

# 'Mystery Men' mysteriously void of both humor and plot

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Special to Sentinel-Voice

My older brother was a comic book fanatic when he was kid. He regaled me with stories about Superman, Batman, Spiderman and countless other comic book heroes.

Since I attended a kind of junior college of comics, I think I know a thing or two about this superhero stuff with its larger-than-life heroes, ridiculous world domination plots, and fantastic escapes and triumphs.

These are elements that fairly beg to be spoofed. With these thoughts in mind, I looked forward to the movie *Mystery Men* which is based upon an actual comic book series. How could this film miss with a subject that is primed and pumped for satire and a cast of fine actors? Sorry, folks, but it missed.

*Mystery Men's* premise is the story of some superhero wannabes who finally get the chance to prove that they've got the 'right stuff' when 'bona fide' superhero Captain Amazing (Greg Kinnear) is kidnapped by his arch-villain Casanova Frankenstein (Geoffrey Rush).

The wannabes are forced to take action to save Amazing and Champion City from Frankenstein's fiendish plans.

The motley crew of superheroes includes Mr. Furious (Ben Stiller), The Blue Raja (Hank Azaria), The Shoveler (William H. Macy), The Bowler (Janeane Garofalo), Invisible Boy (Kel Mitchell), The Spleen (Paul Reubens), and the Sphinx (Wes Studi).

Mr. Furious supposedly exhibits superstrength when he's mad, but the rumors of his 'city-bus lifting' strength are greatly exaggerated. The Blue Raja, who speaks in an effete, faux British accent, considers himself a master of fork throwing, but it's obvious that he needs some practice when some forks land squarely in The Shoveler's backside and in his own.

The Shoveler claims to have a 'God-given' gift of wielding a shovel like few others. Unfortunately, his aim is a little off and he often nails Mr. Furious with his 'deadly'

spade. The Bowler strikes some terror in the heart of her enemies when she throws a bowling ball which holds the skull of her dead father.

Invisible Boy's power is a matter of trust on behalf of his superhero buddies since he claims that he can't be invisible if anyone is watching.

The Spleen has the unenviable talent of knocking his enemies unconscious with his flatulence. The Sphinx is 'terribly mysterious' and he can split guns in half with his mind and spout out fortune cookie sayings "when you care what is outside, what is inside cares for you."

Despite the subject matter and talented cast, *Mystery Men* just never clicked. Sure, there's a few laughs that come from a few great one-liners, but a sustained clever, snappy rhythm that would have made this film really jell was missing.

The acting is particularly disappointing. Ben Stiller's Mr. Furious isn't much of a stretch from other characters that he has portrayed who are pathetic, lovable types who are always on the edge of rage. Azaria's Raja becomes more and more annoying and less amusing as the film unfolds.

The usually solid Macy becomes an 'Everyman' character on autopilot. Kel Mitchell's wide-eyed, optimistic Invisible Boy is a yawn. Reubens' disgusting Spleen character is just that, disgusting.

The insipid sayings of Studi's Sphinx quickly become tiresome. Geoffrey Rush desperately needed to take lessons from Austin Powers' Mike Myers on how to be an arch villain.

There are two bright stars in this dark acting sky though. The incomparable Janeane Garofalo is the queen of laugh-out-loud sarcasm as The Bowler. Greg Kinnear entertainingly hams it up as the smug Captain Amazing.

Folks, your time might be better spent visiting the comic book store and catching up on old and new superheroes, rather than seeing this superflop.

## Jamaican Independence Celebration set for the Clark County Government Center

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Featuring live music, Caribbean food and crafts, the Fourth Annual Jamaican Independence Day Celebration takes place Saturday August 14, from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. at the Clark County Government Center Amphitheater, located at 500 Grand Central Parkway near Main and Bonneville.

Produced by Caribbean Lifestyle Productions, the celebration is co-sponsored by the Las Vegas Youth Ambassadors, a program of Kidz for a Better Society and the Clark County Parks & Recreation.

Headlining the event is the Itals, one of Jamaica's best-known reggae groups. Other featured acts are Stan Rankin

Tand Meshak, and Caribbean Steel Drums & Dancers, with DJ music by Jungle Vibes Disco.

Vendors will be selling authentic Caribbean food as well as hot dogs and snacks. Craft vendors will offer handmade Caribbean and African jewelry, clothing and other items.

The celebration commemorates the 37<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Jamaica becoming an independent member of the British Commonwealth in 1962. Celebrating the rich cultural heritage of this small island nation, proceeds from the event will go to the Youth Ambassadors for the development of their programs for inner-city youth. The programs train

young people in the performing arts, chore and instrumental music, stage movement, directing, composing and other aspects of the entertainment industry.

The Amphitheater features lawn seating and ample free parking. No pets are allowed and smoking is permitted on the upper arcade area only.

Admission is \$8 advance, \$10 at the gate, while children under 12 are free. Advance tickets are available at Caribbean Lifestyle, 1151 S. Las Vegas Blvd., and Clark County Parks and Recreation at the Sunset Park Office.

Information contacts are KFABS at 269-8562, Stan at 386-7022, and Clark County Parks & Rec. at 455-8200.



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