

OPINION

Ace-Man, where are you?

Evil-doers and malcontents beware. Eugene has joined the ranks of Metropolis and Gotham City with the recent debut of a costumed crimefighter of its own.

Ace-Man is here to stamp out injustice Eugene-style.

Unfortunately, the poor guy doesn't know what he's in for.

Ripples were felt in obscure circles shortly after the Fourth of July weekend, when Ace-Man made a public relations stop at KLSR TV. Those on hand for the impromptu appearance were as impressed with his shrewd diplomacy as they were with his road-worker-orange spandex leotards.

His true identity obscured by a black hood, Ace-Man declared himself the "new superhero for the 90s". And although he offered no specifics, agenda items included saving the world and solving our Earthly problems.

Before making a graceful exit, Ace-Man left the stunned on-lookers with his stirring motto: "I'm big and I'm orange."

Ace-Man hopped into a red pickup truck, driven by a still-unknown trusty sidekick, and sped off into the mean streets of Eugene.

The first confirmed sighting of Ace-Man prompted more questions than it answered. If the comic books are to be believed, remaining an enigma is very important for the average superhero. No doubt, Ace-Man has a host of arch-enemies eager to discover his true, mild-mannered identity and his Achilles' heel, which a superhero, if he is to meet the strict definition of a superhero, must have.

However, several questions must be answered before the crime-plagued citizens of Eugene can take heart in their new super-guardian.

What kind of superhuman abilities are at Ace-Man's disposal? Fantastic strength? X-ray vision? Incredible crimebusting gadgets?

If Ace-Man intends to clean up Eugene he's going to require some attribute well-suited for the more mundane crimes that



plague a quiet, college town. Perhaps a suped-up mountain bike to run down those who show no respect for well-reasoned laws by riding their bikes through the campus quadrangle.

One thing's clear. If Ace-Man is serious about the superhero bit, he should ditch the truck.

Where did Ace-Man come from? Real superheroes invariably either originate in the laboratory or from the most distant reaches of the cosmos.

Ace-Man's revelation that he intends to solve our "Earthly problems" would seem to indicate an otherworldly birthplace. But his taste for orange spandex suggests a checkered past as an unstable construction worker. Superman got away with a questionable red and blue ensemble, but then again, no one's going to tease a guy who uses iron bars as twisty-ties.

To further complicate things, when Ace-Man dubbed himself the new superhero for the 1990s, he showed a complete lack of understanding for the issues that any modern superhero must face.

Superman and his Cold War super-comrades had it easy, as far as meting out justice goes. They fought evil-doers at a time when evil-doing was fashionable. Lex Luthor made no bones about his malevolent intentions. The Legion of Doom would rise from the bottom of the sea every week to hatch a new plot to rule the world. And if they weren't plotting world domination, the Communists or some other easily identifiable group was.

Stopping their plans was a piece of cake. All Superman had to do was break through a concrete wall and freeze Lex Luthor with a super-cold puff

of air before he could take the kryptonite out of the lead box.

Today, those doing the harm have learned from Lex Luthor's mistakes. They don't march around with kryptonite, and they don't rise from the ocean depths in a big purple bubble.

They hide behind ballot measures and glitzy television ads, which mask their destructive ideas in good intentions.

So, Ace-Man, if you're really serious about tipping the scales of justice on the side of good, here are your first assignments:

- Stop the OCA's attempt to return Oregon to the dark ages with their ultra-reactionary agenda. If you're still looking for an arch-enemy, here you go, Ace-Man. If you're the superhero for the 90s, the OCA is definitely this decade's Legion of Doom. Lex Luthor has nothing on OCA head-honcho, and soon-to-be gubernatorial candidate, Al Mobeley.

- Preserve the few remaining stands of old-growth forest. Superman would just fly around the Earth counter-clockwise so fast that it would turn back the clock. Then we would just take steps to prevent the destruction that has already occurred.

What are you going to do, Ace-Man? It's one thing to chain yourself to a tree, but something quite different to jump the necessary political hoops and effect any real change. Maybe Ace-Man has superhuman oratory skills.

- Rollback Measure 5. If we intend to move from a resource-based economy to one that is more knowledge-oriented, a viable system of higher education must be a statewide priority. Measure 5 threatens that by causing budget cuts and tuition hikes. Ace-Man may be big and orange, but does he have fiscal savvy?

Ace-Man, where are you? How do we call you, anyway? Does anyone have a big, orange spotlight?

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