

'X-Men' a metaphor for human discrimination

■ The summer flick pits humans against mutants in a supernatural struggle for Marvel-ous survival

By Rebecca Newell
Oregon Daily Emerald

They are the next link in the chain of evolution, born with a genetic mutation evident through extraordinary powers. They are — drumroll please — The X-Men!

Directed by Bryan Singer — known for smaller films including "Usual Suspects" and "Apt Pupil" — the Twentieth Century Fox film is based on the 1960's comic strip by Stan Lee, Marvel Comics editor.

On account of the comic strip originating in the 60s during the Civil Rights movement, it was no surprise that the "X-Men" movie was a political one, proclaimed by producer Tom DeSanto as "an allegory for prejudice."

And somehow the movie pulls it off — establishing a message about discrimination while mixing superhuman powers and fantastic stunts — without trying to get too deep.

The plot is centered around the conflict between the X-Men — mutants who have learned to control their powers for the greater good of mankind — and a group of evil mutants, fighting each other and the world that fears them.

The political background in the movie consisted of the government pushing to enforce "mutant registration," which would label mutants and strip them of the right to attend public schools or lead normal lives. According to the movie's circumstances, it wouldn't be a far stretch to replace the label mutant with that of any other group discriminated

against during the history of mankind.

The moral message, though important in the plot, is as much a backbone to the movie as the array of characters and incredible special effects.

Unlike the often unrealistic fighting scenes in many movies, "X-Men" is supposed to be unrealistic because its characters possess super powers ranging from Jean Grey's telekinesis to Storm's ability to command the weather. Needless to say, those powers make for some pretty great combat scenes.

The casting for the movie was a success in itself. Patrick Stewart from Star Trek plays Professor Charles Xavier, the world's most powerful mutant telepath and mentor to the X-Men troop.

The X-Men troop, of course, contains women, including Halle Berry as Storm, Famke Janssen — from "GoldenEye" and "House on Haunted Hill" — costarring as Jean Grey, and Anna Paquin as Rogue, who won an Academy Award for her role in "The Piano."

The men in the X-Men include James Marsden as Cyclops, known for his role in "Disturbing Behavior," and Australian actor Hugh Jackman as Wolverine in his first major U.S. film role.

Ian McKellan stars opposite Stewart as the villain Magneto, the most powerful mutant ever. Magneto's purpose is to destroy humans, to turn them into mutants, so they can experience the discrimination and suspicion that he feels mutants are subjected to.

Magneto's backup includes several mutants, most notably supermodel Rebecca Romijn-Stamos, who plays Mystique, an agile blue metamorph who can take on any form. Former pro-wrestler



Mystique (Rebecca Romijn-Stamos) can take on any form and is one of the evil mutants with superhuman powers in 'X-Men.'

Tyler Mane takes on the role of Sabretooth, providing the brute force and predictably animalistic grunts every action movie needs.

While "X-Men" is no "Sixth Sense," it does the job of entertaining well. And if you're lucky, you might even leave the theater

pondering the message of the movie. But don't focus on it too hard, or you might miss the great special effects.

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