

FILM

Mutantphobia!

X2 pits the homo superiors against the 'phobes

BY ANDY MANGELS

As a father looks on speechless at his son who has just come out, the concerned mother leans over and asks the dreaded question: "Honey, have you ever tried not being a mutant?"

Welcome back to the world of the X-Men, in which mutants are feared, persecuted and legislated against. But

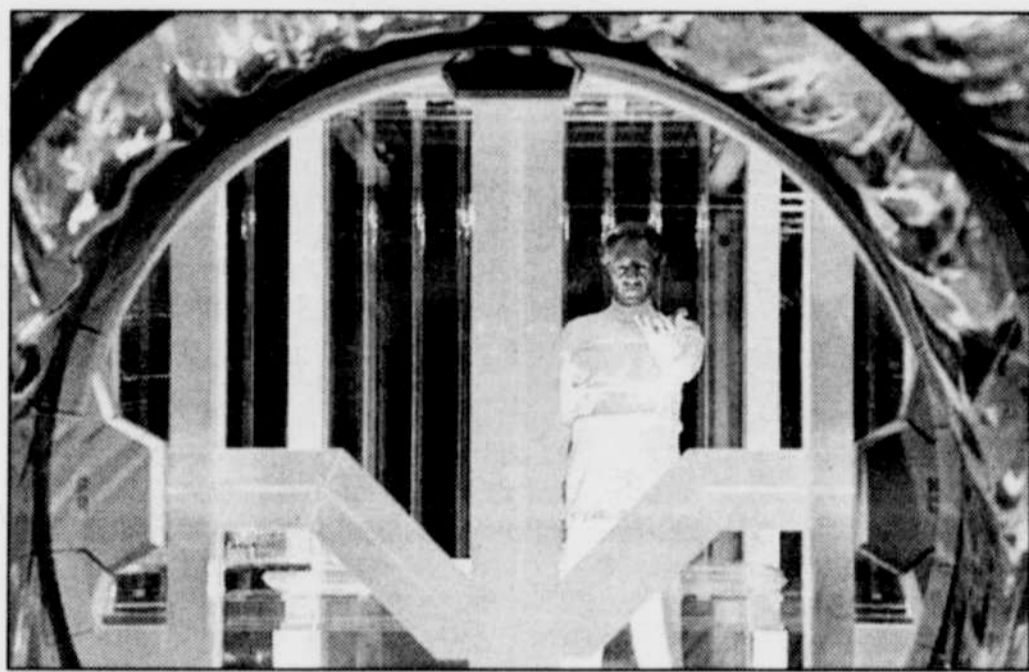
as X2: X-Men United shows, it's not a good idea to try to bash those who can bash back.

The first X-Men film in 2000 introduced viewers to the comic book-based milieu classified as homo superior. Most of them look like normal human beings, but they have extra powers that set them apart; some of them use their powers for good, while others, of course, use them to advance more sinister agendas.

Whereas X-Men dealt with a mutantphobic U.S. senator trying to pass legislation to register all mutants, X2 showcases a more dire threat when Gen. William Stryker (Brian Cox) makes a military strike against the private citadel for mutant teens: Professor Charles Xavier's Academy for Gifted Students.

The various members of the X-Men team scramble to protect themselves, regroup and stop Stryker's evil plan. Hunky wild man Wolverine (the delectable Hugh Jackman) and three mutant teens are in one group, but one of the teens (Shawn Ashmore as Ice Man) doesn't find much solace from his family after he "comes out" to them about being a mutant.

Villains Magneto (Sir Ian McKellen) and shape-changer Mystique (Rebecca Romijn-Stamos) must join with Storm (Halle Berry), Jean Grey (Famke Janssen) and newcomer Nightcrawler (Alan Cumming) to infiltrate Stryker's Alaskan base. Meanwhile, Cyclops (James Marsden) and Professor Xavier (Patrick Stewart) are being mind-controlled to stop their colleagues.



Ian McKellen is downright villainous in X2: X-Men United

The first film dealt much more overtly with the parallels between gays and mutants, but X2 is still pretty gayesque, both in the script and among the actors and production team.

McKellen is gay, while Cumming is bisexual and Romijn-Stamos recently admitted to previous relationships with women. Behind the scenes, director Bryan Singer has long been speculated as gay in the press (an issue he chooses not to address), while editor/composer John Ottman is openly gay.

Beyond its ties to the gay community, is X2 a worthy sequel? Yes, indeed. Perhaps because he's unfettered with having to fully explain the concept of mutants as in the first film, Singer is able to open up the playing field and delve into both more action and more characterization.

As the *Superman* and *Superman II* films are both considered classic examples of how to do a comic book film and its sequel "right," the mantle now goes to X-Men and X2. Moviegoers should love seeing the characters strap on their black leather once again, and queer viewers will get a surrogate thrill from seeing a few mutantphobes getting their due. **J**

ANDY MANGELS is the author of the new book *Animation on DVD: The Ultimate Guide*. Born with no earlobes, he is considered, technically, a mutant.

OUT ON VIDEO/DVD

THE PERFECT SON Wolfe Video



The dreary "AIDS drama" of the late 1980s and '90s resurfaces with *The Perfect Son*. Leonard Farlinger directed this first feature supposedly to honor his brother who died of AIDS, but his sibling may be rolling in his grave at this anemic, retrograde film.

Conservative, closeted gay lawyer Ryan (Colm Feore) meets up with his estranged brother, hunky junkie Theo (David Cubitt), fresh out of rehab. Theo learns of Ryan's promiscuous homosexuality and allegedly declining health due to AIDS. (I say allegedly because, despite the film's insistence on Ryan's illness and his histrionics, he's the picture of rosy health, jogging on the beach, sprinting up and down stairs. In other scenes, he balefully drags an IV around and pukes his guts out, all the while looking gym-trim.)

The film is much more interested in the rise of Theo from clueless wreck to devoted boyfriend, expectant father and, presumably, inheritor of Ryan's substantial estate. Ryan performs the traditional queer role of self-sacrificing vehicle for a straight man's personal growth, thoughtfully taking his bow and leaving the stage at just the right moment.

The DVD includes a commentary by Farlinger and Feore, a separate musical score and a behind-the-scenes featurette.

—Gary Morris

Tobias Schneebaum, is really a cannibal.

During a foray into Peru during the 1950s, he did sample a morsel of human flesh after a murderous raid by the tribe with whom he was living. (And no, it didn't taste like chicken; it was more like pork, according to Schneebaum.)

This intermittently intriguing, sometimes tedious documentary shows the artist and globetrotter, now in his late 70s, returning to the scenes of his "crime": Papua New Guinea—where he lived with, was adopted by and had boyfriends among the natives—and Peru, where the infamous event occurred.

Schneebaum is a charismatic personality—an unapologetic eccentric whose reunion with old friends and lovers after four decades is quite moving. Scandalous clips show him on '60s talk television explaining his adventures to shocked host and guests. There are amusing scenes where the impish Schneebaum lectures boatfuls of bourgeois travelers on tribal art and customs; during a slide show he pointedly indicates, "These men are lovers, these men are lovers, these men are lovers."

Still, the documentary is ultimately as languid and aimless as Schneebaum's quest for "something" that is never really defined.

Extras on the DVD include photo galleries, samples of the subject's excellent art and biographies of the participants.

—GM **J**

KEEP THE RIVER ON YOUR RIGHT New Video Group



The subtitle of *Keep the River on Your Right* is "A Modern Cannibal Tale," but perhaps "Cannibal Queen" might have been more appropriate. Not that the star and subject, gay painter and anthropologist

There was no shortage of boyfriends in the 1950s Peruvian jungle, according to Tobias Schneebaum in *Keep the River on Your Right*

lite bites

QUEER NIGHT MONDAYS 9PM - 1AM

LE HAPPY

1011 NW 16th Ave. (between Lovejoy and Marshall)
(503)226-1258 www.lehappy.com

All vegetarian.
All the time.

THE PURPLE PARLOR 3560 N Mississippi (at Fremont)
7:30a-2:30p Tue-Fri, 8a-3p Sat-Sun
mississippi avenue cafe 503-281-3560 www.purpleparlor.com

3551 SE Division Street, 503-236-6890

HAVEN

www.havencoffee.com

Touchstone Coffee House

More than a coffee house,
an oasis of experience
gifts • live music • organic coffee

The Pink Place 76th & NE Glisan
503-262-7613
www.touchstonecoffeehouse.com

J&M
cafe

se 6th ash
tues sat 5 930
230 0463

Divine Cafe

Vegetarian Paradise

M-Th 11-9pm • Fri & Sat 11-8pm
We Cater!

SW 9th & Alder • (503) 314-9606

Cafe, Cart & Diner owners!

Contact Erin, Larry, or Markie
at 503-236-1253 for details

on our new cost-effective
"Lite-Bites"
restaurant ad.

3 months for \$149