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Introducing Marvel's all-new, never-before-seen heroes of the 1930s! With a new evil washing over an unsuspecting New York City, the Operative, the Aviatrix, the Surgeon, the Revenant and Achilles blast through dangers from blood-soaked mob warehouses to monster-infested mansions, and fight to blow the lid off a conspiracy that could bring the nation itself to its knees! Award-winning historical-thriller novelist David Liss (**BLACK PANTHER: THE MAN WITHOUT FEAR**) and acclaimed artist Patrick Zircher (**SPIDERMAN NOIR**) weave an edge-of-your-seat and in-continuity adventure intertwined with America's most scandalous crimes! **COLLECTING: MYSTERY MEN 1-5**

Mystery Men Details

Date : Published July 11th 2012 by Marvel (first published November 23rd 2011)

ISBN : 9780785147459

Author : David Liss , Patrick Zircher (Illustrator)

Format : Paperback 120 pages

Genre : Sequential Art, Comics, Graphic Novels, Superheroes, Marvel, Graphic Novels Comics, Pulp

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From Reader Review Mystery Men for online ebook

Jin says

"An interesting read! Good storytelling by Liss and lively art by Zircher. It was great to come across this book and add to my growing collection of graphic novels. The real issues of an era were made as springboards in the formation of a super hero team. Great."

Jeff says

With this entry, Marvel is trying to build up some pulpy continuity back into the early 1930's. We've only had about a gazillion stories about the future, so where to go for unmined dollar\$? – back to the past.

Like any group of crime fighters who don't know each other, there's always one thing that draws them together – crime-busting evil. EVIL! EVIILL!!!

The Mystery Men:

The Operator: His girlfriend is kidnapped and killed by The General. He's framed for the crime. He's a burglar with enhanced fighting skills who robs from the rich and gives to the poor. He sports a Clark Gable mustache.

Revenant: He's a throwback to Mysterio – a smoke and mirrors guy and he's African American, so Liss can examine the racial issues of the times.

Aviatrix: Rhymes with dominatrix. The murdered girl's sister. She's has a pair of portable wings and attitude to spare.

Achilles: An archeologist finds a bracelet and lo and behold, he becomes god-like. The catch: every time he taps into his power, he loses a year of his life, unless he kills someone to even it out.

The Surgeon: A former doctor, his house was set on fire by the General's henchman and he was burned to a cinder. Instead of going to the emergency room, he shot himself with morphine, wrapped himself in bandages and started throwing hyper-dermic needles at bad guys and using creepy patter like:

"The reason he's not talking is because the incision isn't deep enough."

Or: Bad guy: "If they catch me, they're gonna kill me!" The surgeon, wielding a scalpel: "Don't worry. When I'm finished cutting away, they won't recognize you."

Marvel throws in a few Easter eggs for fan boys: Before he got permanently attached to his pink mask by Captain America, Baron Zemo, is representing German "socialists". Babies (the Lindbergh baby is one of them) are being abducted and one of those babies happens to be a Stark baby. Nox, the evil, cleavage-bearing baddie, has fought Dr. Strange in modern times.

If you like The Rocketeer or Matt Wagner's Sandman Mystery Theatre mixed with some history and the occult, check this one out.

Anthony says

It's no secret that my favorite superheroes are from the Golden Age of Comics and the pulp era that preceded it. The first (and one of the only) non-fiction piece I had published was a "hero history" of Marvel Comics' The Invaders in the late, lamented Amazing Heroes magazine; among my favorite of the supporting characters in that series was the original Union Jack and his backstory of being part of a costumed team of adventurers during World War One. So it's really no surprise that I'd enjoy this Marvel mini-series about a group of largely non-powered costumed vigilantes active in New York City between the wars. What is surprising is that the five issue mini-series escaped my notice when it came out, and that this collected edition has sat unread on my bookshelf for over a year. I'm glad I finally decided to read it.

This is the origin story for five very different, and yet almost archetypical, "men of action." There's the rich playboy who dons a mask to right wrongs (The Operative), the stage magician turned adventurer (The Revenant), the mechanical genius (The Aviatrix), the disfigured do-gooder (The Surgeon), and the super-human powered by an ancient artifact (Achilles). I thought all of their origins rang true to the pulp and early comics characters of the era, calling to mind pulp greats like Doc Savage, The Shadow, The Spider, and The Avenger, as well as comic strip greats like Mandrake the Magician and The Phantom, with even a nod to Dave Stevens' more recent creation The Rocketeer. Liss doesn't just run the archetypes true to form, though. He mixes and matches back-stories and tropes: The Operative has a bit of Doc Savage's childhood mixed with a bit of the Green Hornet's modus operandi; The Aviatrix has a bit of the Rocketeer in her design but more than a touch of Dale Arden, Margo Lane and Amelia Earhart in her personality; The Surgeon owes as much to modern-era Batman as he does to the tactics of The Shadow and The Spider. Achilles is the closest to an actual super-hero, with his magical amulet and super-human strength, bridging the gap from the pulps to super-heroes.

The plot has a true pulp magazine feel to it, not just in terms of origin stories but also in the revelation of the villain and his big secret early on; the reader knows more than the heroes do. It's tightly-paced but also takes some nice twists. Some of these are foreseeable, with plenty of clues dropped from the beginning, and some are not-so-predictable and yet make perfect sense. Kudos also to the creative team for not pretending the era wasn't all "speakeasies, dirigibles and awesome hats," as Liss says in his author's note. The inclusion of subplots about race and gender politics (especially in the origin of the Revenant, the character I wanted to know even more about), union-busting and the class stratification that gave people very different experiences of the Great Depression, and the tying in of at least one event of national tragedy (the Lindbergh kidnapping) added depth and realism to the story without overwhelming it.

Patrick Zircher's art and costume design is also spot-on. All of these characters, heroes and villains alike, look like they could have appeared in the pulps and comic strips of the time; whatever grafting of modern sensibilities onto period costumes there may be is very subtle. The art is gritty and detailed enough to convey a sense of NYC in the early 30s and to fit the mood of the story.

So far as I can tell, these characters have not appeared again since this story first appeared. I can't help but wonder what other cases Liss and Zircher would have sent these characters on had they been granted another mini-series; while all of the main plots are wrapped up neatly, there is plenty of story coda in the final pages to lead into a sequel.

Paul Hasbrouck says

In MYSTERY MEN the reader steps back to 1932 New York at the height of the Great Depression. The nation and people seems to be living hell that will not go away. Corruption is everywhere, the police, society, business, crime families have a stranglehold on the common man. Unlike our world, this is the Marvel Universe, so a few heroes will rise to battle this evil and protect the citizens.

These are classic pulp heroes-The Operative(playboy turned Robin Hood), The Revenant(African-American stage magician), The Aviatrix(a woman flier and invention), The Surgeon(a doctor driven mad by the forces of evil, who is the murderous "hero") and Achilles(a meek scientist turned warrior), who battle the combined forces of The General and his supernatural mistress Nog.

The artwork is wonderful and the grand mixture of pulp hero and weird menace fiction, with werewolves, airships, The Empire State Building and a very nice solution to one of the great crimes of 20th. century. Reader and enjoy.

Empress Reece (Hooked on Books) says

Who Are The Mystery Men?

For my Summer Book Bingo card we had to read a comic or graphic novel. My son has just recently showed interest in comic books so I picked one of his- Mystery Men. It's the first book in a five book mini-series that was written in 2011. It featured all new pulp-era characters set in Marvel continuity. I've always liked the gritty and stylish 1930s period so I was drawn to this particular comic with the New York City backdrop. This first story starts out with the murder of an actress, Alice Starr, and a conspiracy to frame her boyfriend. We're introduced to two of the characters, The Revenant and The Operative, who end up joining forces to find the true killer.

Now I've read very few comic books in my lifetime so I'm definitely no expert but I was very impressed. By the end I was wishing I already had the next book so I would say the writers did a pretty good job. They reeled me right in anyways! The next time we go comic shopping I'll be on the lookout for the rest of the series.

Jean-Pierre Vidrine says

I love pulp heroes and stories set in the 1930s. Even with that, I was a little reluctant to pick up this book. Too often have I encountered "original" pulp style characters in comics that wind up being little more than pale shades of existing characters like the Shadow and Doc Savage. Tributes and homages are fine, but there's a fine line between those things and just plain imitations. Fortunately, that's not what this book did. There are elements in common with the previously mentioned characters. Nearly every superhero worth the paper he's printed on is born from those two in one way or another. But David Liss gives us characters here that I can truly feel are new and worthwhile.

Two things really struck me about the book. The first was the social relevance. Pulp stories from the era, and the comic books that followed, did okay when it came to confronting some of the issues of the Depression like crooked landlords, poverty, and organized crime. But those stories practically always ignored other ills

like racism, sexism, and corrupt police. It's especially surprising that that last one was ignored since loss in faith in law and order was a key factor in the creation of pulp heroes and later superheroes.

Mystery Men confronts those issues head on, with even some of our leading characters having those less than enlightened attitudes of their time.

The other thing that struck me was the character interaction. True to Marvel form, these individuals don't get along very well. But unlike what we've seen in early Avengers stories, their discomfort with each other doesn't lead to typical hero vs. hero fights. It's much more subtle here, with them simply parting ways for as long as they can.

David Liss also handles the characters' origin stories very nicely, without interrupting the flow of the narrative.

Patrick Zircher's art is terrific, and it is complemented greatly by Andy Troy's colors.

I don't know if any of the characters or events of this story have had any impact on present-time Marvel continuity. I also haven't heard of any plans to revisit these characters. I hope that changes soon.

Alan says

The past couple of years comics have been trying to get back to their roots, the pulps of the 1930s which featured characters such as Doc Savage, The Shadow, etc. For the most part I would say they failed. Moonstone and Dynamite just buy up old properties, and unless Scott Beatty is writing it there is nothing new or interesting happening. DC Comics tried, but its execution failed as it tried a pulp oriented line that featured Doc Savage, some of their own characters and Will Eisner's Spirit.

So why does Marvel pull it off well with this title? I think a large part of the credit has to go to writer David Liss who has made his living primarily writing mysteries set in late 18th century London. Liss was given enough leeway to create original characters, and while they could easily be compared to old pulp or movie serial characters Liss gives things just enough of a twist to keep the reader interested in them. The story also would fit easily into those old pulps.

The ending leaves things open for more stories. I think the best developed character in the Operative.

Will Cooper says

Not your average superheroes. Though barely more than average humans. And it's a nice pulp with the heroes having small powers vs a more powerful villain and the heroes aren't super pure. They will kill when needed. A nice break from the norm.

Jeffrey Jelmeland says

David Liss is a new writer to me, but I have to say that I am impressed with his style. This book takes place in a very dark part of our modern history, and explores the subject of vigilante heroes set in that framework. Liss really seemed to capture the speech and mannerisms common to that time, and at no point did I feel that it was artificial or stilted. What really caught me off guard was encountering a character that is a major villain within the history of the Marvel Universe, but encountering him at a time before he really grew to that level of fame. I hadn't expected to encounter anyone from the history of the universe, so finding him in so innocuous of a role was unexpected. Even so, you get a bit of the vibe that we now expect from that

character (and no, I am not going to spoil it by telling you who this character is) and you can see just a hint of who he will grow to become.

The artwork did a fantastic job of carrying the noir-like flair that always seems to pervade works set within this time period, and really complemented the story. All in all this was an excellent book, and while I believe that this was a one-off book I really hope to find that they revisit this cast of characters again and tell of their further adventures.

Nicholas Ahlhelm says

Originally posted at NewPulpFiction.com:

It is nearly the end of 2011, so this reviewer thinks it is time he looks back at the best pulp work he read in the year. I have certainly read more pulp this year than any other in my life, but there is one clear work that stands out to me as the story that I enjoyed the most.

And that title is Marvel's *Mystery Men*. This is not to be confused with *Airship 27's Mystery Men (& Women)*, the second volume of which I just reviewed last week.

Over the course of five issues, writer David Liss not only introduces five new pulp heroes to populate early 1930s Marvel, he also scripts a compelling adventure featuring all of them. The story starts with the mysterious Operative, easily the most normal of the bunch.

He's just a man in a trench coat, fedora and mask, but over the course of the series the reader gets a good idea of what motivates him. The Aviatrix may be the most derivative character, basically a female Rocketeer. The Revenant is a vigilante in the Shadow mold that uses tricks and gadgets to appear as an unearthly phantom. Achilles is a young man rejected by his love and left for dead who takes up mystic artifacts to become the most powerful of the loose band of heroes. Finally, the Surgeon is a character in the Spider mold; a man with a brutal history, a terrible disfigurement and an urge to kill as many villains as possible.

The five heroes all enter the series from different angles over the course of the first three chapters, but they all face the same opponent: a madman named the General and his unearthly love interest, who just happens to be an obscure Marvel villain.

David Liss is no stranger to the period, having written several prose novels set in the era. He handles character development surprisingly well for a series jam-packed with characters. The artist, Patrick Zircher, is no stranger to pulp comic fans. Zircher broke in to comics with work on *Now's Green Hornet* (alongside *Airship 27's Ron Fortier*) and more recently with covers on Marvel's Noir line of titles. He seems to have a good feel for blending pulp traditions with the superhero art styling of modern comics.

Together the two men have created a really great limited series, a rare breed in today's comic field. The five issues are now sold out, but fortunately a hardcover edition is now available at comic shops (with bookstore distribution in the next few weeks). Do yourself a favor and don't pass this one up a second time.

Bill Williams says

Mystery Men is good but not great. The high concept of a new batch of characters being proto-Marvel characters is not a new one and it almost works in this comic. The story would work as a novel, but as a

comic tied into the Marvel Universe, it's not at all tied into the Marvel Universe. The art is pretty, but the script might have been fixed with another draft that included characters like the guys that went on to run around with Sgt. Fury in the Howling Commandos book

Gina says

I tend to have an aversion to going back and taking historical events and incorporating them into a supernatural plot, so I grimaced when the Lindbergh kidnapping ended up being a thing. It looks like they are going somewhere interesting with it. It is very much pulp, but I think they are doing a reasonably good job with it, and the artwork is gorgeous.

I should add, I came across this looking for the Dark Horse version.

Justin says

Not a resounding success. Feels a bit leaden with origin stories, and the supernatural lacks a pulp feel, edging into the more Marvel-esque as Liss ties it in to that universe. I also felt baited and switched by adopting The Operative as my protagonist, and then finding all the investment placed in Achilles, a late edition to the team. Still, smoked with style and a nice set-up for another series featuring this team.

Keith says

One of the best "New Pulps" I've read. Captures the proper tone and tenor of the original pulps but filters the storytelling through a more modern prism. Artwork is perfectly noirish. The character designs and motivations all fit the pulp tradition without being overtly derivative as direct pastiches of any other characters. Set in the Marvel Universe ten years before the first appearances of familiar characters like the Sub-Mariner and Capt. America.

Highly recommend fans of pulp fiction pick this up

Shannon says

Story got a little clunky at times trying to insert unnecessary origin stories on every character. It is a limited series, just go with the story, origins can come later if the book gets a second volume.

Ended was a real cliché, plus it did not really make much sense in a logical way.

I like the noir stuff, and I would love to see a good superhero group pulp comic like the Mystery Men, and while there was some good here, this attempt fell short.
