



f i l m

X woman

X2's Mystique, Rebecca Romijn-Stamos, talks about living in a 1920s brothel, giving that famous "lesbian homework" quote, and getting blue with Alan Cumming **By Michael Giltz**

When *X2*—the sequel to the blockbuster hit *X-Men*—launches in May, queer fans will be among the first in line. The mid '70s relaunch of Marvel's *X-Men* has spoken more directly to gay and lesbian readers than perhaps any other mainstream comic. Queer youths identified with a universe where mutant teens with special powers were treated as outcasts. Story lines even included teens "coming out" to their parents as mutants—a detail that

figures in *X2*, directed by Bryan Singer, edited and scored by out talent John Ottman, and starring such gay and gay-friendly stars as Sir Ian McKellen, Hugh Jackman, Patrick Stewart, and Alan Cumming.

According to novelist and comics expert Andy Mangels, *X-Men* also hit young gays and lesbians at a sexual level: "Chris Claremont, who wrote it for a long time, favored really strong, butch, neodomatrix women. And the male characters were often in hunky

stages of undress—drawn very erotically most of the time."

Also very erotic is the all-blue shape-shifter Mystique, played in both *X* films by former model Rebecca Romijn-Stamos, who is clearly blessed with the audacity to match her preternaturally gorgeous looks. As the lead in Brian De Palma's 2002 thriller *Femme Fatale*, she unforgettably seduced another woman in order to swipe the jewels adorning the woman's near-naked body. Queried about *Femme's* gay overtones by *Elle* magazine, she delighted gay readers by saying, "In my early 20s I wondered if I was interested in women, and so I kind of, well...did my homework." Is it any wonder we sat her down for a pop quiz?

If you see Mystique in the comic book, she's clothed like the other people. She's got her comic book superhero vinyl outfit on. But for the movie they say, "We think clothes are sort of outdated. We're just going to body-paint you."

I have to agree with the producers of the movie or whoever it was that decided Mystique shouldn't wear clothes. Clothes would get in the way if you're trying to morph. If your body cells can morph, how does the fabric of the garment morph?

You'd have to rip the clothes off every five seconds.

Yes, which could be sexy. Sort of an Incredible Hulk moment.

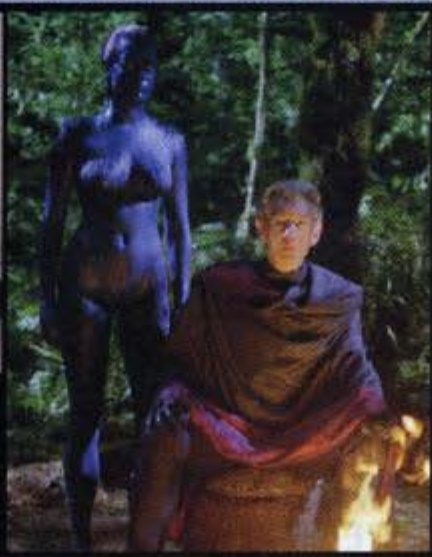
I interviewed your husband [John Stamos], and he mentioned you guys were moving into a brothel.

BY JARVIS THORNTON



X-cellent adventures

Cumming (above) as Nightcrawler; Romijn-Stamos (right) as Mystique, with McKellen as Magneto



[Laughs] We bought this house that was a brothel in the '20s. It's this dilapidated log cabin on a ranch. It looks like the set of an old western. The basement was a whole series of little bedrooms with attached bathrooms. It's been referred to as the Sex Farm by our friends.

X-Men has always been significant for gay and lesbian readers for the obvious reason—

[Interrupting] The underlying theme of anyone who was ever ostracized.

Yes. Or someone who was shunned because they are special and more talented than other people.

Right! Jealousy is what it comes down to. First of all, I love Mystique. It's so great to play this supersexy supervillain. She's angry, and she's part of the brotherhood of evil, so she's fighting for the evil reasons. But it totally makes sense to me why she's so angry. I only had one line of dialogue in the first movie [laughs]. But it was a really important piece of information. It was, "People like you made me afraid to go to school as a child."

After you did *Femme Fatale*, your gay and lesbian fan base went up about, I don't know, 10,000%.
Great! [Laughs] Excellent.

Lily, the jewel thief in *Femme Fatale*, is pretty much a shape-shifter as well. And, like Mystique, she does what it takes to get what she wants.
Yeah, there are a lot of similarities.

I might not describe Lily as a villain. But she's certainly a tough person

working in the netherworld, much like Mystique.

Part of what I liked about her is that she never made any apologies for being a bitch. She never really tried to redeem herself. And there aren't that many female characters who get to be that bad. Mystique is another one who never makes an apology for being a badass. But I feel like such a freak [in the make-up], and I'll get really moody. It's literally five people on me all the time. At a certain point, it's like, "Get out of my personal space! I'm going to go nuts!" [Laughs] It's nice because Alan Cumming [who plays Nightcrawler] is the other blue person. So he and I got to commiserate together. We spent a lot of time hanging out watching movies; we couldn't move because the costumes were so fragile. We'd watch *Waiting for Guffman* over and over again.

Not Blue's Clues?

No, blue has slowly become my least favorite color.

Nightcrawler...I think there's a suggestion in the comic that Mystique might be his mom.

Yeah. Alan didn't know that. I think I told him. I will say that story line doesn't come up in *X2*.

They wouldn't deal with that in the film because your ages—well, I guess your age is nebulous since—
Since we're both blue. We're mutants! Anything goes.

And of course you were working with Ian McKellen again.

Who is fantastic! He is just so great. We spent so much time together on the set, and he is hilarious. He kills me when he's trying to figure out how to work his Magneto cape. He's flipping it all over the place trying to figure out how to make that cape go just right.

I know our readers appreciated your comment about having wondered if you were sexually attracted to women and then doing your homework. I'm sure your agent said, "Don't mention that again."
Exactly. [Laughs] "Stop talking about that."

It's something that a lot of people... I mean, I experimented with girls when I was in high school.

You did? Don't tell anyone. Keep that a secret.

Did you regret what you said? It's sort of an innocuous comment in a way.

It was an innocuous comment. I didn't get into any specifics. I didn't think it was that big a deal. But it's true. Some people asked me to keep my mouth shut after that, and some people thanked me. I don't regret it at all. I don't know. My gay aunts were very supportive of it.

You have gay aunts?
Doesn't everybody?

Not me. We're Catholic, so we just have unhappy marriages.
Got it.

When did you find out about your gay aunts?
Um, I think probably when I was about 9 years old. I sort of put it all together, and it was fine. They've been together for, God, at least 18 years, and they've got two kids, and they live in Berkeley [Calif.], and I'm really close with them.

When female fans like you, how do they express it, as opposed to male fans?
It depends on the individual. But honestly, I don't get hit on very much. What's going on? I've got to get out more. ■

Giltz writes for publications including the New York Post.