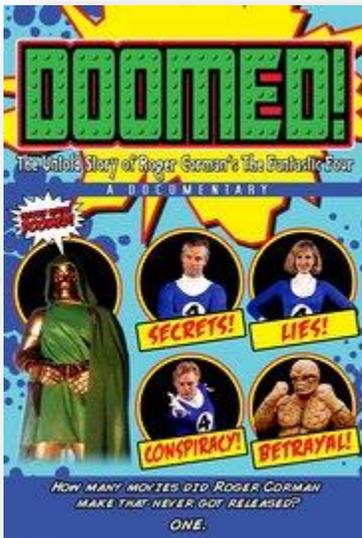


Spotlight

March 24, 2017



When it comes to big screen adaptations of comic book characters, none seem to be as cursed as *The Fantastic Four*. Mr. Fantastic, Invisible Woman, Human Torch, and Thing: a foursome with superpowers no more ridiculous than the X-Men, but who have yet to share the same level of commercial and critical success.

Perhaps the most notorious Fantastic Four flop was the 1994 Roger Corman production that never got an official release, not on the big screen nor on DVD. It has, however, been leaked and shared and mocked by thousands the world over, taking on a cult status. So bad, it's good. It was even spoofed in the fourth season of *Arrested Development*.

To be fair to those involved, the low quality of the film is much more forgivable considering they didn't have the blockbuster budget of Fox Studios who would produce the later duds. They were also under huge time constraints. And, if conspiracy theorists are to be believed, had people above them who had intended to sabotage the project from the get go.

In *Doomed: The Untold Story of Roger Corman's Fantastic Four*, documentarian Marty Langford talks to the actors, directors, and Roger Corman himself about just what went wrong. The answers are at once obvious and elusive. It was near impossible to make a great superhero movie under such conditions and if the project was simply meant to stall in order to hang on to potentially valuable film rights, remains to be seen.

In any case, the more compelling stories come from those who made the movie. It is easy sometimes to laugh at a failed project when it is from a distance, but when the creators are humanized it becomes more difficult. Most involved thought it would be their big break. Most worked hard and were proud of their individual accomplishments. Not that *Doomed* is entirely a sad, pity party; these people are under no illusion that this was a great film and now that much time has passed, they have a sense of humour about the whole thing.

Doomed, in the end, might even be considered an inspirational documentary. It is not so much about those who fail, but those who try.

John Mutford, Library Manager