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Bowfinger

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Bowfinger

Abstract

This is a review of *Bowfinger* (1999).

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Steve Martin's latest endeavor, *Bowfinger*, is a witty parody of Hollywood, including the fascination of some movie stars with new-age religions. Martin satirizes everything from the over dramatic actor, to the aspiring actress who will do anything to get a part, to the new-age religions popular among some of Hollywood's most famous celebrities. *Bowfinger* includes a new-age religion, Mind Head, which bears some similarity to the Church of Scientology, which boasts among its members such stars as Tom Cruise, John Travolta, and Kirstie Alley.

Martin plays the lead role of Bobby Bowfinger, a down-on-his-luck movie director who is still waiting to claim his share of fame and fortune. Bowfinger is portrayed as a desperate man with dubious morals and a hunger for the Hollywood lifestyle. He is convinced that his moment of glory finally has arrived when late one night he reads the script for an outrageous, poorly written science fiction film, entitled "Chubby Rain." At a chance meeting in a restaurant, a very successful producer (Robert Downey, Jr.) jokingly agrees to make the movie on the condition that Kit Ramsey (Eddie Murphy), the hottest star in show business, agrees to play the lead in the film.

Since Ramsey does not want anything to do with Bobby Bowfinger or Chubby Rain, Bowfinger tries to establish a rapport with Ramsey by pretending to be a fellow member of Mind Head, a cult-like religion that dominates much of Kit Ramsey's life. When Ramsey discovers the ruse, he throws Bowfinger out of his

limousine, shouting after him: "It's people like you who give Mind Head a bad name." The line suggests that Mind Head has been the subject of criticism (has been given a bad name) and that it requires loyalty of its followers.

Realizing that his chances of getting Ramsey to star in Chubby Rain are now nonexistent, Bowfinger decides to include Ramsey in the movie without his knowledge. To do this, Bowfinger films the other members of the cast as they approach Kit Ramsey on the streets and byways of Hollywood. Since Ramsey is terrified that aliens are invading the earth, he responds with panic to the lines of the actors, thereby providing exactly the response he would have acted had he been willing to star in the movie. The results are, of course, hilarious. For some scenes, Bowfinger uses a non-actor Ramsey look-alike, also played by Eddie Murphy, a device that spoofs Eddie Murphy movies in which Murphy plays more than one character.

As Ramsey's paranoia increases, as a result of his encounters with Bowfinger's actors, he turns to Mind Head for help. The leader of Mind Head (played by Terrence Stamp) enrolls Ramsey in Mind Head's "Celebrity Relaxing Quarters," suggesting that Mind Head caters to celebrities. When Ramsey decides to enroll in the CRQs, he tells one of his entourage to get his checkbook, indicating that Mind Head followers pay for the services of the religion. Ramsey also is

hooked up to an electrical device that is supposed to clear the mind of negative thinking and promote inner peace.

In the end, Bowfinger has accomplished his goal of filming Chubby Rain, but he sees that he has been chasing the wrong dream. He realizes that his friends (the actors and actresses of the cast) are more important than the glory and wealth so often sought in Hollywood. This realization gives the movie a very happy, upbeat ending, which just may be another spoof on Hollywood.