

ISLAMIC SUPERHEROES

THE 99 ARE FIGHTING ALONGSIDE THE JUSTICE LEAGUE

Islam and lycra have found an unusual pairing among the pages of a monthly children's comic book. The 99 are a group of crime-fighting superheroes based on "the 99 most beautiful names of Allah" from the Qur'an. However, the religious element ends there. The messages within The 99 are being praised for promoting tolerance, and such is the group's international stature that they're soon to team up with Superman and The Justice League.

For Naif Al-Mutawa, the Kuwaiti behind the comics, the union is just the next step for

his astonishingly successful creation. Begun in 2005, there are now a million copies of The 99 produced a year, using artists from both Marvel and DC Comics, and 2010 will even see a cartoon series of The 99 hit TV screens. Here, drawn exclusively for Dazed and introduced by Al-Mutawa, are a few of the main characters... the99.org

Text Alex Ritman

Illustration by June Brigman and Roy Richardson, colouring by Monica Kubina

JABBAR THE POWERFUL

"Jabbar is our strongman. I launched him in the first ever book, because it would have been difficult to tackle the superhero genre without having the muscles on board."

JAMI THE ASSEMBLER

Hungarian teen Jami is the brainbox of the group, creating various inventions. "His IQ is through the roof," says Naif, "but his EQ (emotional intelligence) is through the floor!"

HADYA THE GUIDE

"Hadya is who The 99 turn to when they are lost. She can lead the way! Hadya was expected to follow her family's traditional rules, but never paid attention."

MUSAWWIRA THE ORGANISER

"Ghanaian-American Musawwira is OCD exemplified. She makes order out of chaos. The 99 work in teams of three and she organises the right combinations."

SAMDA THE INVULNERABLE

"Samda, from Sudan, is one of The 99's most fun characters. She is young and hard-headed."

BATINA THE HIDDEN

"The idea of Batina came from my wife Rola. One of the 99 attributes is 'The Hidden'. Batina hides behind her burka and keeps The 99 concealed when it's best they're not seen."

BARI THE HEALER

"Bari is one of The 99's many African characters. He hails from South Africa and is our healing member, channelling his energy to where it is needed – curing illnesses and mending broken bones."

NOORA THE LIGHT

"As the United Arab Emirate's representative in The 99, Noora epitomises the country's leadership. She has a strong ability for shining the light towards the future."

DARR THE AFFLICTER

"Some have accused me of having political motivations in putting the American member of the The 99 in a wheelchair. However, the US has an incredible record of making heroes out of those whose special needs would make them vulnerable in other societies."

