

Popguy the Sailor Man

By Butch Maxwell and Bert Furioli

At a Glance

Genre: Interactive Musical Comedy Murder Mystery

Running Time: Variable — presented across a three-act dinner-theatre evening; timing depends on audience interaction and meal service

Cast: 5 performers (2W, 3M), plus brief audience roles

Setting: Present-day Sweethaven, with flashbacks at sea and on a deserted island

Audience Participation: Extensive — audience members appear as a Flower Girl, Ceremony Respondents, a Volleyball, Captain Steubingville, a Punching Bag, and a Ring Girl; the full audience questions suspects and completes Detective Cards

Ideal Venues

- Dinner theatres
- Community theatres
- Fundraisers
- Performing arts organizations
- Civic organizations
- Corporate and private events

Program Notes

After five years missing at sea, Popguy returns to Sweethaven just as his longtime love, Olive Mohel, is about to marry his musclebound rival Bruto. Popguy's tale of a treasure voyage with the villainous Sea Nag — and five years stranded on an island — reignites old rivalries and leads to a championship fight for Olive's hand.

Sea Nag schemes with Bruto to deprive Popguy of his strength-giving spinach, but Popguy wins the bout anyway. Then a poisoned helping of spinach leaves him apparently dead. The audience questions the suspects and studies the clues before the final act reveals the would-be killer, settles the mystery, and makes room for a wedding and one last song.

The Mystery Theatre Experience

An evening with Mystery Theatre Unlimited begins before the first scene. Upon arrival, guests receive a program, Detective Card, pen or pencil, and a Character Fun Fact Card. As the cast mingles in character, guests are encouraged to read their Fun Facts, exchange information, and meet the suspects before the mystery officially begins.

The Evening's Format

A typical performance follows this sequence:

1. **Guest Arrival & Character Mingling** — Characters circulate, meet the audience, and establish relationships before the scripted action begins.
2. **Act One** — Popguy returns during Bruto and Olive's wedding, recounts his lost voyage and island ordeal, and challenges Bruto to a fight.
3. **Dinner / Intermission** — Characters may remain available for informal interaction as appropriate.
4. **Act Two** — Sea Nag and Bruto scheme against Popguy, the rivals fight, and Popguy collapses after eating poisoned spinach.
5. **Question & Answer Period** — Audience members question the suspects directly.
6. **Guessing Break** — Guests complete Detective Cards identifying the culprit and explaining their deductions.
7. **Act Three** — Popguy returns alive, the attempted-murder plot is solved, and the evening reaches its wedding finale and final song.

Audience Participants

Popguy the Sailor Man draws several audience members into short, guided comedy bits. The cast selects and coaches each participant in the moment; no advance preparation or theatrical experience is required.

The audience roles are:

- Flower Girl — takes part in the opening wedding ceremony
- Ceremony Respondents — join the opening ceremony
- Volleyball — appears in Popguy's deserted-island flashback
- Captain Steubingville — assists in a seafaring comedy sequence
- Punching Bag — helps demonstrate the fighters' prowess
- Ring Girl — presents the round cards during the fight

The entire audience also participates by questioning the suspects and completing Detective Cards before the solution is revealed.

Characters

The show is played by five performers, with additional roles assigned to audience volunteers.

Popguy the Sailor Man

The returning hero of Sweethaven. Missing for five years after a disastrous treasure voyage, he comes home determined to reclaim Olive and settle matters with Bruto.

Olive Mohel

Popguy's longtime love. After waiting decades for a proposal, she is finally at the altar with Bruto when Popguy reappears.

Bruto

Popguy's musclebound archrival — mean, brutal, and none too bright. He wants Olive and is willing to accept Sea Nag's help to defeat Popguy.

Gimpy

A verbose hamburger connoisseur and friend to anyone willing to finance his next meal. He also owes Popguy a considerable debt.

Sea Nag

A ruthless sailor, witch, treasure thief, and all-around villain who stranded Popguy and now schemes to ensure Bruto's victory.

Character Fun Facts

Before the performance begins, each guest table receives one Character Fun Fact Card. The cards introduce the suspects, encourage conversation, and give performers natural material for the pre-show mingle.

Popguy has eaten so much mercury-laden fish that he has become immune to most poisons.

Olive reserved a church for thirty-seven years while waiting for Popguy to propose.

Bruto is the very definition of a meathead.

Gimpy garnishes his hamburgers with Dijon mustard, cilantro, and a dash of hemlock.

Sea Nag began her villainous career as a ruthless meter maid.

Sweet Pea is really Reginald Von Sweet Pea III.

Sweethaven is beloved by sailors, especially those who visit Madam Mimi's House of Whoopie.

Key Props, Costumes, and Sound Needs

- Wedding flowers, Olive's veil, and bouquet
- Treasure map and diamonds
- A volleyball
- Spinach container or can

- A dress, babushka, and veil for Bruto
- A hamburger on a plate
- Two stools or milk crates
- Arugula and kale
- A jump rope
- Round One and Round Two cards
- Detective Cards and pens or pencils
- Playback for musical numbers, transitions, fight sequences, and sound effects

ACT ONE

GIMPY and BRUTO enter, taking their places at the far end of the room from the entrance.

SFX: Music – The Bridal March

GIMPY

Bruto, my dear man, why are you not properly attired for your wedding? You have the rest of your life to be a heathen. Why not take the day off?

Bruto growls at Gimpy.

Did you bring the ring?

BRUTO

Of course I brought the ring. Just get this show on the road, Gimpy. I didn't take my first bath this year for nothing.

GIMPY

I didn't mean a bathtub ring. Your sartorial acumen is sorely lacking.

BRUTO

Why can't you talk right? Are you retardant?

GIMPY

Ahem.

[To audience.]

All rise for the bride!

As the audience rises, Gimpy broadly slaps his own forehead.

My word! I almost forgot! First, the flower girl!

The Flower Girl, a pre-selected audience member, rises.

FLOWER GIRL

[An audience member.]

Hold your horses, Reverend. How much does this job pay?

GIMPY

I will gladly pay you Tuesday for your flower-droppings

today.

The Flower Girl goes to the entrance and slowly scatters flowers along the bride's anticipated path.

OLIVE enters with a bridal veil on her head and a bouquet in her hands. She walks down the aisle, muttering.

OLIVE

Ooo, I wish it was Popguy I was marrying. Bruto is so hairy, the only language he speaks is Wookie.

BRUTO

I'm not that hairy! I only shave my forehead every couple of days.

OLIVE

He's so dumb, blonds tell jokes about him.

BRUTO

I don't get it.

OLIVE

He's so ugly, he went to a proctologist and the doctor stuck his finger in his mouth.

BRUTO

It was an honest mistake.

Olive stands next to Bluto and Gimpy.

GIMPY

[To the audience.]

You may return your posteriors to your assigned settees.

CEREMONY RESPONDENTS

[Pre-selected audience members.]

What?

GIMPY

Sit down. You, too, Flower Girl.

The Flower Girl returns to her seat.

Dearly beloved, we are gathered here today in the presence of these witlesses, to join Olive and Bruto in matrimony –

BRUTO

Go Steelers! [Insert local favorite team]

GIMPY

Matrimony – which is deemed to be honorable among almonds – Good heavens, I meant to say “All men” – I am so hungry. Wedlock is not by any to be entered into lightly, but reverently, solemnly, and so forth and so on, yada, yada, yada. Marriage should be treated as one would treat a gourmet hamburger. Can I get an “amen?”

CEREMONY RESPONDENTS

Amen!

GIMPY

Into this holy estate these two persons present now come to be joined. If any person can show just cause why they may not be joined together, let them speak now or forever hold their peas. *[A beat.]* Peace! Peace! I meant to say “peace.”

POPGUY enters.

POPGUY

I gotsk a reason! Olive’s supposed to marry me!

OLIVE

[Staggering towards Gimpy.]

Oh, Popguy!

Olive broadly turns, directly in front of Gimpy, and faints. As she falls, he steps aside, allowing her to land on the floor. All the other characters ignore her.

BRUTO

What kind of scallywag are you – coming in here and ruining my wedding? Are you one of those wedding crushers?

POPGUY

I yam here to claim what’s rightfully mine! Olive!

[To Olive.]

Come here, my little flounder.

OLIVE

[Recovering.]

But Popguy! You’ve been missing for over five years. That’s a lot of missing.

GIMPY

Yes. Everyone assumed you were deceased, old boy.

BRUTO

Mostly, we were hoping you were dead.

POPGUY

Well, I ain't dead!

BRUTO

Yet.

POPGUY

[Under breath.]

A little foreshadowing, eh?

GIMPY

Popguy, you will be glad to know that while you have been missing, I have moved into your house to take care of it. Everything is fine, but you are a little low on groceries.

POPGUY

[Under breath.]

What does he think I am, Grub Hub?

[Aloud, to Gimpy.]

You still owe me –

[Pulling out a piece of paper and reading it.]

– Ten thousand, six hundred forty-five dollars and thirty-seven cents for hamburgers. Pay up! It's past Tuesday.

Gimpy hides behind Bruto.

GIMPY

Who knew a sailor man could be such an accurate accountant?

OLIVE

Popguy, where have you been? I was so worried! I was afraid you were captured by the pirates, but then I realized they were on the road in Milwaukee playing the Brewers.

POPGUY

I was stranded on a deserted island livin' on nothin' but me wits.

OLIVE

Oh, how ever did you survive?

POPGUY

[Under breath.]

That's a little passive-aggressive, ain't it?

[Out loud.]

I went on a voyage with the Sea Nag to find a buried treasure of diamonds. I was going to get to keep one of the diamonds – for an engagement ring – for you, Olive.

OLIVE

A diamond engagement ring for me? Oh, Popguy!

Olive broadly turns, directly in front of Popguy, and falls, while Popguy, oblivious to this and immersed in his own story, steps away, allowing her to land on the floor. All the other characters ignore her. She rises in time to watch the flashback.

POPGUY

It was a treacherous journey! Even though it was five years ago, I can remember it like it was – 20 years ago...

SFX: Flashback 1 (music)

SEA NAG enters.

There's the loot, Sea Nag! A treasure chest full of diamonds! I told you I could read that map.

[Holding up a map.]

All we had to do was sail toward that big "X."

SEA NAG

Excellent! I'm rich!

[Fondling diamonds]

I'm rich! I'm rich! I'm rich! Now I can afford to get a bikini wax!

[To audience.]

Keep that image in your head until dinner.

POPGUY THE SAILOR MAN

POPGUY

Now I gets to pick out one diamond to give to my sweetheart,
Olive – right?

SEA NAG

[Away from him.]

Now that I have the diamonds, I don't see why I need him.

POPGUY

What did you say?

SEA NAG

I said: I don't know what I'd do without you.

POPGUY

Well, shucks, every voyage needs a seasoned seafarer like
me. Seasoned with sea salt.

SEA NAG

True. Say – over the side of the ship – is that a person in the
water?

POPGUY

[Leaning over, in front of Sea Nag.]

Ahoy! Do we have a man overboard?

SEA NAG

[Kicking Popguy overboard.]

We do now.

Popguy exits, falling.

SFX: Splash! (or Popguy makes a splash sound)

I had to push him overboard. It's in the Villains' Code.

[Evil laugh.]

Ah ha ha ha ha ha ha ha! [Exit.]

SFX: Flashback 2 (music)

Popguy enters.

BRUTO

Ha ha ha! You let a woman get the best of you! Where's your
skirt, Mary?

POPGUY

[To Bruto.]

You tub o' lard! Stop interrupting my flashback!

[Out loud.]

So, there I was – floating in the ocean. I had no choice but to swim to the nearest desolate island.

[Under breath.]

I think it was Wheeling Island. [Substitute local island]

[Out loud.]

I was all alone. Nobody else there. That's why my forearms are so muscular.

[Aside.]

It ain't what you're thinking. I got these arms playin' the slots.

[At large again.]

I didn't have nobody until this volleyball washed up on shore...

SFX: Flashback 3 (music)

[Picking up a pre-set volleyball.]

I drew a face on it and called it –

[Turning the ball to see the name brand]

– Spalding? – Anyways, I found myself talking to it, like it was a real person.

VOLLEYBALL

[An audience member.]

But I **am** a real person, Popguy.

POPGUY

What was that?

[Under breath.]

That's a little creepy if you ask me.

VOLLEYBALL

It's me, Popguy. Your only friend. Spalding. Spalding the Volleyball.

POPGUY THE SAILOR MAN

POPGUY

[Under his breath.]

Well, at least it's a name brand.

[Discarding the ball, to Olive.]

And then one day, after five long years, I was walking along the beach and I saw it.

[Resuming his flashback.]

Hey! Look over there! It's a ship headed this way!

[Jumping up and down, waving arms.]

Ahoy! Help! S.O.S.! Rescue a fellow sailor here!

SFX: Music – “The Love Boat” theme

Well, blow me down. What kinda fancy ship is this?

CAPTAIN STEUBINGVILLE

[An audience member.]

Ahoy! I am Captain Steubingville! Welcome to the Love Boat where it's all about love, Popguy!

POPGUY

I'm not into that Kinko's stuff.

CAPTAIN STEUBINGVILLE

No, no, my nautical friend. We believe in pure, true love. And it won't cost you \$6.95 per minute.

POPGUY

Well, Olive is me sweetheart and me sweetheart is in Sweethaven.

CAPTAIN STEUBINGVILLE

I'll take you there! That's out next stop. We have to pick up our guest stars, Zsa Zsa Gabor and Red Buttons.

SFX: Flashback 4 (music)

POPGUY

Olive, I did everything I could to get a message to you. I sent out carrier pigeons. I tried carrier dolphins. I even gave a note to a fish named Nemo.

OLIVE

[Producing a bottle with a curled piece of paper sticking out

the top.] I did get this message in a bottle. It said “Help! I’m a castaway on a dessert island!”

POPGUY

That’s **desert** island!

GIMPY

[Examining the note.]

Yes, you clearly wrote two “s”-es in “dessert.”

During the following, Gimpy quietly exits.

OLIVE

I thought you were marooned on a hot fudge sundae.

BRUTO

I heard enough of this fiddle-faddle!

[To Popguy.]

You can’t just come busting in on my wedding with all your flashbacks!

[Pulling Olive to his side.]

Olive’s marrying me! Right now.

OLIVE

Ooo, how forceful!

POPGUY

She’s marrying me!

[Pulling Olive by one arm.]

Olive’s always been my gal!

OLIVE

Ahh, so powerful!

BRUTO

[Pulling Olive’s other arm.]

Not for the last five years, she ain’t been!

OLIVE

Oww, so painful.

Bruto and Popguy are now in a tug-of-war with Olive’s arms.

POPGUY

She's mine!

OLIVE

Mmm, so assertive!

BRUTO

She's mine!

OLIVE

Oh! I feel like taffy!

BRUTO

Let her go, squid breath! Olive's got to be married today –
and she's marrying me!

POPGUY

Hold on, ya bilge rat! Olive, why do you have to get married
right now? Are you in a familiar way?

OLIVE

Oh, Popguy, I'll tell you, but it's going to call for another
flashback. Even though it was only yesterday, I can
remember it like it was – 20 years ago...

SFX: Flashback 5 (music)

A government representative came to my door.

*Sea Nag enters. Olive and Sea Nag pantomime the
described action during the flashback.*

POPGUY

Hey! Wait a minute! What is the Sea Nag doing in your
flashback?

SEA NAG

[To Popguy.]

I had to take a government job when I found out that the
diamonds we stole were really cubic zirconia. Now, get out of
this flashback.

[As Popguy steps back, to Olive.]

Are you Miss Olive Mohel, guardian of a child named Sweat
Pea?

OLIVE

Oh, yes. Has Sweat Pea won an award at school? Has he been voted class president? Is he the homecoming queen?

SEA NAG

I'm from Child Neglective Services, and I have an order to remove Sweat Pea from your home, due to unsafe conditions.

OLIVE

Unsafe?

SEA NAG

Miss Mohl, yesterday, you let Sweat Pea crawl out of an upstairs window, over power lines across a pit of hot lava, through a nuclear waste dump and into a lion's den at the zoo.

OLIVE

He loves kitties.

SEA NAG

I have a court order to take Sweat Pea from your home unless you can prove that you will provide a more stable environment. And no, living in a lifeboat does not constitute a stable environment.

OLIVE

Don't worry. We're moving into an abandoned shipping crate down by the pier. It's ocean view!

SEA NAG

What I mean by a stable environment would be like, for instance, getting married.

OLIVE

I've got to be married to keep Sweat Pea?

SEA NAG

You have 24 hours, Miss Mohl, to get your trousseau.

[Evil laugh.]

Ah ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!

[To audience.]

I have reached the pinnacle of witchery! I'm a government bureaucrat! Ah ha ha ha ha ha ha ha! [Exit.]

SFX: Flashback 6 (music)

OLIVE

So, you see, Popguy, I have to get married right away.

POPGUY

[On his knee.]

I'll marry you right now, Olive!

BRUTO

No! You promised me!

OLIVE

That's true. I betrothed you.

BRUTO

That's right. You hypnotized me, you string bean seductress.

POPGUY

But I wanna marry you, Olive!

OLIVE

Why?

POPGUY

Huh?

OLIVE

Why? Why do you want to marry me, Popguy?

POPGUY

Because you're my sweetheart! You're my gal. You're my hubba hubba.

OLIVE

Yes, but, do you love me?

POPGUY

Sure, I guess so.

[Under his breath.]

She's always asking me the hard questions.

OLIVE

You "guess so?" What does that mean? Do you love me or not? Can you say it to me? Can you say – out loud – "Olive, I love you"?

POPGUY THE SAILOR MAN

POPGUY

*[Slurring and stammering.]*Olive, I ---- lo---- lo---- *[A beat.]* I ---- lo---- lo--
--

BRUTO

Ha! Ha! Ha! He's got – what 'cha call it? – a speech pedicure.

SFX: Music – “I’m So Excited”

OLIVE

Oh my. I'm torn between two brutes. I love Popguy, but he's non-committal. And I love Bruto, but can I commit to a guy who should be committed? I've got to figure this out today! Whatever will I do?

[Pause.]

I know! Sing!

*[Singing.]*Today's the day I'm gonna make it happen
Today's the day I think I will decide
Who will I love and show all my affection
I'm hopin' for those pleasures in the night*[Singing, to Popguy.]*I want to love you, feel you
Wrap myself around you*[Singing, to Bruto.]*I want to squeeze you, please you
I just can't get enough*[Singing, to both.]*But if you move too slow, I'll let you go
I'm undecided and I just can't hide it
I'm about to lose control and I think I like it
I'm undecided, and I just can't hide it
And I know, I know, I know, I know,
I know I want you... or maybe you.***SFX: Music ends****Gimpy enters.*

GIMPY

It appears that I have missed the musical interlude. If I might make a suggestion... Perhaps you can settle this dispute with a good old-fashion bout of fisticuffs.

POPGUY

I'd rather just beat him up.

BRUTO

You're on! Winner marries Olive.

GIMPY

Excellent! We will commence the fight immediately after dinner. I do hope they are serving hamburgers tonight.

SFX: Music – “Rocky” Theme (Gonna Fly Now)

SEA NAG

[Enter.]

All right, Bruto!

[Handing him a jump-rope.]

If you're gonna take Popguy down, you're gonna eat lightning and crap thunder!

BRUTO

[Starting to jump rope.]

You've been watching “Rocky” again, haven't you?

OLIVE

[Going to Bruto and swooning.]

Oh, Bruto! You're so – physical!

SEA NAG

Faster! Recite it!

BRUTO

[Jumping.]

I'm a little Dutch girl – Dressed in blue –
These are the things – I like to do:
Salute to the captain – Courtesy to the queen –
Beat Popguy 'til I break his spleen.

OLIVE

[Swooning.]

Oh, Bruto! You're so poetic!

POPGUY

I can do some training, too.

[Starting to jog.]

Look here Olive! I can go forwards and backwards!

[Jogging backwards.]
I yam amber-dextrous!

OLIVE
[Going to Popguy and swooning.]
Oh, Popguy! You're so – athletic!

SEA NAG
[Corralling the audience member.]
All right, Bruto, now try the punching bag!

The pre-selected audience member (a man) stands. Bruto mock punches his head multiple times as he responds.

OLIVE
[Going to Bruto and swooning.]
Oh, Bruto! You're so – strong!

GIMPY
[To Popguy.]
Why not lift some weights, my boy? Tighten up the old gluteus maximus.

POPGUY
Look here Olive! I can lift this dumbbell!

OLIVE
You can lift Bruto?

POPGUY
[Trying to lift a very heavy weight.]
Uggh!

[Under breath.]
Stubborn, aren't you?

[Trying again.]
Uggh!

[Under breath.]
Maybe it's glued to the floor or something.

[Trying again.]
Uggh!

[To Gimpy.]

POPGUY THE SAILOR MAN

Me muskles are flaggin'. Gimpy, get me spinach!

GIMPY

I assume that you will gladly pay me Tuesday for your spinach today?

POPGUY

[Under breath.]

Bargaining with me, eh?

[Out loud.]

You already owes me \$10,645 –

OLIVE

And 37 cents.

POPGUY

You got until the end of the show to pay up. Now, just hands me the spinach, will ya?

Gimpy gives Popguy the spinach. As Popguy begins to dump the spinach down his throat –

SFX: Music – The Spinach Theme (1)

Popguy's triceps appear grow as the theme plays, and he struts around. Popguy goes back to the heavy weight and lifts it easily.

SEA NAG

So! That's what gives him his power!

BRUTO

What? The theme song?

SEA NAG

No, you cod-faced fish gizzard! The spinach gives him his super strength!

BRUTO

Spinach gives me gas.

SFX: Music – “Eye of the Tiger (parody)”

Popguy, still at the pantomime barbell, lifts it in synchronization with the music, mugging and doing

ridiculous tricks with it.

SEA NAG

Moron! During the fight, if he eats his spinach it will be your finish. So don't get skittish. We'll steal his spinach.

BRUTO

When?

SEA NAG

Right after dinner. Which immediately follows this song.

POPGUY

[Under his breath.]

Not a very subtle transition to the song is it?

OLIVE

[Swooning.]

Oh, Popeye, are you going to sing?

Olive falls to the floor. No one responds.

POPGUY

[Singing.]

Listen up, (I was) lost out at sea – Did my time, took my chances

Olive rises.

OLIVE

[Singing.]

Oops I fell down! Now I'm back on my feet –
Just a girl and her will to survive

GIMPY

[Singing.]

I have to eat – I'm not one to fast –
I have a passion for burgers

SEA NAG

[Singing.]

Don't lose your grip on the dreams of the past –
You must fight just to scheme and connive

POPGUY

[Singing.]

I'm Popguy I'm a fighter – It's the thrill of the fight
Rising up to the challenge of my rival

BRUTO

[Singing.]

And the last known survivor wins his woman tonight
And I will defeat –

POPGUY

[Singing.]

Popguy! I'm the fighter!

All except Popguy exit.

We'll be back after you chow your grub. I hope you like
squid. *[Exit.]*

End of Act One