Superman Movie Short Review

By Nicole

Intro

"Real Power can't be given – it must be taken"

- The Godfather III

The exact type of person who has all the power in the real world (i.e., a billionaire) is someone who leveraged other people to their advantage. Essentially, a powerful person is almost never a good person. They may do good things from time to time, but the main idea is that people get powerful because they clawed it away from the people they deemed lesser. This is who Lex Luthor represents.

Superman's whole bit is that he's a man who was given power. He represents what'd happen when a good man, who wasn't corrupted by the struggle to gain the power to enact change on his world, is given that exact power. A good man with the strength of a god vs. a man who ripped that strength from the people beneath him – that's the core of the conflict between Lex Luthor and Superman.

However, this makes Superman a challenging character to write. If the nigh-invincible man *also* has unquestionably good morals, how do you make a compelling movie?

The actual review

The short, more general review: The movie's great. It's a Superhero movie that isn't afraid to be a Superhero movie – no irony, no deconstruction, nothing edgy for edginess' sake. Comic book insanity that other movies would lampshade or brush aside are happily displayed onscreen. From Guy Gardner's stupid haircut

to Lex Luthor creating an entire pocket dimension to imprison his exes and a hundred monkeys pretending to be twitter bots, the entire movie symbolizes Superman's sincerity.

A movie where the morality of the main character isn't up for question sounds boring as hell. The film flips that premise around – instead, Superman challenges everyone else's morality against his own.

The scene where Lois "interviews" Superman communicates this point very well. He's *pissed* that he's being scrutinized for stopping Boravia's military from invading Jarhanpur, and he can't understand why the rest of the world is so unwilling to do the right thing. He doesn't care about the geopolitical climate or about how stopping a war would impact the world's economy - all he knows is that a bunch of people were gonna get crushed by a nearly unstoppable military force and he couldn't just let it happen.

This idea is also communicated in more subtle ways – for instance, the part where Superman breaks into Lex Luthor's office. The doesn't come yelling about Lex breaking into his house or even the fact that he got slandered and had the entire world turned against him. He just wants to know if the dog is ok. It isn't even his dog, and that says so much about him.

Of course, there's a risk that the movie would come across as preachy if it were just Superman lecturing everyone about his "superior" morality system. Thankfully for everyone, Superman's actions speak a *lot* louder than his words.

Every action scene says so much about his mindset. During the Kaiju fight, he's working to minimize casualties. His entire fighting style changes because this ginormous dinosaur is in a populated area. The part where he says "eyes up here" and flies high up wasn't just him being funny/cheesy – instead, it's how he draws

fire away from the people in nearby buildings. In contrast, his fighting style when the entire city's been evacuated is a lot looser – he can finally stop holding back because nobody's gonna get put at risk. The revelation that "Ultraman" is his clone resulting in him fighting even harder fits – he needs to hold back against essentially everyone he fights, but he *knows* that he doesn't need to hold back if he's fighting himself.

Superman leading by example works so well partly because it leads to meaningful action scenes – it also manages to spur other people into doing the right thing. The Justice Gang obviously doesn't really care as much about saving people's lives as seen in the Kaiju attack, but Superman's bravery gets them to stop Boravia's invasion. Same could be said for the people of Jarhanpur standing up for themselves right that climactic scene.

Here, Lex Luthor works well because his actions also bring out the best in other people – but only because he's such an awful person. Metamorpho doesn't turn because of Superman's words. Instead, he turns because Lex killed an innocent man to get information out of Superman. Similarly, Eve only turns against Lex and gives Jimmy the intel he needs to completely dismantle Lexcorp because Lex was just a complete asshole.

Part of me was expecting that Lois would be used as leverage against Superman. It'd also parallel Metamorpho's kid being used as leverage to keep Superman trapped in the pocket dimension. After further reflection, I've figured out why they didn't include anything like that scene. The whole point is that Superman's goodness was never truly up for debate. He'd just find a way to save Lois along with everyone else. Additionally, it's why they don't really dwell on the message from Superman's Kryptonian parents. The message could be faked (and I really like that the second half sounds exactly like Lex Luthor's own philosophy

towards humanity) or it could be real. In the end, it never really mattered what they sent him here to do – all that matters is that Superman's decided do as much good as he can.

My one criticism of the film is Superman's final speech towards Lex Luthor. It isn't bad at all. It's completely in character for both Lex and Superman and it might've been weirder if Superman didn't say anything. However, the entire rest of the movie embodies Superman's humanity and commitment towards serving the people of earth much more elegantly, by literally showing us his priorities through his actions. And that's Superman's greatest strength.

Bonus Thoughts

I couldn't find a great way to fit this into the review, but I still wanted to talk about it.

This film might not have worked a decade ago, but this was the *perfect* time to drop a movie where Superman's unquestionably good. "Evil Superman" is a subversion of Superman's goodness, but at some point, the "subversion" became the norm. Homelander from The Boys, Injustice Superman, and even Zack Snyder's Superman – everyone's had a shot at "evil superman", so now it's what audiences have come to expect. It's a subversion of a subversion.