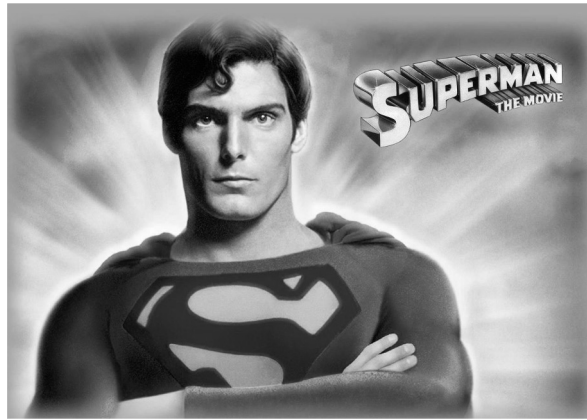


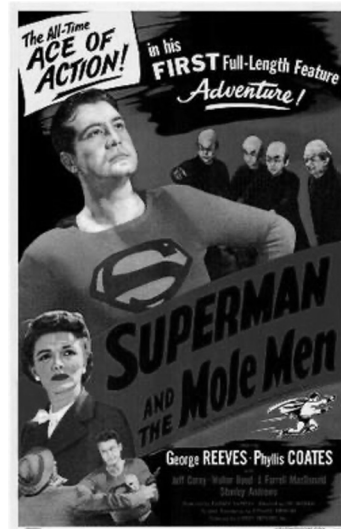
Superman (1978)



1

Background

- Superman on the screen
- 1st appeared in cartoon serial during WWII
- 1st live action depiction was after war
 - serial in 1948 (*Superman*)
 - Second serial in 1950 (*Atom Man vs. Superman*)
 - Superman played by Kirk Alyn (1910-1999)
 - had basic structure of later stories (Lois Lane, *Daily Planet*, etc.)
- 1st motion picture:
 - *Superman and the Mole Men*, 1951) [46:00-]
 - Superman played by George Reeves (37)
 - Lois Lane by Phyllis Coates (24)
 - low-budget movie
- led to 3rd TV show in early 1950s: *Adventures of Superman* [14:00]
- Reeves gained popularity through reruns in 1950s and 1960s



2

Superman (1978)

- Produced by father and son team: Alexander and Ilya Salkind
- Director: Richard Donner
- Story: Mario Puzo
 - author of *The Godfather*
- Stars: Christopher Reeve, Margot Kidder
 - Gene Hackman, Marlon Brando
- Most expensive film made up to that point: \$55 million
- Reception
 - 2nd highest grossing movie of the year (\$300 million worldwide)
 - behind *Grease*
 - contemporary reviews very positive
 - Rotten Tomatoes: 94%

3

Questions

- Was it faithful to the original comic book?
 - see Reynolds, pp. 104-
- How was Krypton depicted?
- How was his childhood depicted?
- How was 'Metropolis' depicted?
- How was *The Daily Planet* depicted?
- Lex Luthor?
- Lois Lane?
- What kind of special effects were principally used? [10:00-17:20]
 - full-scale and miniature models
 - flying riggings
 - blue screen
 - front projection
- Do you think there is a relationship between the ability to depict superhero activity on screen and the effectiveness of the movie?
- Do you see any archetypes or tropes established in the movie that influenced later comic book movies?

4

Questions

1. As the first major comic book movie of the modern era, what archetypes of the “superhero” do you think the movie established?
2. How do you think the director of the movie established differences between Superman and Clark Kent in the movie? Highlight visual differences as well as those made through sound and script.
3. What kind of non-comic book cultural and movie influences do you see in the movie?

5

Questions

- Overall thoughts on casting of Christopher Reeve as Superman & Clark Kent?
 - Tom Brennan: The real reason that the movie works—and it does work, for the most part, even when you rewatch it 40 years later—is Christopher Reeve, the then-unknown actor chosen to play Superman. I don’t know whether Reeve is an exact fit for the comic book version of Superman or whether my own personal image of Superman is just colored by this Reeve version being around for my entire life, but it’s hard to imagine any other actor embodying that strange mix of brawny handsomeness, charming sincerity, and physical comedy. As Clark Kent, Reeve is a gracefully screwball bumbler, and as Superman, he’s a warm and sheltering presence. The list of actors who almost got the Superman role is long and hilarious: Dustin Hoffman! Sylvester Stallone! Burt Reynolds! Paul Newman! (My favorite sentence from the movie’s Wikipedia page: “Both Neil Diamond and Arnold Schwarzenegger lobbied hard for the role, but were ignored.”) But after watching Reeve in the role, it’s hard to imagine anyone else playing it, even though the fact that the 6-foot-4 Reeve towers over everyone else in the cast makes it even *more* improbable that nobody would’ve figured out Kent and Superman were one and the same. The main problem that subsequent screen Supermans Brandon Routh and Henry Cavill have had is that they’re just not Christopher Reeve
- Lois Lane in the movie?
- Overall thoughts about Superman as a character?
 - as a do-gooder:
 - as a Christ-like figure?
- Overall thoughts on the movie?

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