

'Batman v Superman' Packs A Punch, But It's No Marvel

Putting the two most iconic comic book characters mano-a-mano on the big screen for the first time should be a guaranteed knockout for fan boys and action-movie fans.

But like a heavyweight fight filled with hype and hoopla, *Batman v. Superman: Dawn of Justice* features more flash and dash rather than substance and something special. Despite extensive spiritual overtones about a god-like superhero and Messiah figure, the movie is also not very family friendly with its dark and brooding elements, as well as jarring violence (see Content Watch below for details).

For the most part a glorified sequel to 2013's *Man of Steel*, the movie launches a series of "DC Comics Extended Universe" movies from Warner Bros., including later this year with *Suicide Squad* and next year with *Wonder Woman* and *Justice League Part I*.

Directed by Zack Snyder, who was also behind *Man of Steel*, *Batman v. Superman* stars Ben Affleck as Bruce Wayne/Batman and Henry Cavill as Clark Kent/Superman, as well as Gal Gadot as Wonder Woman, Amy Adams as Lois Lane and Jesse Eisenberg as Lex Luthor.

Batman v. Superman takes place after the events of *Man of Steel*, when Superman becomes the most controversial figure in the world following his battle against fellow Krypton, General Zod, which caused the city of Metropolis to be razed to the ground.

While many still see Superman as an emblem of hope, a growing number of people consider him a threat to humanity—seeking justice for the chaos he has brought to Earth.

In fact, to Gotham City's Bruce Wayne, Superman is clearly a danger to society. He fears for the future of the world with such a reckless power left ungoverned, and so he dons his mask and cape to right Superman's wrongs.

The rivalry between them is furious, fueled by bitterness and vengeance, and nothing can prevent them from a collision course. Added to the tension is a dark new threat in the form of a third man, who has a power greater than either of them to endanger the world and cause total destruction.

Far from a faith-based film, *Batman v. Superman* repeatedly broaches the subject of God. Quirky and borderline overbearing, Eisenberg's Lex Luthor offers some curious speeches about how Superman plays into myths about religion and godly powers.

"We know better now, don't we?" Luthor asks. "Devils don't come from hell beneath us. They come from the sky."

Later, the film's main villain tells Superman: "And now, you will fly to him, and you will battle him ... to the death. Black and blue, fight night! The greatest gladiator match in the history of the world. God versus man. Day versus night! Son of Krypton versus Bat of Gotham!"

Luthor also says: "If man won't kill God, the devil will do it!"

Rated PG-13, *Batman v. Superman* clocks in at 153 minutes, featuring lots of destructive and action-packed scenes, as well as special effects that are big and spectacular.

Overall, the film has well grim, dark and serious tone. Affleck told the media that he would not take his young son to the film because it could give him nightmares, which means that *Batman v Superman* might be off limits to families with younger children.

"I'll have to con one of the editors into giving me a truncated version of the movie without some of the scarier stuff," Affleck said.

On the down side, the movie is practically devoid of humor or levity, except for Lex Luthor's unfunny quips and some brief one-liners during the film's climax. Speaking of which, Wonder Woman practically steals the show from Batman and Superman with her glorified cameo during the battle sequence.

With *Batman v. Superman*, Warner Bros. hopes to go toe to toe with rival Marvel Studio's unparalleled cinematic gold mine of comic book characters turned film franchises. With a staggering \$250 million budget, the film is expected to generate as much as \$150 million when it hits 4,200 screens domestically this weekend, and more than \$300 million globally when it rolls out across more than 60 major territories, including China, the world's second biggest market for film.

"This is basically their Avengers," Jeff Bock, a box office analyst with Exhibitor Relations, told *The Hollywood Reporter*. "There's a ton of buzz about it. They need to open bigger than any DC Comics film ever has."

But as *The Hollywood Reporter* succinctly pointed out in its review, *Batman v. Superman* "may be imposing, but it's not fun." Translation: *Batman v. Superman* packs a wallop, but it's no marvel.

Content Watch: *Batman v Superman* is rated PG-13 for sequences of violence and action throughout, and some sensuality. The violence isn't gory, but it's graphic and jarring at times for a superhero flick. The picture opens with Bruce Wayne's parents being murdered and then cuts to *Man of Steel*'s climax with an even greater emphasis on civilians dying and children watching their parents get blown up. There are also a flurry of brutally violent action sequences (point-blank executions, sex trafficking victims in cages, etc.) and grim testimonials

about the collateral damage that Superman allegedly causes. Additionally, there are scary scenes with demon-like creatures, which will definitely scare young kids. The sensuality involves an unmarried couple getting in a tub together, and one of the main characters is shown getting out of bed with someone who is not his wife. The movie features several expletives, while God's and Jesus' names are used in vain a handful of times. When it comes out on DVD later this year, *Batman v Superman* will feature a R-rated version for its increased violence but no nudity, which will be a half-hour longer than the theatrical release.{eo}