

Comic Book Writer Urges Hollywood To Make 'Man of Steel' PG

Are superhero movies becoming too dark? With the release of *Iron Man 3* and the upcoming Superman reboot *Man of Steel*, some are worried about what these movies might be communicating about reality.

Greg Rucka, who's written both Superman and Batman comics, recently commented on Superman, heroism and recent Hollywood fads with superhero movies.

He urged Hollywood to tone down the movie's apparent PG-13 and make the movie PG, saying, "I just know that if you make a Superman movie you can't take kids to, you've done something wrong."

In a recent column in *The Hollywood Reporter*, Rucka also wrote, "For many, the difficulty with Superman isn't heat vision or flight, or even that a slouch and a pair of glasses in no way make a viable disguise. Their disconnect arises from his very character, the idea that a person who can do so much, who can have so much, would be selfless rather than self-serving. They reject that kind of heroism in fantasy, because they claim it doesn't exist in reality."

To that kind of warped thinking, Rucka replied, "Look back at Boston and West, Texas, at those men and women of flesh, blood, bone and heart, who ran into fire and terror rather than away from it, and then tell me if that holds water."

He added, "Words like *realism* and *dark* and *gritty* get bandied about Hollywood as if the only merit a story can have is in its verisimilitude, but that's a lie. Emotional honesty transcends reality; it's what allows disbelief to be

suspended, and yet what makes a story stay true. When *Superman: The Movie* was released [in 1979], Richard Donner promised us we'd believe a man could fly. We did, but it wasn't the wire-work alone."

It's no secret that the studios have been rebranding superheroes like Batman, Superman and even Spider-Man to reach a demographic wider than just young boys. Creative filmmakers like David Goyer and Christopher Nolan, who developed both the Batman trilogy and the upcoming *Man of Steel*, purposefully inserted more adult themes. Even so, the most recent Batman trilogy was full of fantastic themes and messages that made it wonderful entertainment for adults and older children. The allegedly "old-fashioned" good vs. evil, idealistic hope in something greater that children were inspired by in the past have been replaced with moral ambiguity and a certain amount of social pessimism.

This isn't to say that there haven't been good superhero role models. Characters like Captain America, Thor and even Iron Man have brought viewers great heroic values. Hopefully, *Man of Steel* will stay true to what made Superman such a great hero for kids—his uncompromising justice and earnest altruism.

"Superman is precisely what we should be teaching our children," Rucka added. "Superman inspires us to our best. I haven't seen *Man of Steel*, haven't read the script, and I've assiduously avoided spoilers. I genuinely don't know if this 'reality' will be present or not. I want it to be brilliant. I want it to be glorious. I want it to be inspiring. I am keeping the faith.

"But that PG-13 on *Man of Steel* is making me nervous. I don't know what it means. I don't know if it's a warning that there's another k-shiv coming for the kidneys, or if it's just the cost-of-doing-business, or even if it's an MPAA-bias against all superhero violence. I don't know if this is a genuine caution to parents, or a marketing decision aimed at a

demographic too-cool for Superman's brand of hope and idealism, yet embracing of Batman's self-loathing rough justice, to assure them their ticket will be money well-spent. I don't know if that PG-13 is there out of sincerity or cynicism or politics."

In that light, it should be noted that, beyond an occasional animated movie like *The Incredibles* or *Monsters vs. Aliens*, Movieguide hasn't been able to OK an action movie for children aged 8-12, much less children aged 3-7, for years now.

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