

Review: New Superman Reboot Shifts Focus From the Super to the Man

The beloved comic book superhero Superman returns in *Man of Steel*, the highly anticipated rebooted version of the icon.

The film begins on Krypton, with the birth of Kal-El, the first natural birth in centuries on the advanced planet. We quickly find out that Krypton is in trouble, as the planet's inhabitants have used up all its resources, and it is about to explode.

Superman's parents, Jor-El (Russell Crowe) and Lara, have made special preparations to save their son from the dying planet, sending him off in a spaceship to the planet Earth. This enrages General Zod, who is in the midst of trying to take over the doomed planet. He kills Jor-El and is then sentenced with his fellow officers to the Phantom Zone.

Years later, Clark Kent (Henry Cavill), aka Kal-El, is living a humble life as a blue-collar worker, but he can't seem to stop himself from using his superhuman abilities to save the day. Through flashbacks, we see him as a young boy in Kansas struggling with his newfound X-ray vision, and as an adolescent not comprehending why it's a bad thing that he saved a busload of kids in danger.

Then, in a far-too-big coincidence, Clark stumbles upon a ship where he meets the hologram version of his Kryptonian father and learns his true identity. The young man, who has spent years not knowing where he came from or why he has special abilities, finally learns about his true heritage—and even discovers his capability to fly.

But Clark's discovery does not come without consequences, as

the plucky *Daily Planet* reporter Lois Lane (Amy Adams) is determined to find out who her mystery savior is, who mysteriously disappeared at the same time a spacecraft rocketed away from a mountain. She tracks him down to his hometown in Kansas, where he tells her why he's kept himself hidden.

"My father believed if the world found out who I really was, it'd reject me. He was convinced that the world wasn't ready. What do you think?" he asks Lois after sharing how his father died in a tornado while sacrificially saving others' lives.

Though the movie is paced fairly slowly up to this point, it picks up when General Zod and his team take over the world's airwaves.

"Your world has sheltered one of my citizens," Zod announces. "He will look like you, but he is not one of you. To those of you who know his location, the fate of your planet rests in your hands. To Kal-El, I say this: Surrender within 24 hours, or watch this world suffer the consequences."

Clark wrestles with whether or not to turn himself in. He doesn't want to cause any harm to the planet where he was raised, but he also doesn't trust Zod.

"Sometimes you have to take a leap of faith first," a priest he seeks advice from tells him. "The trust part comes later."

What follows is a roller coaster of action and suspense as Clark, Lois and the U.S. military take on Zod and his army of aliens.

Man of Steel's incredible visual effects and interesting storytelling techniques make up for its lack of character development. And though the violence is heavy, the movie contains positive elements as well. Clark is raised to be a morally good person by a father who gives up his life for others. His birth parents also gave up their lives for him,

and the symbol he wears on his chest stands for hope. At the ironic age of 33, Clark harnesses his powers for the good of mankind and protects the people he was sent to live among. His actions unquestionably mirror those of Jesus, and his goodness inherently overcomes the evil General Zod.

Content Watch: With a PG-13 rating and the Dark Knight trilogy's Christopher Nolan as a producer, *Man of Steel* is darker than previous Superman movies. Extreme caution is advised for young children. There are some curse words, including "d-k" as a crude put-down, and "Oh my God" is uttered several times. There is no sexual content, besides a kiss between Clark and Lois and a slightly revealing outfit worn by Lara. As expected in a superhero movie, violence is a large element. *Man of Steel* takes it to a new level, though. Superman is thrown around like a rag doll while facing two alien soldiers from Zod's army, and they relentlessly attack the military and anyone who comes in their path. Later, Zod and his gang ruthlessly attack Metropolis. Buildings crumble as citizens run screaming for their lives, and a lot of death and destruction are left in their wake. [SPOILER ALERT] Also—something that will likely upset Superman purists—Clark deliberately kills someone. Though it is a villain and Superman does so to save innocent people, it is an unlikely and upsetting event.