

The Adventures of Superman



My last posting regarding the death of 'The Adventures of Superman' star George Reeves resulted in my reminiscing about my childhood love of this particular Superman/Clark Kent. 'The Adventures of Superman' is an interesting mix of adventure and plain silliness. The result is that there is something for almost everyone. The series started out as an adventure series aimed more at adults than children. In the beginning the series had an almost film noir quality about it; there were real mysteries and realistic (for the time) dangers. Superman may have saved the day, but the stories themselves would have fit well in almost any of the detective shows of the era. If you like a good story and don't mind the cheesy special effects of the time, check out the first season of 'The Adventures of Superman'. Once you get past the Superman origins episode you will find some good half hour mysteries.

After the first year the producers realized that the strongest audience for the 'The Adventures of Superman' was children and they began the process of transitioning the series to a lighter more 'kid friendly' style. By the end of the second year 'The Adventures of Superman' had become a children's show with stories and situations that had as much comedy as adventure in them. They were still entertaining, albeit in a different way. Sadly the characters were becoming more of a parody of themselves as the series ran on; all of them that is, except one. He remained as intelligent and thoughtful as he was in the beginning. I'm not speaking of Superman, but his alter ego Clark Kent.

George Reeves was my first live action Superman. He was not the first film Superman and there have been a number of other actors who portrayed the Man of Steel since- Christopher Reeve, Dean Cain, Brandon Routh, Tom Welling, and others down to the upcoming Henry Cavill. Is any one of them better than the other? As Superman, no not really, though the special effects have certainly gotten better. For me, Superman is a throwaway part. Superman is a one dimensional character with few real overtones. The real strength of character is found not in the Man of Steel, but in Clark Kent, mild mannered reporter, and how he relates to being Superman. Somehow over the years 'mild mannered' has turned into 'buffoon' in the movies, or a love struck reporter ala 'Lois and Clark,' or teen angst as in 'Smallville.' I guess to be fair though 'Smallville' was about a teenager, so some teen angst is to be expected. As the role of Clark Kent has been portrayed in the movies in recent years I would have fired him as an ineffectual, bumbling reporter, had I been his editor. George Reeves was not my ideal Superman, but he was and still is my ideal Clark Kent. If you watch the first season Clark is an effective, but polite reporter who was fully capable of hard reporting, and mystery solving even without using his super powers. He was respected by the police and his opinions were even sought out by them. You won't see that happening with the more recent Clark Kents. If there had been no Superman, you could have easily created a mystery series using George Reeves' intelligent and resourceful reporter Clark Kent.

Posted by Keith C. on June 3, 2013

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