Superman ?????

I guess it's movie season, because this week I watched both Elio and Superman, and during the movies, I didn't look at my clock or wonder when they were going to end even once. It's a nice feeling. The 1978 Superman movie was one of my favorite movies growing up, and apparently James Gunn is also a 1978 Superman fan, because even though the movie avoids all the cringey nostalgia traps, it still hit some hidden nostalgia button in me. Perhaps the most obvious is that John Williams' Superman theme is played often, almost too often, and yet each time I heard it I felt like cheering as I watched Superman triumph over the baddies. The movie also puts Superman in a universe more akin to his golden age comics than the dark universe that Zach Snyder created for the character. It's a refreshing take. Sometimes it feels maybe a bit too cartoony, but it doesn't sacrifice emotional depth. I do have some complaints on that front, though.

Towards the beginning of the movie, there is a scene where Lois Lane (who is already dating Superman, and already knows his secret identity) is interviewing him, and asking some tough questions about his recent actions where Superman essentially scares and bullies a fictional political leader in order to prevent a war. Superman gets angry at Lois, and doesn't see that he's done anything wrong, because his objective was to prevent deaths from war. But he doesn't really address Lois' concerns that he may have stirred up more trouble by taking things into his own hands. When I saw this scene, I was very happy. I like how this Superman can get angry, and be human. I think this highlights how being empathetic can lead to anger, and being angry can cause those who see the angry person as being a bad person, justifying and solidifying their own beliefs. I expected that Superman would have a character arc where him taking action without considering the broader impact of his actions would lead to some kind of conundrum that he would have to solve by not letting his anger guide his actions, showing to the world that he is in fact the best person for the job of protecting Earth. That didn't happen. He does get into trouble, but that trouble essentially starts a different arc, where he has to consider his heritage, and who has more influence on him, his biological parents, or the parents that raised him. I don't think this is necessarily a bad arc, but because the movie sort of started with one arc and then shifted to the other arc, it didn't do either arc as well as it could have. He got angry one more time, and it did seem to add to people having a negative view of him, but it didn't feel like he did anything different to change that view. He just saves the world like he would do anyway, and all was forgiven, by the world, and by Lois.

Regardless of this major flaw, which does set this movie back by one star in my opinion, I still highly recommend this movie. I feel like James Gunn gets Superman in a way that I haven't seen in a while. I enjoyed all the supporting characters as well, including Lois Lane and Jimmy Olsen as well as Lex Luthor and his team of goons and cronies. (I appreciated the inclusion of Otis as a henchman of Luthor, a nod to Luthor's henchman in the 1978 film.) This Lex Luthor does feel like a real threat, like he's one step ahead of Superman the whole time, though he does devolve into incoherent cartoony madness at the very end.

This movie definitely has flaws, and could have been more emotionally moving, but it kept my attention for the entire runtime, and I was always rooting for the good guys to win, so it gets my

recommendation with a solid 4 out of 5 stars. I'm just now learning that this movie is meant to be a soft reboot of DC, being the first movie in the DC Universe (DCU) which is totally separate from the the previous and totally different DC Extended Universe (DCEU). Since that is the case, I'm excited to see what they come up with, especially the next film planned for next year, Supergirl. I'm actually a pretty big Supergirl fan, so I hope they don't fuck it up!

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