Review: Stellar cast makes Superman shine bright

I'll be frank: I had mixed feelings, based solely on the trailers, about James Gunn's *Superman* reboot. Sure, the casting seemed great, Gunn has a winning track record on superhero fare, and Krypto the dog stole the show every time he appeared. The trailers struck a nice balance between action, humor, and heart. Yet the film also seemed overpacked with super-character cameos, and it was hard to get any sense of the actual plot.

I've now seen the film, and those impressions were largely correct. But I'm happy to report that the positives far outweigh any negatives. *Superman* is a super-fun ride that unabashedly embraces its early comic book roots, naive optimism and all.

(Spoilers below, but no major reveals.)

Gunn has described his take as less of an origin story and more of a journey, with Superman (David Corenswet) struggling to reconcile his Kryptonian heritage and aristocratic origins with his small-town adoptive human family. In fact, Gunn wanted to avoid the origin story entirely, asserting (correctly, in my opinion) that it has already been depicted multiple times and there is no need to cover the same ground.

So the film opens *in medias res*, with Superman's first defeat in battle against a metahuman dubbed the "Hammer of Boravia." We see him fall into the snow, bloodied and battered, and whistle for Krypto. The plucky little superdog drags Superman to the Fortress of Solitude, where he is treated by a posse of robots. Then he heads out again for Round 2—only to once again

be thrashed by his rival metahuman (codename: Ultraman) who, we learn, is being controlled by Lex Luthor (Nicholas Hoult) for mysterious and no doubt nefarious purposes.

Why is Ultraman attacking Metropolis? Because a few weeks before, Superman had foiled the Boravian army’s invasion of the neighboring country of Jarhanpur, avoiding pointless bloodshed but drawing criticism for interfering in a foreign war when he lacked any governmental authority to do so. Naturally, Luthor expertly manipulates the media coverage against Superman while trying to convince the Pentagon that Superman poses a major threat to national security. The idealistic and naively optimistic Superman walks right into the trap.

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