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## TV Previews; It's Super-Duperman!

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Even with all those miles on him, Superman can still fly higher than the Concorde. It helps to have smart people pulling the strings, and the producers of ABC's "Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman" appear to be very smart indeed.

Their series, premiering tomorrow night at 8 on Channel 7, is a whimsical charmer that adds romantic comedy to the action-adventure elements and updates the superhero's saga without spoofing it. You'll believe a man can fly, but that's only the half of it.

Dean Cain, the 27-year-old actor who plays the 28-year-old Superman, deserves much of the credit for the soaring success. Cain is an approachable hunk who in both hunkishness and acting ability puts most of TV's other reigning he-men to shame. He plays Clark Kent not as a ninny or a klutz but as an earnest young man somewhat embarrassed by his amazing powers and anxious to fit in among normal people.

He wants to be respected for his brain, not just his brawn, and don't we all?

As Lois Lane, star reporter at the Daily Planet, Teri Hatcher improves mightily on her performance in Norman Lear's "Sunday Dinner," seeming much more comfortable playing a brash workaholic than she did a twinkly saint. The strong cast also includes Tracy Scoggins, both beautiful and funny as predatory social reporter Cat Grant; and Lane Smith as arguably the best Perry White ever.

Instead of "Great Caesar's ghost!" this Perry White is wont to exclaim, "Great shades of Elvis!"

A sense of infectious fantasy is evident from the very first scenes, including Kent's arrival in Metropolis from Smallville, Kan., and the matter-of-fact way he manages to halt a runaway bus. At this point, he's still in his civvies, and even goes on a flying jag in sports coat and tie.

"I think I need some kind of outfit," he tells the folks back home (K Callan and Eddie Jones, superb casting), which eventually leads to the best sequence in the show, Clark trying on a series of uniforms designed by mom while ZZ Top's "Sharp-Dressed Man" plays on the soundtrack.

About the only weak link in the cast is John Shea as Lex Luthor, here streamlined from a villainous maniac into a seemingly philanthropic industrial tycoon a' la Donald Trump (only not as obnoxious). Shea gets too much screen time, and a scene in which he supposedly stares down a cobra is laughable in the wrong way.

Stare it down? Seems more likely he would just bore it to death.

But when Cain and Hatcher are together, sleuthing out a story or making cat-and-mouse badinage, "Lois & Clark" is genuinely delightful. When Lois has a hankering for Chinese food, Clark obligingly goes out for

some -- to China. This may sound unlikely, but writer Deborah Joy Levine and director Robert Butler even devise a cute visual metaphor for sexual arousal; staring at Lois during a party, Clark unconsciously rises off the floor.

Essentially, "Lois & Clark" amounts to a de-tooning of the Superman story, changing it from kids' stuff to more sophisticated fare, yet retaining the beguiling sense of wonder it would be lost without. Superman, contrary to published reports, is not dead. In fact, it could be argued he has never looked better.

#### 'Townsend Television'

Robert Townsend is a very likable fellow, but he seems to be overextending himself in "Townsend Television," a new one-hour Fox variety series premiering tomorrow night at 7 on Channel 5.

Townsend hosts, helps write, and directs parts of the show, which does have in its favor a genial, upbeat, nonviolent attitude in contrast to much of the cruel and harsh comedy so popular on Fox. It's as a director that Townsend comes up shortest; his timing seems off so that the commercial parodies and movie spoofs tend to creak and wobble.

Among the skits on the first show is "Recast Classics," a new version of "The Godfather" with Bill Cosby (Townsend) in the title role. Unfortunately this bit seems borrowed from the old "SCTV" show, even to the extreme of including "Floyd the Barber" in the recast cast. If only this were half as funny as "SCTV" was.

Later, Townsend stars in a long sketch (13 minutes!) about "Nigel Spider," a detective who uses modern urban slang but speaks it with a British accent. He does the first-person voice-over as well, so that when he questions a homicide victim's widow, she tells him, "Yes, I hated him -- just like you said in your narration."

There are plenty of bright spots, but the general level of luminescence is low. Forgive me for even suggesting such a thing, but Townsend seems better equipped to be a talk show host than the auteur-host of a big variety hour. Yes, yes, there are too many talk shows as it is, but maybe when Chevy Chase gets tired of disgracing himself on Fox, Townsend could slip right in.

'seaQuest DSV' NBC would not make the opening two-hour installment of its "seaQuest DSV" available for preview. The show, which airs tomorrow at 8 on Channel 4, got huge embarrassing yocks from the press when screened in Los Angeles earlier this summer.

A 45-minute sample film of scenes from the premiere made this Steven Spielberg production look like an Irwin Allen throwback that even Irwin Allen would throw back. Roy Scheider stars as the reluctant captain of an underwater vessel that prowls the oceans of 2017 looking for miscreants, guttersnipes and n'er-do-wells and, upon finding them, spritzing them right in the kisser.

"We aim at them, they aim at us, and the whole world holds its breath!" exclaims Shelley Hack as Marilyn Stark, a renegade sexpot sea captain who is out to destroy the good ship seaQuest. We've got news for her; the whole world is more likely to be holding its nose.

Much time is spent with Scheider refusing to take command of the vessel, having been routed from the desert island where he retreated six years earlier after losing his wife and son. There is endless bickering about whether he will accept the commission, and everybody in the crew seems for some strange reason to hate him on sight.

Such a fuss and hullabaloo! Capt. Bligh got more respect than this.

Of all the objectionable souls onboard, none is more irritating than Darwin, the adorable dolphin who "talks" via a computer that translates his various squawkings into English. Poor Scheider has to bend over and address the animal just as if he were conferring with Lassie. It gets even ickier when he repairs to his cabin to hobnob with a hologram of his late spouse, who materializes a' la Obi-Wan Kenobi.

Even if it weren't so dreadfully written and performed, "seaQuest" would be hard to sit through, with nearly all

the action taking place underwater. People with even the slightest traces of claustrophobia are bound to want out long before Scheider and company reach 20,000 leagues.

Bad enough to be trapped underwater, but "seaQuest" traps you underwater with a veritable army of corny cliches. "We're approaching collapse depth!" a worried salt exclaims at one point. He can say that again.

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