

Blu-ray Review: ‘Superman vs. The Elite’ Delivers the Goods for Comic Fans

Submitted by [mattmovieman](#) [1] on June 29, 2012 - 7:39am

- [Blu-ray Review](#) [2]
- [DC Comics](#) [3]
- [George Newbern](#) [4]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [5]
- [Joe Kelly](#) [6]
- [Matt Fagerholm](#) [7]
- [Michael Chang](#) [8]
- [Superman vs. The Elite](#) [9]
- [The Dark Knight Rises](#) [10]
- [Warner Home Video](#) [11]
- [Theater, TV, DVD & Blu-Ray](#) [12]

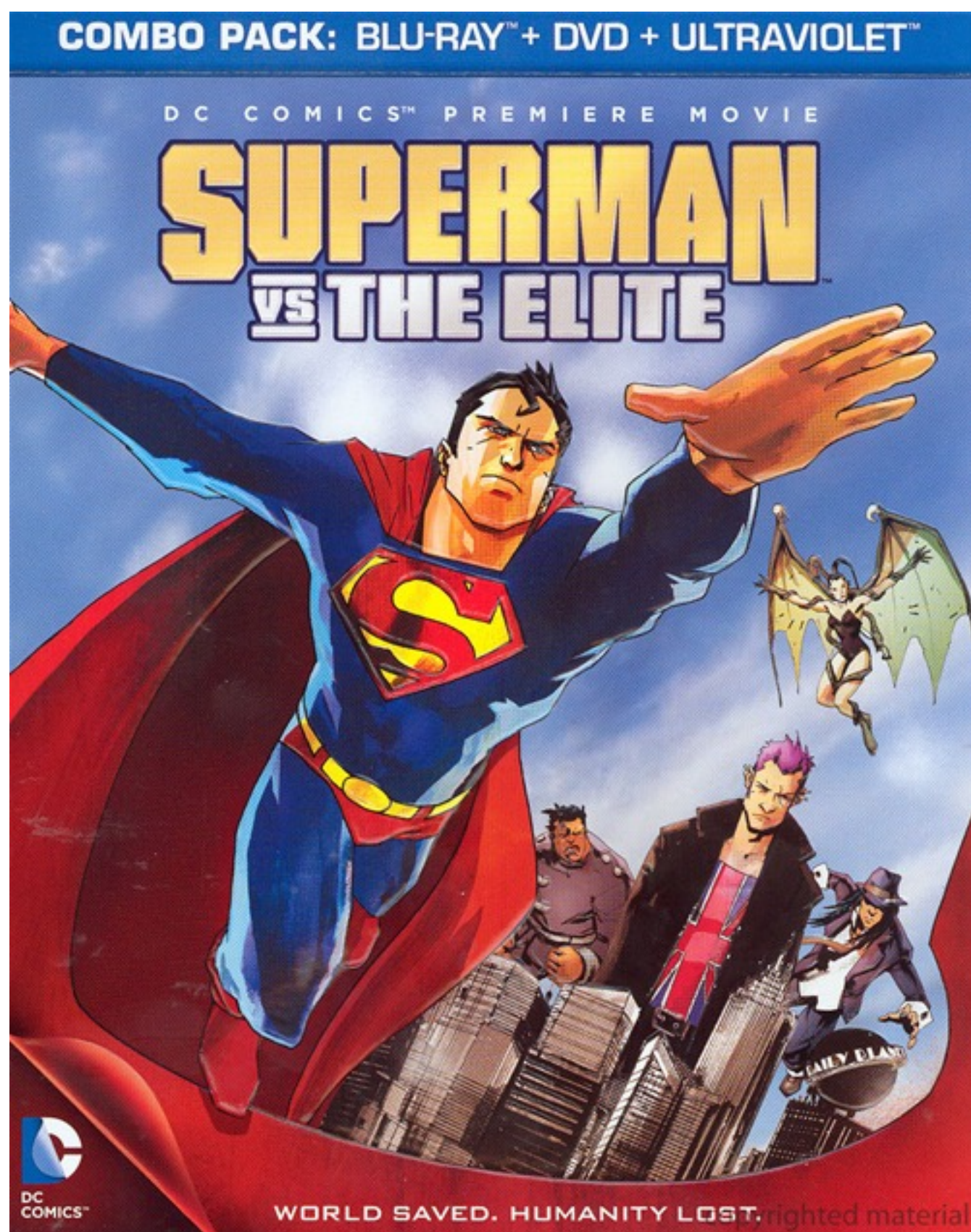
CHICAGO – It always takes a few minutes for viewers to adjust their eyes to the stiff, herky-jerky movements of characters in a direct-to-video animated film from DC Comics. “Superman vs. The Elite” opens with a cheeseball caricature of the Man of Steel headlining an outdated kiddie cartoon. It’s pretty silly, but at least the satirical characters are far more expressive than the “real” Superman once he rears his blandly noble head.

Yet as soon as I was ready to write off this seemingly disposable release, it won me over with its witty banter, topical themes and a villain who could prove to be a real showstopper if he was brought to the big screen. If Zack Snyder’s upcoming “Superman” reboot is a solid hit, then I suggest that studios consider Joe Kelly’s Action Comics yarn, “What’s So Funny About Truth, Justice & the American Way?” as source material for the sequel.



Blu-ray Rating: **4.0/5.0**

Kelly’s tale finds Superman’s popularity sinking faster than Batman’s friend count in a post-Dent Gotham City. His biggest adversaries, dubbed “The Elite,” cloak themselves in the term of “superhero,” and are headed by a charismatic British thug named Manchester Black, whose T-shirt proudly displays the Union flag. He gains public approval by killing bad guys rather than sending them to prison—a more humane tactic favored by Superman that hasn’t proven to have much of a success rate. When Superman tells The Elite that they can’t kill people and call themselves heroes, Black retorts, “Why not? Your government does it all the time.” This sort of pointed dialogue brings real bite to Kelly’s script, which carries echoes of the social commentary in Christopher Nolan’s “Batman” films. Superman is ultimately confronted with the same question faced by Batman in “The Dark Knight.” Can he remain true to his moral code when battling amoral beings without lowering himself to their level? There’s a powerful moment when citizens’ hunger for blood vengeance causes them to turn their backs on Superman’s message of nonviolence. Though the final twist is a bit of a cop out, this film offers the most compelling onscreen portrayal of Superman in recent memory. When it appears that the beloved hero has, in fact, turned to the dark side, his crazed facial expressions are truly unsettling (parents should heed this flick’s PG-13 rating).



Superman vs. The Elite was released on Blu-ray and DVD on June 12, 2012.

Photo credit: Warner Home Video

Though I'd still argue that the character animation suffers from its two-dimensionality (reminiscent of a Saturday morning cartoon), this briskly-paced 74-minute feature has no shortage of visual delights. Some members of the Elite unleash demonic creatures that would look right at home in a Studio Ghibli production. This picture leaves one hoping that Mr. Black will someday get his big screen due, perhaps in a Justice League film. He is quite a character.

"Superman vs. The Elite" is presented in impeccable 1080p High Definition (with a 1.78:1 aspect ratio), accompanied by English, French and Spanish audio tracks and includes Blu-ray, DVD and Ultraviolet copies of the film. On the audio commentary track, Kelly and comic book editor Eddie Berganza reflect on how the story was spawned from their frustration with trendy antiheroes (perhaps of the "Watchmen" variety) that criticized old-school heroism for seeming passé. A rather lame featurette tackles the film's "moral debate" by bringing on a drill instructor from the US Air Force to explain that a peaceful resolution can't always be achieved when dealing with terrorists.

A stronger featurette centers on the evolution of the Elite, and Kelly's decision to diversify the ensemble. Some of the grislier and edgier material had to be softened for the cartoon, suggesting the possibility for a more adult, R-rated film version that could possibly rival "Watchmen." Superman fans will especially appreciate two full-length episodes from the second season of "Superman: The Animated Series," hand-picked by Warner producer Alan Burnett: "Brave New Metropolis" and "Warrior Queen." There's also an extensive sneak peek at the much-hyped, direct-to-video release of "Batman: The Dark Knight Returns, Part 1," due out Fall 2012, a gallery of photos from Nolan's "The Dark Knight Rises" (most of which have already been released) and a page-by-page glance at the complete comic book that served as this film's inspiration, proving that no cartoon, however good, could quite capture its arresting power.

'Superman vs. The Elite' is released by Warner Home Video and stars George Newbern, Robin Atkin Downes, Pauley Perrette and Dee Bradley Baker. It was written by Joe Kelly and directed by Michael Chang. It was released on June 12, 2012. It is rated PG-13.

By [MATT FAGERHOLM](#) [14]
Staff Writer



[13]

HollywoodChicago.com
matt@hollywoodchicago.com [13]

Source URL (retrieved on *Apr 19 2024 - 3:05pm*):

<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/19121/blu-ray-review-superman-vs-the-elite-delivers-the-goods-for-comic-fans>

Links:

- [1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/mattmoviemann>
- [2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/blu-ray-review>
- [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/dc-comics>
- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/george-newbern>
- [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/hollywoodchicagodotcom-content>
- [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/joe-kelly>
- [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/matt-fagerholm>
- [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/michael-chang>
- [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/superman-vs-the-elite>
- [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/the-dark-knight-rises>
- [11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/warner-home-video>
- [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/dvd-theater-tv-news>
- [13] <mailto:matt@hollywoodchicago.com>
- [14] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#MATT>