



Helen Slater is Supergirl, who meets three villains including would-be witch Selena, played by Faye Dunaway.

the movies
Dan Greenberg

Supergirl replaces tired-out Superman for more adventure

Wisely realizing he'd never get away with a fourth "Superman" flick, Executive Producer Ilya Salkind opted for "Supergirl."

As it turns out, it's not a bad option. "Supergirl" is entertaining enough to win at the box office, even though it lacks intellectual stimulation.

Now, kiddies, you all thought that only the infant Kal-El (Superman) escaped when Krypton was blown to bits. You think that because your minds atrophied in the '30s when Action Comics introduced Superman.

If you had stayed awake until the '50s when DC Comics introduced Supergirl, you'd know that a fragment of Krypton spun away from the explosion and came to rest in inner space.

THE SMALL BAND of surviving Kryptonites (those are people, not food additives) led by artist-visionary Zaltar (Peter Onorati) built the utopian Argo City with two magic spheres, the Omega-hedrons, as their power source.

One day, Zaltar and his young friend Kara (Helen Slater) lose an Omega-hedron through the city's membrane. Kara follows the sphere to Earth where she becomes Supergirl, alias Linda Lee or vice versa, and able to leap tall buildings in a single bound.

Meanwhile the magic sphere has fallen in the not-really-evil clutches of a would-be witch, Selena (Faye Dunaway); her sidekick Bianca, and her instructor in the black arts, Nigel (Peter Cook).

Now, guess what this evil threesome plans to do with the magic sphere.

Right, take over!

The three villains are the most fun in this comic-book film, particularly Faye Dunaway, who always looks slick and lovely, right out of the pages of Vogue or such such high-fashion layout.

Dunaway plays the role strictly for laughs as the sensuous and gorgeous megalomaniac bent on world domination. The fact that she doesn't laugh at her own jokes, but lets us know she's playing by the twinkle in her eye, makes the characterization work so well.

Brenda Vaccaro and Peter Cook, to a lesser extent, are of the same ilk. Clearly these three mock-evil characters are the best of "Supergirl."

HELEN SLATER in the title role is pleasantly attractive, innocent, naive and tough when she needs to be. But Super-Kara-Linda-Girl has a mildly dopey comic-book part to play and so do her competent supporting cast — boyfriend Ethan (Hart Bochner) and Midvale School roommate Lucy Lane (Maureen Teefy as Lois' cousin).

They all do well with what they have, but that's just not as meaty as the villains' roles.

Another considerable attraction of "Supergirl" is the visual impact it has. The extensive special effects staff provides a wide array of visuals to delight the eye, and that's a good deal of the fun with comic books. The matting of Supergirl in flight is sufficiently well-done so that the often-disturbing fringing effect of poor-quality mattes is eliminated. Whether flying from inner space or fighting various demons, "Supergirl" effectively presents imaginative images.



Mia Farrow and Simon Ward portray Supergirl's parents, Alura and Zor-El, in "Supergirl."

what's at the movies

AMADEUS (PG). Superb rendition of Mozart's life with Tom Hulce and F. Murray Abraham. Directed by Milos Forman.

CHOOSE ME (R). Comedy about radio talk shows and other things, with Genevieve Bujold, Keith Carradine and Lesley Ann Warren.

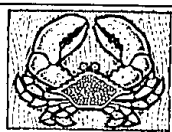
COMFORT AND JOY (PG). Boring, overly dry comedy about a disc jockey and his problems.

CRIMES OF PASSION (R). Story of a beautiful prostitute and her abilities. Kathleen Turner and Anthony Perkins. Directed by Ken Russell.

THE GODS MUST BE CRAZY (PG). Nomadic tribesman discovers Coke bottle and believes it's a magic talisman. Comedy from South Africa.

JUST THE WAY YOU ARE (PG). Kristy McNichol in heavy-handed romantic clasp.

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GHOSTBUSTERS (PG). Billy Murray, Dan Aykroyd and Harold Ramis as parapsychology research students trying to rid New York of menacing ghosts.

THE NIGHT OF THE COMET (PG-13). Sci-fi flick. A comet passes, and human survival hangs in the balance. Don't worry, something will turn up.

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A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET (R). Girl stalked by killer in her dreams.

OH, GOD! YOU DEVIL (PG). George Burns is back for his third try as God. He does a pretty good job for an amateur. Enjoyable comedy.

PLACES IN THE HEART (PG). Sally Field as young widow, in Depression Texas years, faced with supporting herself and two young children.

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