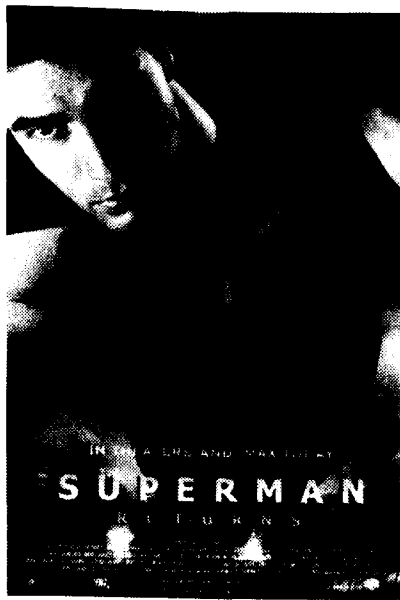


DICK'S PICKS

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Superman Returns



Superman Returns has been met with polar criticism from fans. Many people thoroughly enjoyed the film and hailed it as "the best Superman movie ever," but other die hard fans felt it was a slap in the face to the original Richard Donner films and had the late Christopher Reeves turning in his grave. *Superman Returns* is certainly a welcome come back for one of, if not the, greatest superhero of all time and sheds a more contemporary light, or rather shadow, on the Superman character. If you didn't see this movie in the theaters, pick up a copy or rent it. It is well worth it. The premise of the film has been widely controversial among fans both new and old. This film is not restarting the franchise like *Batman Begins*, instead it is supposed to be another sequel to come after the first two original Richard Donner films. This was done for two reasons, one was

respect towards those films that first brought Superman to the big screen and the second was so that they did not have to go into great detail about his origins and can dedicate more screen time to a new story.

It was still a lame attempt at shifting continuity because it only showed a few lines at the beginning saying that scientists found the remains of Krypton and Superman just up and left to see for himself.

Now, five years later, he's back and has to deal with the fact that life carried on and people got over his absence, even Lois Lane. Other than that, he comes back and gets right into saving the day.

Brandon Routh does a great job in picking up the Superman/Clark Kent character and is almost on par with the work of Christopher Reeves. Routh as Clark Kent is not as bumbling or awkward as Reeves' portrayal, he makes Kent more quiet and bashful rather than uncoordinated but then begins to act more confident and serious than Kent should be in some scenes.

He does fill the Superman costume well and does a good job in making Superman more detached from those people around him. With the exception of Lois Lane, Superman simply swoops in saves everyone and with a slight nod, flies away. It all works out for him though, mimicking the work of Reeves but bringing it to the 21st century.

Lex Luthor, played by Kevin Spacey, is an interesting character to watch in this movie. He is certainly more maniacal and darker than the more comical Gene Hackman Luther from the original films.

Lex is of course willing to cheat, steal, and kill to get his way but when compared to the likes of recent cartoon versions and Smallville's Michael Rosenbaum,

this Lex seems quite short sighted and still on his tirade of real-estate schemes.

It would have been better to see Luther behind a massive desk at Luther Corp. wielding millions of dollars to perpetrate his delusions of grandeur. Spacey does very well in his role, but the writers should have brought the character up to date.

The rest of the cast is fairly well-rounded, including Kate Bosworth as Lois Lane. She looks a bit too young for the role and probably wasn't the best choice for it. She doesn't really add anything or take away from the film. It just breaks even.

The biggest flag on this film is the introduction of Superman's son, his love child with Lois Lane, from the second Donner film in which the two hooked up. Besides the almost pointlessness in bringing this kid into the story line, the greatest hurdle to get over is how Lois could bear this child.

Not getting into the act of conception, simply carrying the child could have been her demise. Heaven help her if she got a tan. The kid could have kicked right out of her stomach. The only way this could have actually worked is if Superman wore a Kryptonite condom, but that'd kill him. (Thank you, Mallrats.)

The special effects are amazing and even when scenes are fully CG animated it looks convincingly real. The special features delve into a lot of interesting behind-the-scenes information and show how some scenes that may look too unbelievable to actually film were in fact done in the studio with the live actors.

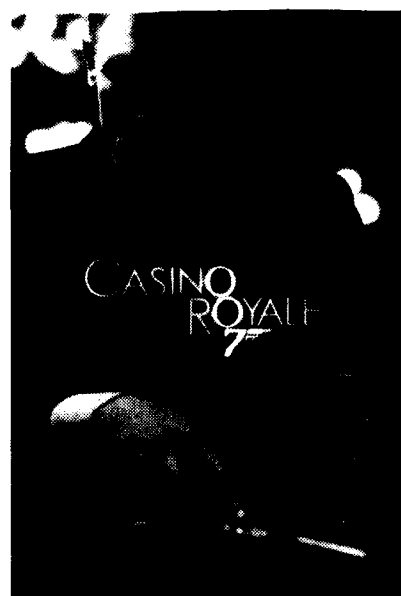
All in all, it's an entertaining film on a character we haven't seen in a while. This film is more a remake

of the first Superman movie and probably would have been better if it was done so. Again, despite the short comings in the plot, characters, and acting, it is still a very good film.

I give this film 3 out of 5 nuts.



Casino Royale



The name's "E," "Dick-E." Ok, it doesn't have the same flair and intimidation as James Bond, but I'm sure if he wasn't a suave international spy, saying his name like that would be just as stupid. However, to put it simply, *Casino Royale* is a great Bond film. It has all the great things that the recent Bond films were lacking, and dare I say it has a better actor to play the role. I know a lot of people out there are upset and questioning a "Blonde-Bond," but Daniel Craig gets the job done. From mere obscurity, Craig's name was thrown into the pot of potential Bonds, and

the immediate fan buzz catapulted his status when Pierce Brosnan officially turned down the role.

Craig's portrayal of the infamous MI-6 agent is radically different than that of Brosnan and for the better. *Casino Royale* is technically a prequel, showing the time when James Bond became 007 and is, for lack of a better term, a "rookie" in the spy game.

What's really fun to see is that he isn't a perfect pretty boy, saving the day without getting a single scratch. He's down and dirty running across rooftops, hanging out of moving vehicles, and even brawling in a public restroom.

He gets beaten, bruised, and bloodied and still carries on the mission. Also, he isn't wearing a tuxedo everywhere or always driving the latest Euro-super car, let alone being supplied with an array of gadgets.

This Bond is all "guts and glory" and does show that he needs to learn some self-control and tact. The new Bond is also not as much of a 'player' as Brosnan when it comes to Bond-girls. Where Brosnan's Bond would hit on anything that moves, Craig is more reserved and actually only woos a woman for information and not much more.

Bond's counterpart in this film is Vesper Lynd, played by Eva Green, who doesn't really like Bond or the risks the government is taking, backing him in this poker match.

There is an underlying attraction throughout the film, but for the most part neither Lynd nor Bond act on it or let it compromise their objective. Green plays this role very well, and you can see how she gradually warms up to Bond's personality rather than all of a sudden jumping his bones like prior Bond-girls. It all makes for a great

dynamic relationship between their characters.

The villain in this film is also much better than in recent films. Le Chiffre, played by Mads Mikkelsen, is a terrorist financier and banker but uses his client's money in the stock-market and loses it all. Now he'll do anything to get back the millions of dollars he's lost that doesn't belong to him. Le Chiffre is also a mathematical prodigy and must pit his cruel and calculating mind against Bond's instincts in a high stakes poker match.

Admittedly, the film is not perfect. There are segments that seem to drag on with no clear meaning and sitting through it is like pulling teeth. There is a particular torture scene that will make any man squirm in his seat, and the way some issues are resolved seems way too convenient and anti-climactic.

A number of loose ends also make the conclusion of the movie seem like a rip off, but after fuming for a few minutes, I realized that it is an appropriate segway for future films.

All of this is irritating but not enough to detract from the rest of the movie. *Casino Royale* seems to have found a perfect balance between explosive action and graceful plot development. By the end of the film, you can see how it develops the Bond character into what he calls, "half hit-man, half monk."

Though this movie is actually a remake of an earlier Bond film (which failed miserably), it has been re-mastered and looks to breathe new life into an almost played-out Hollywood icon.

I give this film 4 out of 5 nuts.



Superman returns with a bang

By **OLIVER EISLER**
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After a twenty-year absence, *Superman Returns* hit theaters. The film revolves around Superman's return to Earth after a five-year absence. He re-assumes his secret identity of Clark Kent, and discovers that Lois Lane—now in a "long engagement"—has a five-year-old son.

Superman's nemesis, arch-villain Lex Luthor has devised a new plan to defeat Superman. Director Bryan Singer has said that the continuity is "taking off from the first two *Superman* films with Christopher Reeve", which serve as its back-story, or as he put it, a "vague history."

The late Marlon Brando's role as Superman's biological father Jor-El is reprised with the help of computer-generated imagery and earlier footage. The movie failed

miserably at the box office, but fortunately the game is a step up from the movie in virtually all aspects, most prominent among is its heavily comic-influenced plot.

The graphics on the PlayStation 2 version of the game are decent. The buildings, the roads, bridges, skylines, clouds, water, and cars, all are very well done. The citizens of Metropolis don't look all that great, but they are acceptable.

The game sounded fine for the most part, but the lack of the Superman theme in the game, even as a cost-saving measure, is inexcusable; especially from the game-developer EA which paid millions to keep other companies from making NFL Football games to rival their Madden series.

They can afford the rights to a song. In the very least they should have used the Superman cartoon theme.

The controls on the PlayStation 2 version of the game are spot on. Flying, using the super powers,

fighting with your fists, charging up your powers, leaping into the sky, etc.

are all done extremely well and make it feel like you truly are Superman! The game's story very vaguely follows that of the movie. It introduces various super villains from the comics, including fan favorites such as the space tyrant Mongul, the life-absorbing Parasite, literally

heartless Metallo, the bizarre super-monstrosity Bizarro, and even



A screen shot of Superman flying in the *Superman Returns* video game. Flying is one of the many super actions gamers can use to fight crime.

One of the game's more innovative features is the Metropolis health-bar.

Since Superman is invulnerable due to the rays of Earth's yellow sun, the game's challenge lies in protecting the city.

This can be frustrating at times such as when the player is about to smash up the enemy, but he suddenly loses due to Metropolis taking too much damage and effectively being destroyed.

For the most part, however, the Metropolis health-bar is a necessary innovation to add a measure of challenge to the game.

After all, when one can lift islands and travel through the core of the Earth, what could hurt more than being powerless to save the city you love? Nothing.

Overall, the game would have been a more enjoyable experience if EA had added different enemies, more varied missions, and a deeper story.

Next time give us more missions (that are up to us to accept or refuse), more enemies, maybe a little time as Clark Kent, and some situations where we can meet our friends Jimmy and Lois.

Throw in a trip to Smallville or the actual Fortress of Solitude, not just the pause/update screen. However, the game itself is fun, and bashing a game simply because it's not all it could be is unfair.

Although not the perfect Superman game, *Superman Returns* is by far the best Superman game released to date. It makes you feel like you really are the Man of Steel.

TIME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

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 REINDEER
 MISTLETOE
 EGGNOG
 BLIZZARD
 MITTENS
 STOCKINGS
 ORNAMENTS
 COOKIES
 HOTCHOCOLATE
 CHIMNEY
 FAMILY
 FRUITCAKE
 PRESENTS
 SLEIGH
 CAROLS

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TO SOLVE: Each row, column and 3x3 block must contain the numbers 1 to 9 without any duplicates.

For the correct answers, please visit us in the Capital Times office, E-121 Olmsted.