

Movies

Batman and Superman

films ranked from worst to best

This weekend's *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice* brings DC's heaviest hitters face-to-face for their first live-action throw down on the big screen - and gives us our first glimpse of the new Wonder Woman in the bargain. To celebrate this momentous occasion, take a look at all the times the Caped Crusader and the Man of Steel starred in movies of their own.



BATMAN & ROBIN (1997)

One of the least-loved blockbusters of recent years, *Batman & Robin* brought the Batman 1.0 franchise to a screeching halt. Unlike the earlier installments, which returned the Caped Crusader to his brooding noir roots, *Batman & Robin* was a veritable camp-o-rama, closer in spirit to the 1960s TV series. Utilizing punny dialogue to a jaw-dropping degree were villains Arnold Schwarzenegger as Mr. Freeze ("Ice to see you!") and Uma Thurman as Poison Ivy ("My garden needs tending"). Even George Clooney made little impression as Batman, and his sidekicks (Chris O'Donnell as Robin, Alicia Silverstone as Batgirl) failed to drum up much audience or critical enthusiasm. As a result, a planned fifth sequel, *Batman Triumphant*, which would have pitted our heroes against the Scarecrow, never materialized, so it was left to Christopher Nolan to resurrect the series. "

SUPERMAN IV: THE QUEST FOR PEACE (1987)

With Gene Hackman back in the cast and a four-year break to cleanse filmgoers' palates after the unpleasantness of *Superman III*, 1987's *Superman IV: The Quest for Peace* seemed to have everything going for it at first - including a smartly topical storyline that put the Man of Steel in the middle of the Cold War (and doing battle with a nuclear-powered Superclone designed by Lex Luthor). Unfortunately, when money started to run tight at Cannon Films, director Sidney J. Furie found himself forced to cut corners in every direction; the result, according to most critics, was a disjointed, cheap-looking mess, further hampered by dejected-seeming performances from a cast that appeared to know exactly how much of a mistake they were making.



SUPERMAN III (1983)

The first two *Superman* movies boasted an impressive narrative scope, state-of-the-art special effects, and layered performances that made it possible for the story to move gracefully between action, drama, and comedy, sometimes within the space of a single scene. They were a tough act to follow, in other words - which might explain why 1983's *Superman III* didn't really bother attempting to build on their success, instead opting to take the franchise in an altogether sillier direction by pitting the Man of Steel against a power-mad CEO (Robert Vaughn) who blackmails an unscrupulous computer programmer (Richard Pryor) into using his know-how to help him achieve world domination. Aside from the typically techno-ignorant screenplay, which imagines weather satellites capable of creating tornados and supercomputers that achieve sentience after being attacked with an axe, *III* earned fans' and critics' ire by ignoring any semblance of character development in favor of director Richard Lester's fondness for oddball humor and silly sight gags.