



Superman: The Unauthorized Biography

By Glen Weldon

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Superman: The Unauthorized Biography By Glen Weldon

A celebration of Superman's life and history—in time for his 75th birthday

How has the Big Blue Boy Scout stayed so popular for so long? How has he changed with the times, and what essential aspects of him have remained constant? This fascinating biography examines Superman as a cultural phenomenon through 75 years of action-packed adventures, from his early years as a social activist in circus tights to his growth into the internationally renowned demigod he is today.

- Chronicles the ever-evolving Man of Steel and his world—not just the men and women behind the comics, movies and shows, but his continually shifting origin story, burgeoning powers, and the colorful cast of trusted friends and deadly villains that surround him
- Places every iteration of the Man of Steel into the character's greater, decades-long story: From Bud Collyer to Henry Cavill, World War II propagandist to peanut butter pitchman, *Super Pup* to *Super Friends*, comic strip to Broadway musical, Lori Lemark to *Lois & Clark*—it's all here
- Affectionate, in-depth analyses of the hero's most beloved adventures, in and out of the comics—his most iconic Golden Age tales, goofiest Silver Age exploits, and the contemporary film, television, and comics stories that keep him alive today
- Written by NPR book critic, blogger, and resident comic book expert, Glen Weldon

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Superman: The Unauthorized Biography By Glen Weldon Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Review

""Weldon's years as a lifelong Superman fan give him superb insight into the character's central truths.... A reliable, witty, and informative guide."" —**NPR Books**

""Breezily written and compulsively readable."" —**A/V Club**

""An excellent portrait of the Man of Steel, managing to be fan-crazed and critical at the same time."" —***Publishers Weekly***

""[Gathers] the sprawling, complex, and occasionally contradictory history of Superman into a rich and deeply textured story."" —**New York Journal of Books**

From the Inside Flap

You likely have an indelible image of Superman etched in your brain. But from the moment of his birth (as the offspring of two teenage proto-nerds) in 1938, the Man of Steel has proven far more changeable than anyone expected. While he hasn't aged a day, his appearance, powers, vulnerabilities, and persona have evolved in numerous ways.

In *Superman: The Unauthorized Biography*, NPR's resident comic book expert, Glen Weldon, tells the life story of the world's first, and still the most popular, superhero, from his creation to the present. He reveals how this cultural icon has been continuously transformed, not just by time but by his travels through a variety of media, including comic books, radio, television, movies, and graphic novels.

The original Superman, a tough-talking, two-fisted bruiser, was quick with a smirk and a sarcastic quip. He was impatient and prone to violence—our hotheaded, protective big brother. Yet that early Superman was a social reformer with a decidedly anti-militaristic streak. Only a few years later, he would become a super-patriot, championing the war effort in comic books and on the radio.

Most baby boomers met "The Big Blue Boy Scout" for the first time not through comics or radio, but as played on television by actor George Reeves. Reeves' Superman was more fatherly than his comic book counterpart, a quality that promptly leached into the comics as well. Weldon documents how Superman's persona shifted again in the 1960s and early 1970s as his middle-aged writers started chasing the nation's emergent "youth culture," unintentionally turning him into our bemused, out-of-touch uncle. Then Christopher Reeve came along to make him a more dashing, good-humored, and sometimes passionate hero.

No biography of Superman would be complete without a thorough treatment of Clark Kent, along with his coworkers Lois Lane and Jimmy Olsen and their boss, Perry White. Weldon tracks their first appearances and development throughout the series and also pays special attention to Superman's archenemy, Lex Luthor.

Complete with thorough accounts of the Man of Steel's more recent films and television shows as well as comics, graphic novels, and a Broadway musical, *Superman: The Unauthorized Biography* is the ultimate resource for anyone, young, old, or in between, who wants to know everything about everyone's favorite superhero.

From the Back Cover

How has "The Big Blue Boy Scout" stayed popular for so long?

Why can't anyone recognize Superman when he puts on a pair of eyeglasses?

Why didn't Clark Kent enlist to fight in World War II?

Has there ever been a Superman comic, film, or show that wasn't a huge success?

It's not true that a super-mullet happened in the 1990s, is it?

NPR's go-to comic book geek, Glen Weldon, recounts Superman's story from 1930s circus strongman to all-American icon

How has he changed with the times, and what essential aspects have remained constant? This fascinating biography examines Superman as a cultural phenomenon through seventy-five years of action-packed adventures, from his early years as a crime-fighter in circus tights to his growth into the internationally renowned icon he is today.

Weldon examines the character as a cultural phenomenon: how he's perceived, how that perception has changed over time, and which specific aspects have remained constant. As a critic, Weldon looks at what makes a Superman story a Superman story and what the various iterations of the character over the years say about him—and about us.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Graciela Tubbs:

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