

Captain America

By Tom Sims, Executive Director, Cape May Film Society

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Welcome to the next generation of superhero movie. Captain America: The First Avenger may usher in a new era of super storytelling. But that's only if writers can be heroes saving helpless stories from the evils of overdone special effects.

This story starts with Steve Rogers, a scrawny guy often bullied during World War II. He wants so badly to fight against Nazis that he fakes a handful of applications—only to be turned down each time for a laundry list of ailments. Rogers is played by Chris Evans, a bulky actor who through special effects is brilliantly shrunk in the first part of this movie to the puny soldier wanna-be.

Rogers is befriended by scientist, Dr. Abraham Erskine (played by Stanley Tucci), who has invented a special serum that should create an army of super soldiers, and he has been looking for a first subject with depth of character (not just muscles). The experiment goes well, as we see Evans transformed from skinny to his more natural superhero build. But the experiment is sabotaged by German spies, and Dr. Erskine is killed along with any possibility of duplicating the serum.

The new soldier's first commission is far from the battlefield as he is enlisted to perform on stage for audiences across the U.S. to sell war bonds. It isn't until the performances go overseas to entertain troops that he gets a chance to be a true hero—saving several hundred troops captured by forces of the deranged Nazi named Johan Schmidt (played by Hugo Weaving). It turns out Schmidt was a colleague of Erskine before war, and he is the only other human to have had an injection of super serum.

I'm an old superhero junkie from way back. It started with comic books, and then television shows (Batman, Hulk, even a terrible Spider-Man series). Then came Superman with Christopher Reeves... followed by a second one (which was better than the first--and the series should have stopped there), then Batman. A free Cape May Film Fest weekend pass for the first person to email capemayfilm@hotmail.com with the name the actor to play Batman opposite Jack Nicholson's Joker (sorry, not Adam West). These heroes might be super, but story is still the ultimate weapon against horrible movies.

The first one-third of Captain America was excellent—well written, interesting concepts, expert execution. Somewhere along the way, it becomes another shoot 'em up without nearly as much story finesse (but still worthy enough to see). Captain America will join fellow big screen stars Iron Man, Hulk, and Thor in a new movie next summer called "The Avengers." Let's hope make the story super before anything else.