



ARTSHOUND

Sniffing out what you shouldn't miss in the arts this week

Summer and art are soaking into Eugene! The Downtown Initiative for the Visual Arts (**DIVA**) will host a **"Drink & Draw"** at the Ninkasi Patio June 20. You bring the drawing tools and DIVA will provide the model — perhaps a Maiden the Shade or a Tricerahops?

Yet another fun, local fashion affair: LCC fashion design students present their latest patterns at **"Fashion Design Progression & Completion — Then & Now,"** LCC's seventh annual fashion event. Check out what students right here in Lane County are doing from 6 to 8 pm Saturday, June 22, at New Hope Christian College Rexius Event Center, 2155 Bailey Hill Rd.

Between this and Last Friday ArtWalk, you'll have to plan early to juggle next week's arts events: **DanceAbility**, the nonprofit that aims to show that "we all have the ability to create beauty, no matter our constraints in life," sent two arts envoys and a filmmaker to Indonesia, Mongolia, and the Philippines in May. Now they're back, and they'll be performing at a multimedia and live dance event at 5 pm Friday, June 28, at The Shedd. It's a benefit to fundraise for their documentary of the trip.

MOVIES BY MOLLY TEMPLETON



CONFLICTED

The Man of Steel as alien god

MAN OF STEEL: Directed by Zack Snyder. Screenplay by David S. Goyer; story by Goyer and Christopher Nolan, based on characters created by Jerry Siegel and Joel Shuster. Cinematography, Amir Mokri. Editor, David Brenner. Music, Hans Zimmer. Starring Henry Cavill, Amy Adams, Michael Shannon, Russell Crowe and Diane Lane. Warner Bros., 2013. PG-13. 143 minutes. ★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆.

Superman, who originally hails from both a different planet and a different era, is often a tough sell with modern audiences who've gotten used to conflicted heroes, anti-heroes and intriguing bad guys. Superman — with a smile and a cape, the embodiment of a certain kind of American ideal — is just so *good*.

It turns out he's a little conflicted after all.

Zack Snyder's *Man of Steel* splits Superman's goodness into two threads: On one hand, he's a young man who doubts humanity's willingness to accept him. On the other, he's alien Jesus. David S. Goyer's screenplay (Christopher Nolan shares story credit) never passes up an opportunity to

draw godlike parallels, whether emphasizing that Superman has been on the planet for 33 years or having young, bullied Clark throw himself against a fence, arms open wide. At a key point, Clark (played as an adult by the chiseled Henry Cavill) seeks the advice of a priest, who gives Clark his answers while lit by a glowing stained-glass vision of Jesus. This alien god has to choose to trust humanity.

His nemesis will do no such thing. *Man of Steel* shares a villain with *Superman II*; here, General Zod is played by Michael Shannon with glower and goatee. Condemned by Kryptonian leaders and freed by Krypton's demise, Zod makes his way to Earth to demand Superman's surrender. He's still angry about baby Kal-El's escape, but Zod has also been bred to defend Krypton, and all that is left of his home planet is embodied by our hero.

In fighting Zod, Superman fights a whole host of ideas about freedom; these don't always fit together with the religious elements, but you can't say *Man of Steel* isn't ambitious in its themes, no matter how tangled they may be. It also ambitiously emphasizes the science fiction aspect of Superman's story. A long prologue explaining how Superman came to be on Earth gives us a fascinating vision of Krypton. Dark, geological, unwelcoming, it's full of caves and tunnels, genesis chambers where children are bred and

flying beasts that look like they're half dinosaur, half dragonfly. Kryptonite technology looks alien, but has an eerie biological streak. It's deeply *other* — and so is our hero.

But like so much else, this idea fades out in the film's endless last third, a parade of broken glass and demolished buildings. The scope is huge, but the imagery might've come from one of Michael Bay's *Transformers* flicks, except that it lacks robots. Superman is willing to submit to Zod to save humanity, yet the rampant destruction of the finale suggests heavy casualties that the movie pretends don't exist. This thoughtlessness undermines the movie's quieter, more effective moments, and runs counter to Superman's driving savior complex.

Man of Steel isn't going to win over those who are indifferent about Superman, but it does set the stage for Adams and Cavill to develop their chemistry, for Clark's journalist alter-ego to emerge, and for future films with more interest in character than in spectacle (maybe they could take a page or several from Grant Morrison's *All-Star Superman*). Cavill, who has an interesting, muscular stillness, is at his best when Kal-El is learning, not brawling; the movie's neglected heart is his need to reconcile his origins and his upbringing — to learn to be Clark *and* Superman. ■