Lex Luthor (Michael Rosenbaum) stands over his father deciding whether or not to save his life in the season finale of Smallville Season One, "Tempest."

‘Smallville’ season DVD set not quite ‘Super’

By Vincent Civitillo

Managing Editor

Before there was the cape, the loincloth or even the iconic S-shield logo, there was a man struggling to find his way in the world.

This is the general premise behind the WB’s hit TV-series Smallville, the story of a young Superman, Clark Kent (played by Tom Welling), on his journey through high school before donning the famous primary colors of the Man of Steel.

The series opens on a beautiful autumn day in Smallville, Kansas, but things quickly turn sour as the small farming town is hit with a massive meteor shower. People are killed, buildings are destroyed, panic ensues and, in the heart of it all, two farmers (Jonathan and Martha Kent, played by John Schneider and Annette O’Toole) find their greatest wish granted as a baby boy is delivered to them from the sky.

A quick flash-forward finds the boy to have grown up to be Clark, who is just now discovering many of his superabilities as he enters his freshmen year of high school. However, as he discovers his own strengths and weaknesses, he also learns of people in the town who were affected by the meteor shower in a different way.

Underdeveloped secondary characters and frequent flash in the pan villains hurt the season, but a strong season-long plot with a breathtaking cliffhanger finale, "Tempest," at least held interest in viewers until the writers could find their niche with the far better-developed second season.

The Complete First Season DVD set, released Tuesday, Sept. 23, parallels the general quality of the season as being impressive, but noticeably flawed.

The look of the season, in 1.77:1 anamorphic widescreen video, is unexpectedly strong in each episode, with only slight pixilation in barely noticeable places from time to time. However, it is the audio mix, presented in only Dolby Digital 2.0 Stereo that disappoints.

An earlier released Canadian DVD of the first two episodes featured surround sound with five discrete channels of sound, whereas this one downgrades to only two for a noticeably different, and weaker, experience.

While typically, a TV-series released for one-episode runs as villains never get used for the general benefit of mankind, these characters tend to pop up for one-episode runs as villains for Clark to take care of while he fights the real losing battle of the series, his relationship with his first real love, Lana Lang (Kristin Kreuk).

Unfortunately for Clark and Lana, who very obviously “secretly” care about each other, there’s always something standing in the way of their happiness.

Just as interesting to watch as the lovers is Clark’s best friend Lex Luthor (Michael Rosenbaum of Sociology Boys). Seeing the two on the same side is an interesting juxtaposition as fans are treated to seeing the two gradually grow apart over the course of the series with Clark developing into the Man of Tomorrow and Lex becoming the self-proclaimed “greatest criminal mastermind of our time.”

Although comic fans may have been upset with the writers for altering key parts of the Superman story, fans of the WB’s teen angsty formula might have been turned off by the superhero label, Smallville’s first season was at least a decent blend of the two.

SEC Film:

Friday, September 26

1:45 p.m., 2:40 p.m., 4:45 p.m., 6:30 p.m., 8:00 p.m., 9:20 p.m.

Freaky Friday (2003): 2:20 p.m., 4:45 p.m., 7:45 p.m.

Jeepers Creepers 2: 7:30 p.m., 9:50 p.m.

Matchstick Men: 1:30 p.m., 2:30 p.m., 4:15 p.m., 5:15 p.m., 7:00 p.m., 8:05 p.m., 9:35 p.m.

Once Upon A Time In Mexico: 1:45 p.m., 2:45 p.m., 3:30 p.m., 4:30 p.m., 5:40 p.m., 6:15 p.m., 7:00 p.m., 8:10 p.m., 9:00 p.m., 9:40 p.m.

The Order: 2:10 p.m., 5:20 p.m., 7:35 p.m., 9:50 p.m.

S.W.A.T.: 9:55 p.m.

Seacliffs: 2:00 p.m., 5:10 p.m., 8:15 p.m.

Secondhand Lions: 1:50 p.m., 4:20 p.m., 7:10 p.m., 9:35 p.m.

Teenine (2003): 2:10 p.m., 4:30 p.m., 7:20 p.m., 9:40 p.m.

Underworld (2003): 1:30 p.m., 2:15 p.m., 4:10 p.m., 5:00 p.m., 6:50 p.m., 8:00 p.m., 9:30 p.m.