

SUPERMAN VS. KKK

Inspired by true events

Coming of age story set in the Deep South during the summer of 1946.

Stand By Me meets *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Sponsored by Kellogg's, running 5 times a week, with an audience of over 5 million, the Superman radio show was hit for over a decade. During June and July of 1946 the Superman radio show took on a new villain: the Klu Klux Klan. While the Klan was no longer the powerhouse it had been in the 1920's it was still a formidable, threatening and deadly force in the deep South.

Stetson Kennedy, an investigative journalist, spent two years undercover in the Klan, rising to the rank of Kleagle. He passed all his secrets: passwords, membership drives, organizational structure and more to the producers of the Superman radio show. The writers folded these details into the plot, embarrassing the KKK. The KKK tried, and failed to organize a boycott of Kellogg's. Kellogg's stood firm in their support of the show and the episodes received high ratings.

The movie follows two 10 year old boys, at the height of segregation, joined by their love of Superman. Each is forced to leave their childhood behind sooner than they should. But in doing so, each learns to rely on themselves.

Clarence: Son of an African American maid. Now that school is out, he follows along with his mom on cleaning days that take him into the white side of town so he can listen to the radio. He sometimes dusts the same bookshelf over and over, entranced with the stories on the airwaves.

Homer: Son of the local white sheriff, lives in one of the houses that Clarence and his mother clean.

Act 1

The boys relish being out of school and free for the summer. We are shown clearly and concisely what this means for each boy living in the segregated south. Some lines are not meant to be crossed. Ever. Homer and his dad listen to Superman on the radio in their living room. Homer on his dad's lap, cape around his neck. Clarence and his friends sneak a listen under a porch or with a homemade crystal radio when the weather is perfect and the signal is strong. Homer and his father play checkers with other fathers and sons at the country store, wait in line to get their hair cut every 2nd Saturday with the Mayor and other town elders.

Act 2

Once the KKK episodes are aired, Homer's dad no longer allows Superman on the radio or Kellogg's cereal at the breakfast table.

Walking along the rail road track, hearing the familiar sound of the theme song, Homer stumbles across Clarence and his friends with their crystal radio listening to Superman in a dry creek bed. An uneasy truce is formed and they listen to the episodes together, eating cereal thrown out by all the white families. In a crystal radio, there is speaker, only a single earpiece. So one boy must recite everything they hear in the earpiece so the other boys can hear it.

That week, Clarence is accused of stealing from Homer's house. When in fact it was Homer who stole the money, wanting to buy pieces for his own crystal radio. Homer watches in silence as Clarence and his mother are berated and fired.

Act 3

Homer wakes that night to find his father putting on a Klan uniform.

Homer is shocked and disappointed in his father. Telling him everything he learned from Superman about the KKK. His father explains how things work in the "real world."

Homer gives the crystal radio to his father and explains who really stole the money and why. His father tells him, it is too late. Justice has to be done, fair or not.

Homer stows away in the rumble seat of his father's car getting out when the car finally stops.

A Klan ceremony is under way, and Clarence, being held by the scruff of his neck at the front.

Homer walks through the gathering, calling out each member by name, recognizing them from their shoes, posture, gait, or girth. His father slaps him, but he continues through the tears. The other men begin to look down in shame.

Clarence, made bold by his friend goes further, naming each rank and password, embarrassing the Klan even more.

The two boys walk the gauntlet toward each other, takes each other's hand and as bravely as they can, walk back down in silence.



Left to right

Pep Cereal, the sponsor of Superman. KKK at a county fair, the cast of Superman.