

Superman Found Dead



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Superman found Dead! I missed the headline blazing across newspapers all over the country. I'm not surprised, I was less than four years old in June of 1959 when George Reeves, the actor who starred as both Superman and reporter Clark Kent, was found in his bedroom, dead, apparently of a self inflicted gunshot wound. At four I wasn't interested in such things as Superman. At six and seven that changed and I was hooked on the television series "The Adventures of Superman .." At some point after that age I found out that George Reeves, Superman, was dead. What I didn't know until much later in my life was that there were in fact many questions about the death of actor George Reeves. Enough questions to make one wonder did the actor really kill himself or was he killed?

"Hollywoodland ." leans slightly towards the former but still leaves the question open. "Hollywoodland ." stars Adrien Brody as a private investigator hired by the Reeves' mother to investigate the death of her son and Ben Affleck as actor George Reeves.

"Hollywoodland ." explores the life of Reeves in flashbacks, while in the present the investigation into his death is explored. You will find a life vastly different than expected for a man who portrays the symbol of "truth, justice and the American way." He is a man in turmoil while enjoying the benefits of fame. In many ways "Hollywoodland ." gives insight into the pressures and glories of starring in one of the most popular TV shows in the land- something that George Reeves loved.... and hated.

Is there reason to suspect that Reeves was killed? Most certainly, he had been in a long term affair with the wife of a man with known gang affiliations. It is unlikely that this was the reason for his death; the affair had been going on for a very long time and was well known and out in the open. In fact it had received a seal of approval from the husband. More than likely, if he was killed, it was because he was starting to break off that relationship and was becoming involved with another woman.

Is there reason to believe that Reeves killed himself? Yes, he was known to be somewhat despondent over the fact that he couldn't break free from the stereotype that went with being the Man of Steel. The show had been off for a number of years and he had been unable to get acting roles because he was too well known as Superman. However, The Adventures of Superman was scheduled to return to the air and George had signed on to continue as Superman/Clark Kent and as director for at least three quarters of the episodes. In addition he was in the process of setting up a film and television production company. Even those who knew Reeves well have gone back and forth regarding whether he killed himself or was killed. "Hollywoodland ." won't answer that question.

One piece of trivia the film does get right: at one point it pictures George Reeves in the iconic Superman costume but in shades of brown rather than the traditional blue, red, and yellow. This is because the brown filmed better in black and white than if they had used the real colors. Once they switched to color and for public appearances the traditional colors were restored.

Posted by Keith C. on May 20, 2013

