

Lost Worlds and A Strange Visitor From Another Planet



I just re-watched the [pilot](#) of [Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman](#) (1996). It is actually pretty good, especially for a late-1990s superhero show. It's sly and clever, and does a nice job working around its obviously-inadequate effects budget. There's real chemistry between Dean Cain and Teri Hatcher, as well.

Hatcher really sells Lois Lane as a modern women, the natural progression of the character's strong arc since her introduction.

One thing really did stand out to me about this pilot, though, that is both endearing and maybe a little depressing. The writers went with the "[evil businessman](#)" version of [Lex Luthor](#) that's been common since the Crisis on Infinite Earths. The pilot had to have Lex plotting some nefarious scheme for the sake of pure profit.

But what?

The sabotage of the space program.

Really. The "Congress of Nations" is about to launch the first 100 colonists to a new space station (Prometheus). Lex wants to blow up the launch, doom Prometheus, and replace it with Space Station Luthor. (Of course.) His motive is the billion-dollar patents that will flow from research done in zero-g on new drugs and treatments. The loss of the first transport is greeted as a national tragedy.

The launch of the replacement (with the colonists) draws a viewing public all over the world, with everyone on the edge of their seats.

That's what I find both endearing and sad. When was the last time our (crewed)

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space program elicited that sort of enthusiasm? Heck, we can't even launch people into space anymore. For the writers of this show, movement forward into space was the obvious, almost inevitable mark of progress, of there being a future. It might well be the last time popular TV treated it that way.

And to me, that's a little sad. We have miracles and wonders today, of course, but somehow everything seems ... *small*. Musk and Bezos are slogging forward and dragging us, I suppose, but it certainly doesn't fire the popular imagination any longer. I hope we're just in a holding pattern, waiting for the technology to meet its potential, but I don't know.

(By the way, Superman -- of course -- foils the sabotage and lifts the transport into orbit himself. Because, hey, Superman.)