

Supervillains aren't the subtlest creatures, but they fit right into the fantastical comic book worlds in which they exist. But when we're talking about live-action film or TV, there's an innate sense of reality that never really goes away. Against that, it's too easy to spot every bizarre mannerism, every ridiculous bit of dialogue, and definitely every weird outfit. There are only two ways to survive that scrutiny: you can pull a Jack Nicholson and own all the audacity like you don't give a hoot who's watching; or you can pull a Heath Ledger and dig deep to find the core of realism that can keep the supervillain grounded. So which of these camps would I say Wentworth Miller's Leonard Snart and Dominic Purcell's Mick Rory belong to? Ultimately, I think they're going the Ledger route. Their acting isn't what you'd call realistic, but then again, they're playing two characters who aren't realistically motivated, being more driven by their respective obsessions. Given the technology in their possession, there's no limit to the money and power in their grasp, but both things are secondary considerations for Snart, who just wants to beat the Flash, and Rory, who can find contentment in fire, any kind of fire. In that context, Miller and Purcell do manage convincingly menacing performances, Miller by staying committed to Snart's mustache-twirling calculations and Purcell by reveling in Rory's primal temper. This contrast in their personalities helps to balance them out even as the opposing physics of their weapons leads to their undoing. They're not given the easiest of scripts, but they tear through it and grandiose lines like, "Any preference on how you'd like to die? The flame...or the frost?" by sheer, mutual bravado. And you know what? You can sell even a strong dose of wacky if you dilute it with a fairly grounded episode and for The Flash, this one might be as grounded as it gets. I'm not just talking about Snart and Rory being non-metas, though that plays a part. Somehow, over the winter break, the characters have found comfortable positions to work in, reducing the amount of soap on the show to a healthy minimum. Undoubtedly, this has a lot to do with Barry finally airing out his feelings for Iris, which, as Caitlyn reassures him, can only lead to better things for both, despite the awkwardness. In fact, better things have come already, with Barry moving back in with adoptive father Joe, proving the show's investment in its most compelling pairing. Besides commiserating on the loss of Iris, Joe has a huge stake in Barry's career as the Flash. The S.T.A.R. folks may be committed to training Barry and supporting him in battle, but Joe is undeniably his mentor. Unlike Wells, he shares Barry's main interest in using his powers to help others, a fact that causes even more tension when he senses Barry parroting Wells' rationalizations about priorities. These two men are wrestling over Barry's soul, and despite Wells' brief advantage in the episode, it looks like Joe's winning. In other news, things are looking up for everyone else on the show, too. In giving Barry a necessary assist during the battle with Snart and Rory, Eddie gets double credit for proving his own guts and showing his support for Team Flash. Caitlyn's investigation into Firestorm takes her into a whole new area of the show, one rife with government intrigue and opportunities for comic book nerdery (i.e., the introduction of Jason Rusch). Even Cisco gets more to do than coining supervillain names, lending his tech support to the CCPD and redeeming the S.T.A.R. name in the process. The only one not reaping the same rewards is Iris who still spends most of her time getting in the way at crime scenes, flirting semi-convincingly with Eddie, and emotionally torturing Barry. With the Flash's public outing—by which I mean the Flash himself is out in public knowledge, not that people know it's Barry or that he reveals he's gay—Iris is rendered even more useless than before, losing her role as Flash evangelist. Her unadulterated warmth still has a value, but it's clearly dwindling and the show treats it that way. Some Musings:- Any episode that boosts Ghostbusters is a winner in my book. Even Wells offers an endorsement: "[It's] really quite funny." Wait—is his endorsement good or bad?- On moving back in with Joe,

Barry: "I am a Millenial; that is what we do." A rare and surprisingly topical joke from The Flash. Well done.- But the best joke of the night goes to Rory, for his critique of the painting he and Snart plan to steal: "It represents to me that rich people buy dumb stuff." You better preach it, Heat Wave!- "My dead fiancé can fly. Haven't broken that to my parents yet." Caitlyn, please never turn evil, if only to give more dubious looks to Cisco when he tries to act macho. The post The Flash: Revenge of the Rogues appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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