

The Spectrum: A Scholars Day Journal

Volume 3

Article 4

January 2013

The (Cinematic) Dark Knight

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Repository Citation

Fitzgerald, B. (2013). The (Cinematic) Dark Knight. *The Spectrum: A Scholars Day Journal*, Vol. 3 Article 4. Available at: <https://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/spectrum/vol3/iss1/4>

The (Cinematic) Dark Knight

A look into the development of Bruce Wayne,
Batman and the characters around them

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Darkness falls onto the skyline of Gotham City. As the sun descends below the horizon line, the citizens of Gotham retreat into their homes; not because they are tired but in fear of the night. As the sun disappears, the scum and grim of Gotham rise up and roam the streets. From thieves, murderers and rapists to the super criminals, evil masterminds and the psychotic, these menaces of society take and do what they want with no consequences. They have no fear and the police are powerless to stop them. There seems to be no hope for the citizens of Gotham. However, the hope the city needs resides on the roof tops and in the shadows. A cloaked figure runs across the rooftops, watching the streets below. Armed with gadgets and tools to help him out, he jumps down to the street and fights the many that bring crime to the streets of Gotham. He is the caped crusader, the dark knight, a man haunted by a murderous past that drives him to prevent more crime. He is the hero the citizens of Gotham need, not the one they deserve. To the daytime world, he is known as his alter ego, Bruce Wayne, the billionaire playboy with money to spare. In the nighttime, he is known by his cape and cowl with the insignia on the chest. He is the Batman.

The character of Bruce Wayne and Batman was the brain child of comic artist Bob Kane. Premiering in Detective Comics #27 in May 1939, the character was a dark brooding man who took the law into his own hands, often killing his enemies in the end or throwing them off a ledge, leaving the reader with their imagination to decide what happened to the villain. As the popularity of the franchise grew, the products associated with the comics grew as well, eventually reaching the silver screen. The first adaptation of the caped crusader appeared in 1943 with a fifteen part serial. As the decades advanced, Batman would appear on the television screen and eventually the silver screen with the release of the 1966 film. After the cancelation of the Adam West television series, Batman had an absence from the silver screen until the new director Tim Burton re-imagined the caped crusader in

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1989, resulting in three direct sequels; *Batman Returns*, directed by Burton, *Batman Forever* and *Batman & Robin*, both directed by Joel Schumacher. In 2005, Batman was yet again re-imagined by Christopher Nolan, creating the three recent live action Batman films; *Batman Begins*, *The Dark Knight* and *the Dark Knight Rises*. Each of the Batman film presented a different interpretation of the original Batman character from the 1939 Detective Comics; some of the films gave a more accurate depiction of the Dark Knight, while others gave a completely different view of the caped crusader. As the films from the campier feel of the 1996 Adam West's Batman, towards the Tim Burton image, the movies started to gain a darker feel and started to gravitate towards the original comics. The Joker, one of Batman's more famous villains, has also gone through a development from a campy villain to a psychotic bringer of chaos. The films were also greatly different from each other, giving the audience and representation of the events and attitude of the decade.

From the Brain of Bob Kane: Looking into the original comics of Batman

If a reporter was to hit the streets and ask the everyday person if they knew who Batman was, likely nine out of ten people would enthusiastically say "Yes, I know who Batman is." If that same reporter asked those same people if they knew the origins of the Batman, those same nine people would definitely give that reporter detailed description of the caped crusader's rise to fame and fortune. For this paper, the origins of the Batman and the ideas of the Batman will be looked based on the original story from Detective Comics #27, where Batman was first introduced.

In 1939, comic books were becoming a big hit with the American youth. According to Rick Marschall, author of several books on comic books and lecturer, Batman arrived on the scene off the coat tails of the success of another superhero. According to Marschall, "The year was 1939; Superman was a national sensation; and the company that introduced the Man of Steel was bidding for another

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success,”¹. When the actual character emerged, Batman created an instant success for DC comics and new appeal for fans and comic artists alike. The comic artist fell in love with Batman because of the new school of thought for comic book characters that he created. Superheroes didn’t have to be just crime solvers, or fight bad guys or move through the scenes; Superheroes could do it all and then some². The fans of Batman were entranced by the Batman because of the uniqueness of the character. Marschall said that “readers seized on this new character because he was different, because his world was so unified (and so frightening), because he fit in that world in ways readers could sense and not just see, from elements like his costume to the manner in which he was drawn against those compelling, bizarre cityscape,”³. Batman, as a character, was relatable to the readers.

How could the reader relate to Batman? Batman was merely a character on the pages of a comic book, an image of the imagination of Bob Kane. Compared to other reigning superhero of the time, Superman, Batman was reachable. Superman was a man who was invulnerable and had unlimited powers, an alien that crashed to earth and started life in the American homeland and was raised to be a model of American ideals. Superman’s invulnerability ruined his connection to the audience, making his alter ego and everything about him more like “props than essential elements,”⁴. Batman, however, had a back story that was reachable to the audience. In Detective Comics #33 of November, 1939, the tragic story of Batman was told. Born to the billionaire family Wayne, Bruce Wayne witnessed his father and mother killed by a robber an alleyway. In a surge of emotion to avenge his parents’ death, Bruce trained himself in science and athletics to become a physical and mental genius. Looking for inspiration for a disguise, Bruce witnessed a bat flying through a window and “thus is born this weird figure of the dark.

¹ Bob Kane, *Batman Archives: Volume 1*(New York, 1990), 5.

² Kane, 5.

³ Kane, 5.

⁴ Kane, 5.

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This avenger of evil, the Batman,”⁵. Bruce’s story is relatable because it was realistic. Bruce wasn’t given

powers from the gods or received them from a radioactive spider, he

trained his body and mind to peek of his ability. Bruce created the persona

of Batman out of emotion for his parent’s death and spent his life towards

the character. Along with the reason for the character, the way Batman

fights crime is realistic as well. In the first issue, Batman drives to the scene

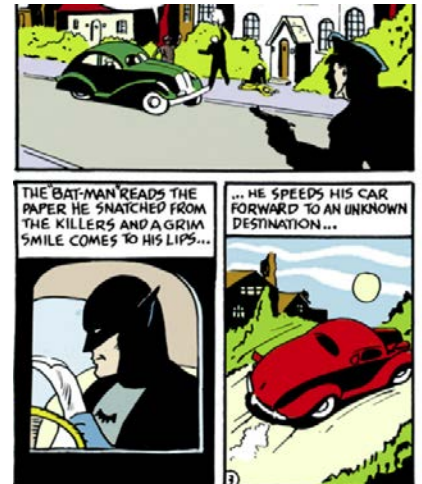
of the crime in his car, later known as the Bat-Mobile. In the first issue, the

Bat-Mobile was just a red car that he drove. It wasn’t decked out in black or

fancy fins (although these modifications would appear on later models of

the Bat-Mobile). Batman also used grappling hooks and rope to climb up

buildings and hand held object to fight against crime, such as a wrench on a work bench.



1 : The Original Bat-Mobile, bottom right (Kane, 12.)

Another aspect to Batman that made him such a success was the darker tone to the comics.

Already mentioned in the last paragraph, Batman’s character came from a darker past. With both

parents murdered in front of him, Bruce Wayne’s vengeance for the deaths of his parents gave the

Batman the motives of revenge as well as justice in the comics. Marschall said that the Batman

“embodied the darker elements of the city through which he stalked,”⁶ thus giving the means to be a

meaner and tougher superhero than the thugs he would battle with. In the first issue of the Batman,

Detective Comics #27, Batman is saving a man from murder by the hands of Alfred Stryker. As Batman

solves the mystery of the issue, Stryker reaches into his jacket and pulls out a gun to shoot the Batman.

Batman dodges the attack and punches Stryker, sending him into a tank of acid. As the would-be victim

⁵ Kane, 69.

⁶ Kane, 5.

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looks on, saying that Stryker is falling into the acid, Batman suavely replies with, "A fitting ending for his kind,"⁷. This showed the ruthlessness of the original Batman.

The scene in figure 2 also shows a pivotal plot device used in the Batman comic. Batman used his intellectual mind and prowess to solve crimes and work with the police, earning the well known nickname of the World's Greatest Detective. In this issue, a man was killed in his home with the police thinking it was the son. Batman further investigated the crime and traced back the clues he found back to Stryker. Batman's detective skills set him apart from the rest of the superhero comic, where other superheroes were using their fists or powers to solve to problem, he was using his mind to defeat the bad guys.

Quiet on the set: Batman's progress through film



3. Batman in the Bat-Cave, 1943.

The first appearance of the Batman on the silver screen came in 1943. Played by Lewis Wilson⁸, the Batman appeared in a fifteen part serial that took place in Gotham City. In the film, Batman teamed up with Robin, played by Douglas Croft⁹, to fight the evil Japanese super spy Dr. Daka. Using a combination of his detective skills and crime fighting ability, Batman and Robin were able to



2. Batman ruthlessly killing a man in a vat of acid (Kane, 15.)

⁷ Kane, 15.

⁸ *Batman (1943)*, http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0035665/?ref_=fn_al_tt_3.

⁹ *Batman (1943)*, http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0035665/?ref_=fn_al_tt_3.

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foil the plans of Dr. Daka. The film gave audiences the first look into the historic Bat-Cave and gave Batman actual life. This version of the Batman gave perfect representation of the Bob Kane's vision of the Caped Crusader. Using both his detective skills, his use of disguise and his crime fighting ability, Wilson gave audiences an accurate Batman. In one scene, Batman disguised himself as a regular man to investigate a hotel to find his female friend, Linda Page. Batman goes into the hotel, asking for room information. When one of the villain's henchmen walks into the building, Batman uses his detective skills and sleuthing ability to follow the henchman to the room where Page is being held. The use of his detective skills to find the location of Linda Page shows the Batman in a positive representation of the comic book hero.

An alteration to the character of Batman in the 1943 movie, that made a major impact on the character's image, was the difference between Batman and Bruce Wayne. In the film, there seemed to be very little in difference between the Batman and Bruce Wayne. Bruce Wayne seemed to be a regular man off the street with nothing special about him. When Bruce Wayne donned on the cowl and cape, becoming the Batman, there seemed to be very little change. Batman was just the same man with a cape. This can be seen in a scene where the Batman fought against two different foes. While Robin fought another henchman, Batman fought very poorly against the two men. Batman was easily overpowered and tossed off the side of a building, only to be saved by window cleaners.¹⁰ The Bat's near deadly free fall took from the mystique of the comic's hero.

In 1966, Batman made another appearance in theaters. This time, the film came to the audience off the heels of what the film was based off of; the 1966 Batman Television Show. Starring

¹⁰ Lambert Hillyer, *Batman*, 1943.



4. Batman 1966 movie poster

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Adam West as Batman and Burt Ward as Robin¹¹, the movie saw the dynamic duo fighting the Penguin, the Joker, the Riddler and Catwoman in a fight to save the leaders of the free world. The film brought the campy feel from the television show with it to the silver screen, with puns and one liners throughout the film. In one scene, while chasing a yacht in the Bat-Copter, Batman was climbing down a rope ladder



5. Batman and the Shark, 1966.

to board the yacht. Suddenly , the yacht disappeared into thin air and Batman was dipped into the water.

As Batman sank into the water, Robin worked quickly to pull Batman out of the water before danger occurred to the Bat. As he arose from the water, a full grown shark was hanging off of Batman's leg.

Thinking quickly, Batman yelled to Robin, "Robin- Hand me down the shark repellent bat spray!"¹²

Robin quickly grabbed the spray, which was next to Manta Ray spray, Whale Spray and Barracuda Spray, climbed down the rope and acrobatically gave it to Batman, which Batman used on the shark. The shark fell into the water and exploded on impact. This scene showcased the campiness of the movie, showing the puns and one time gags that, although making the scene laughable and enjoyable, created such a mind numbing sensation. Over the course of the film, the constant use of these jokes wore down the viewer tolerance until the viewer could not handle it anymore.

The Batman of this film was very different from the 1943 Batman. While there was very little difference between Batman and Bruce Wayne in the 1943 film, Adam West created two very different personas. Bruce was perceived as a suave playboy, sweeping the ladies off their feet wherever he went.

¹¹ *Batman (1966)*, http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0035665/?ref_=fn_al_tt_3

¹² Leslie Martinson, *Batman, 1966*.

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Batman, in contrast, was a more serious character. Batman would look around and try to find clues to the crime, his intelligence greater than average citizen. In a scene where Bruce Wayne is on a date with Ms. Kitka, a disguised Catwoman, Bruce sees the Bat Signal in the sky and knows the intention was to trick the villains into thinking that Batman was too busy with the police commissioner to worry about them. Another difference between the two films was the personalization of Batman's equipment. In the 1943 film, Batman used a regular car to travel around and fight crime. In the 1966 film, everything used by Batman was personalized with a Bat name or the Bat symbol. For instance, Batman and Robin used the Bat-Copter, the Bat-Boat and the Bat-Mobile, all of which had the same colors and similar Batman details, such as bat shaped fins.



6. Michael Keaton as Batman, 1989.

In 1989, then new film director Tim Burton decided he wanted to tackle the project of a new age Batman film. In the year previous, devoted fans of the comic book company DC Comics had a huge uproar at a slide show presentation of the *Superman* movie, calling out certain scene as uncharacteristic to Superman.¹³ When Burton took on the mantle of director after the project was placed into development, Burton wanted to do the project right. Burton recalled that, "the film must be about the creature of the night and capture the spirit of what Batman was originally about and what the comic, by and large, has reverted to in the last couple of years."¹⁴ And that is what Burton did. Covering everything in a darker tone and shadowy scenery, Burton's *Batman* sent viewers into a world that was similar to the original comics and far away from the 1966's movie. The villains were no longer laughing mad men but

¹³ Alan Jones, *Batman*, 16.

¹⁴ Jones, 17.

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were tough, brutal murderers and criminals. And the hero that fought them was just as dark. Losing the colorful outfits and gadgets, Burton's Batman was clad in black body armor and stood with authority. His vehicles were black and had gothic design, with fins shaped like bat wings. The movie went back to the original material of the comics, a good mix between detective work and crime fighting, with a darker feel of fear throughout. In the first scene of *Batman*, Batman easily cleans the floor of the robbers and leaves one conscious to tell the world who he is. When Bruce Wayne is at home, he uses his detective training and mind set to figure out the Joker's identity and understand his motives (which he has none).

Michael Keaton's performance as Bruce Wayne and Batman is one of the better performances. Keaton separates the personas easily into two different characters but leaves overlapping factors that make the



7. Michael Keaton as Batman and Bruce Wayne, 1989

character real. In this film, the audience is actually shown the murder of Bruce Wayne's parents. Michael Keaton is able to show the struggle of living with the memory and knowing who the murderer was (in this story) perfectly. In a certain scene, he watches a monitor of the murderer calling out Batman and he has a flash back to the murder. Keaton show the conflict that he feels of trying to hold onto his "no killing" policy while wanting revenge on the man who ruined his childhood.¹⁵ Another aspect viewed in the film was the seriousness of both Batman and Bruce Wayne. In the previous 1966 film, Adam West created characters that were over the top and unbelievable. Keaton created a Bruce Wayne that was believable to the audience. Bruce was arrogant and proud, with a sense of entitlement. When reporters were snooping around his mansion, looking at his personal collection and mocking the owner, Bruce followed them and told them the history of the pieces that they were looking at. As Batman, Keaton is

¹⁵ Tim Burton, *Batman*, 1989.

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able to create a no-nonsense authority figure that can't be stopped. In the first scene of *Batman(1989)*, Batman uses the darkness around him to scare his enemies and then easily defeats them in hand to hand combat.

In 2005, director Christopher Nolan re-imagined the caped crusader in a realistic light in *Batman Begins*. Tapping into the billionaire side of Batman, Nolan built off the aspects Burton already created and twisted and turned it a little bit.



8. Christian Bale as Batman

Nolan's Batman was as dark as Burton's, dwelling into the fear aspect of the character. In the first few scenes, Bruce Wayne is traveling to the mountains of Asia to go to the Guild of Assassins to train with Ra's al Ghul. There, Bruce learned the ways of stealth and fear, Ra's saying, "theatricality and deception are powerful agents. You must become more than a man in the eyes of your opponents."¹⁶ Nolan created a Batman that used the fear aspect of the original comics to create the Batman. When Batman needed to find out more about the criminal dealing happening in the docks, he dressed up in all black and went into the office of Police officer Gordon. Using the darkness and deception of sound, Batman tricked Gordon into tell him what was going on at the docks, making Gordon believe Batman had a gun to his back when in reality it was a stapler.

Christian Bale's performance of Batman tapped into the development of separate characters and created the perfect difference between the two characters. Bale played a very arrogant and self centered (in the eyes of the public) Bruce Wayne. When there was a party in his mansion for his birthday and Ra's arrived to confront him, Bruce told everyone to leave saying "The thing about being a Wayne that you are never short of a few free loaders,"¹⁷. Bale used the arrogant side of a billionaire to

¹⁶ Christopher Nolan, *Batman Begins*, 2005.

¹⁷ Nolan, 2005.

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push everyone out of the mansion without being suspicious of Bruce. Bale's Batman is on the other side of the spectrum. He is the dark character who will fight a man to his limit, breaking his bones and to near death but without killing him. While interrogating a corrupt cop, Batman hangs him off a ledge of a building connected to a rope. Batman drops the cop from the roof and stops him inches from the ground.



9. Christian Bale as Bruce Wayne, in front of Batman's armor, 2008

This iconic scene shows the ruthlessness and the intensity of Bale's Batman.

The Gag Reel: The Dark Knight's notorious nemesis



10. The Joker, as he first appeared (Kane, 229.)

The Joker has been a staple in the Batman Universe since the November 1940 issue of Detective Comics. A man with pale white skin, bright red lips that form into a smile and deep green hair, the Joker is a villain like any other. Constantly laughing and giggling, The Joker uses this gag to kill a man in the comics. In the issue, the Joker sends a record to the District Attorney of Gotham. As the record plays, Joker's voice is heard saying,

"District Attorney Carter, Even as I speak the needle bites into the record,

releasing a deadly gas sprayed on its surface. It brings you death from – The Joker! HA HA HA HA...."¹⁸.

As the DA listens, he laughs hysterically and dies with a big grin on his face. However, the Clown Prince of Crime was not only a mad man but an evil genius. The Joker was a diabolical thinker, figuring out every detail before hand and thinking of every single outcome. As stated by author Marc DiPaolo, "the Joker

¹⁸ Kane, 230.

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could announce his high-profile crimes in advance and still succeed despite the police's and Batman's best efforts,"¹⁹. In the issue of Detective Comics #45, The Batman has followed the Joker to his secret hideout. After the Joker revealed his evil plan to the world, The Batman appeared to put an end to his plans. However, the Joker was ready. The Joker traps the Batman in a glass tube, gloats about his evil plan and leaves. The Batman's capture shows the readiness and the wherewithal to set a trap up for the Batman's arrival.

The Joker's first film appearance came in 1966 in the spin-off movie of the 1960's television show. Played by Caesar Romero, this version of the Joker takes a step back from the original comics. Instead of the maniacal mad man that fought against the Batman, the Joker of this film was a satire of the



11. Caesar Romero, 1966 Batman

comics. With similar make-up and facial expression, these mannerisms were the only things resembling the comic's Joker. In this film, the Joker acted like a campy class clown. The Joker would use jokes and pranks to try and make the other villains laugh. In one particular scene, the villains of the movie were in a submarine and were firing torpedoes at Batman and Robin. The Penguin was leading the attack on the caped crusader and the boy wonder. As he shouts order, the Penguin is specifically telling the Joker what to do. The Joker quickly responds with a "Yo Ho!"²⁰, the response of the Penguin's henchman. The Joker continues laughing and taking orders, while saying the occasional catchphrase now and then. This interpretation of the Joker degrades the character into nothing more than a barely higher up henchmen.

¹⁹ Marc DiPaolo, *War, Politics and Superheroes: Ethics and Propaganda in Comics and Film* (North Carolina, 2001), 59.

²⁰ Leslie H. Martinson, *Batman*, 1966.

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If the Penguin was a big brother who was the know-it-all hot shot, the Joker would have been characterized as the annoying younger brother that the mother told the big brother to bring along.



12. Jack Nicholson as The Joker, 1989.

In 1989, as Tim Burton tried to reboot the franchise of the cinematic Batman, there was only one villain that could be brought into to fight the Batman. The Joker was perfect for the villain for Burton's new, darker version of the Batman, and Jack Nicholson was the perfect choice for the Joker. Bob Kane, the artist behind Batman and who worked on *Batman (1989)* envisioned Nicholson as the Joker back in the 1980's when he used a picture of Nicholson to draw a reimagined Joker. Interviewer Alan Jones said that, "Kane thinks our Joker is better than the original in his strip. Very early on Bob kept saying 'Get Jack Nicholson. He is the Joker. Get the man!'"²¹ From early on, Nicholson lived up to the standards of Kane and Burton. Nicholson's Joker was both sadistic and hysterical. Using the props and toys of the original Joker, Nicholson brought back the key factor left out in Martinson's *Batman*; the Joker's murderous side. Nicholson created a character that was dark and laughed as he committed a crime. After the accident that created him, the Joker went to a meeting with the crime bosses of Gotham. The Joker told all the men that his is the true crime boss and they all answer to him. One crime boss says that he won't team up with the Joker. The Joker stands up from the table the crime bosses are all sitting at, walks to the crime boss and extends his hand as a way of peace. As the two shake, the crime boss starts to shake and smoke. He becomes charred broiled as the Joker is laughing hysterically, the Joker's joy buzzer killing the crime boss. As another crime boss calls the Joker crazy, the Joker simply replies, "Haven't you've heard

²¹ Alan Jones, *Batman*, 1989.

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the healing power of laughter?”²² Nicholson’s use of subtle humor and the portrayal of a sadistic mad man created a near perfect representation of the character.

In 2008, Christopher Nolan presented to the world a darker, realistic version of the Caped Crusader in *The Dark Knight Rises*. In the film, The Joker rose up as the main antagonist to Batman. Heath Ledger’s performance of the Joker is one that leaves chills down the spine and goose bumps on the skin. This Joker moves away from the traditional Joker from the comics, away from the comedic pranks, gags and laughing



13. Heath Ledger as The Joker, 2008.

gas (such like Nicholson did), but continues further down that path of darkness. Ledger gave the audience not only a sick, demented character but look into a human soul that was tortured from birth and pushed to the edge of sanity, leaving nothing but a sadistic shell of humanity. As emphasized by DiPaolo, Ledger continued down the road that Nicholson created but added more of a murderous side, “evoking Malcolm McDonald’s role in *A Clockwork Orange*,”²³. A scene that shows this when the Joker arrives at the meeting of the criminal overlords of Gotham. The Joker comes in, insulting the crime lords and mocking them for stealing their money. As the men around him get angry, he places a pencil on the table, telling them he’ll do a magic trick. As a henchman approaches him, he slams the henchmen’s head into the pencil making it “disappear”²⁴. As the Joker continues talking to the men about killing the Batman, how each of the men are wimps because of the Batman and cracking jokes along the way, the crime lord finally has enough and gets up to handle the situation. The Joker reveals that he is strapped with explosive and that he will detonate if he gets closer. The men back off and the Joker slowly leaves the meeting. This scene not only

²² Tim Burton, *Batman*, 1989.

²³ DiPaolo, 60.

²⁴ Christopher Nolan, *The Dark Knight*, 2008

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places homage to the Burton crime lord's meeting, it shows the Joker in the sadistic light that he lives in and the criminal mastermind that he is. The Joker came into the meeting with a game plan if things went south. He can clearly defend himself if trouble starts to brew, as seen with the pencil trick. He understands that he is protected, so he continues to joke about the crime lords until one snaps. Minus the theatrical gags of the comic, the Joker presented in this film give the audience an accurate representation of the true essence of the Joker; a deliverer of chaos for the world and, more importantly, Batman.

Edit the script : The underlining themes of Batman

The Batman films have been a staple of American cinema. Each film has created clichés and new breaking effects that have or will influence future films. While the effects of these movies are important, the messages of the film often provide a deeper importance than the effects. In the later films, the message of fear and overcoming it is prevalent from the 1989 *Batman* to the 2012 *Dark Knight Rises* film. However, the message of the earlier 1943 and 1966 films did not revolve around this idea. Their messages were more in tune with the times the film were released, representing the attitude of the era.

The 1943 film took place at the height of the second World War. During this time, the American populace was focused on buying war bonds and funding the army in any way that they could. In the serial, Batman represented these ideals. In the opening of the first episode, the narrator said that Batman and Robin, "represent American youth who love their country and are glad to fight it."²⁵ The film shows that Batman is a patriot and represents the ideals of America. The film also shows the fear of the Axis powers of World War II. In the film, the main villain, Dr. Daka, is a Japanese super spy. He comes into Gotham city and tries to control the men of the city to do his bidding. If the men refused to help

²⁵ Hillyer, 1943.

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him, Dr. Daka would use his science to control him and turn the man into a puppet for him. The fear of the Japanese after the attack on Pearl Harbor was still in America. The populace wanted to get back at the Japanese. Buying war bond and supporting the war, and who would Batman be if he didn't fight for America and against Japan?

The 1966 *Batman* was one that reflected more than just the era. The campiness of the movie reflected most television of the day. The film was a happy romp that distracted from the issues out in the real world. With the Vietnam War, race riots, the Cold War and political issues occurring throughout the sixties, shows and movies, such as *Batman*, provided an escape from the harshness of the real world. However, the film did not try to avoid the real world. Throughout the film, the theme of getting along and togetherness was ever present. When Batman was trying to organize the dehydrated particles of the World Leaders, Robin asked if Batman could mix the leaders up a bit to try and make them more cooperative. Batman disagreed with Robin, saying that if the leaders need to work together, they'll need to do it on their own and of their own free will.²⁶

Conclusion

Over the seventy years of Batman films, the characters of both Batman and the villain Joker have been interpreted in very different and distinct ways. The characters developed as dark and serious entities were more analogous to their comic counter parts. As the film headed towards a darker and more grave tone, the more faithful the film was to the original comics. Tim Burton's 1989 *Batman* and Christopher Nolan's 2005 *Batman Begins* were the films that were the most true to the original comics. The films produced earlier in the century reflect the tone of the era and the cultural messages of each decade. Lambert Hillyer's 1943 *Batman* reflected the fear of a Japanese invasion and the push to support the

²⁶ Hillyer, 1966.

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American troops in World War II while Leslie Martinson's 1966 *Batman* showed the urge for the American population to get along and get over their differences.

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