

Dark and Stormy Knight

by Thomas A. McKean: 08/13/1989

After viewing the adult fantasy "Batman" film, one might leave the theater wondering what happened to the family oriented classic television series of the sixties. For who can forget Bruce Wayne, millionaire socialite, and his youthful ward, Dick Grayson, as they slid down the Batpoles to make Gotham city safe from evil doers? Into the Batmobile they went, bringing atomic battery to power, and turbines to speed. And then it was off for a brief visit to the Gotham city police headquarters. What daring foe struck this time? Could it be that clown prince of crime, the Joker, or that infernal prince of puzzlers, the Riddler? Or was it someone much more dangerous, such as that infernal snatcher of hats, the Mad Hatter, or that fowl bird of plunder, the Penguin? Whatever the odds, whoever the foe, Batman and Robin were there to protect the good citizens of Gotham from those "poor deluded people."

The movie, on the other hand, approaches the Batman legend from a different angle. This then, is the Batman of the eighties. The Dark Knight that lies deep within the souls of all of us. He is the Batman of a new age. Yet he is also the Batman of an old age. For this is the original Batman. A vigilante out to avenge the cold murder of his parents that fateful night in Crime alley. This Batman is serious. He does not like criminals of any type, and has no bones about proving it to them. This Batman is capable of murder. He does not respect the law as the Batman of the sixties did. He is the quiet type. He spends days and nights brooding over the unfortunate events in his life, instead of teaching Dick Grayson algebra. For this Batman has no Dick Grayson, and therefore, no Robin. He is a soloist. A lonesome figure acting on the premise that yes, one man can make a difference.

There are obvious visual differences as well. For instance, the crime fighting on the series usually took place at some point during the day, where Batman and Robin would casually climb up the wall on the Batropes to put someone behind bars. The movie, however, usually had those scenes take place under cover of darkness, presumably when the criminal element thought itself to be safe and adequately hidden from police and other law enforcement.

So which to believe? Is Batman that happy go lucky guy as played by Adam West? Or is he a dark and depressed brooding type of fellow as played by Michael Keaton? Certainly both are entertaining, and both have a message. Both have since become legend, and both...are Batman.