

# IRABANOS

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## RADIATIVOS!

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San Diego in 1966!

Thomas Schlick for TAFF!

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I've just seen the first episode of the new "Batman" television series. You know, it's true -- it is being played on two levels; straight comic-book action and camp-type satire for the sophisticates who've currently picked on comic books to be "In". But the two levels are not dissimilar, as I'd heard they would be, with the serious level for the young kids who take their costumed heroes seriously, and the satire for the sophisticated audience. Instead, the two plots are blended into one, following what is coming today to the the standard portrayal of a costumed hero, as the stereotyped Average Man who just happens to be in a weird costume. This trend has been growing in comic books since the return of the costumed super-hero in the early '60's; we have the Marvel crew of crime-fighters who sweat, lose their tempers, and quarrel among themselves, as the prime example, and even the established comic-book heroes such as Superman are currently going all-out to prove their mortality -- in the current issue of ACTION COMICS, Superman is having a nervous breakdown from overwork. "Batman", the television program, is capitalizing on the more humorous aspects of this trend, but it is by no means creating something new for the adult television audience, or "perverting" the comic book character from the purist's view -- the comic book itself has been just like this for the past couple of years, ever since editor Julius Schwartz took the character away from editor Jack Schiff (under whom the Batman comics had been losing circulation steadily), and instituted the "New Look" Batman.

The plot of the tv program is a standard one that just about every masked crime-fighter has been run through at one time or another. One of his old foes, in this case the Riddler, has tricked the hero into arresting him for committing a crime when in fact the villain has only pretended to commit the crime, but is actually technically innocent of the charge. The villain then swears out a charge of False Arrest against the hero, seeking to bring the case to trial and manuever the hero into a situation in which he is forced to reveal his secret identity while under oath on the witness stand. This takes care of the serious side of the program. The "sophisticated" side consists of playing up all the human fallibilities of the costumed heroes, making them just ordinary guys in costume rather than super-heroes. When Batman and Robin trace the Riddler to a night club, Robin is unable to go in because he's under age. Batman is served a drugged drink, and succumbs to it like anyone else would. (The old, original Batman would invariably have proven immune to the drink's effects because of his superior physical constitution; all costumed heroes back in the '40's, if not actually super, at least had the physical strength and training of a Doc Savage -- can you imagine the Doc being fazed by ordinary knockout drops?) When Batman, still recovering from the drug's effects, staggers to the Batmobile to pursue the criminals (who've kidnapped Robin), the police take his keys away from him; no matter who good his motives, he's still obviously in no condition to be driving about on the city streets. And so it goes.

The technical effects and camera work are faultless. And, for the first time in screen history that I can remember, Hollywood has succeeded in successfully creating costumed heroes and villains that look like their comic-book originals. (Earlier attempts, from the old movie serials to tv's crew-cut Superman, were always pathetic failures.) The tv Batman and Robin look just like the comic-book Batman and Robin -- that is, Julie Schwartz's "New Look" Batman and Robin, in which Batman is transformed from an imposing physical figure into a slim, wiry, agile young man, and Robin, the Boy Wonder, has grown from 10 or 11 to a teen-ager of 17 or 18. The costumes are very well made, adding to the verisimilitude -- but they add to the humor, even so; no matter how well made, or how straight played, a real man cannot run around in a real comic book costume without looking like an overgrown Trick-or-Treater who doesn't know that Halloween's over. Indeed, the modern Batman and Robin, both on tv and in the comic, give more of an impression of being allowed to run loose to contribute to the public's amusement than for any superior crime-combatting abilities. The dialog is straight comic-book dialog; bad enough to pass as sophisticated humor without being a distortion of the original, thus automatically playing on two levels.

I like "Batman", but then I like comic books. I don't think that anybody who's outgrown comic books is going to like "Batman" -- not enough to become a regular viewer, at any rate. The two aspects of the material are too closely interwoven; no matter how the producers try to play up the sophisticated humor inherent in the subject to attract a wider audience, the program still remains basically a vehicle for comic-book adventure, and this fact cannot be altered. If you like comic books, I think you will enjoy "Batman"; you won't consider that television has "corrupted the original literary character". But if you don't like comic books, I don't think that "Batman" will have much for you. I just hope there are enough people who like the show to keep it alive for the usual life span of a successful television series. I understand the magnates are watching the public acceptance of "Batman" with an especially sharp eye; if it proves successful, there are projected series, either live-action or animated, featuring Superman, Superboy, Aquaman, Wonder Woman, and the Green Hornet, all waiting in the wings. In another season or two, the comic book costumed-hero series may be the new vogue, replacing the current spy series and cute-monster series that replaced the doctor series that replaced the Western series...

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— BEING COMMENTS ON LAST WEEK'S DISTRIBUTION

Andy Porter -- Come to New York and walk eight miles, eh? ## Forry Ackerman was bewailing that "The 10th Victim" doesn't seem to be setting any sort of a record in establishing a sophisticated non-monster vogue in s-f movie making. The public seems to like it, but even though it's set in the future, it's not being considered as an s-f movie. So it probably won't set off any new trend.

Mike Klassen -- A couple of years ago, when we first thought of the idea, we checked with both UCLA and the main downtown branch of the Los Angeles Public Library, to see whether either of them would be interested in putting on an s-f display. Both said yes, but... Get all the material assembled first so they'd see what they were committing themselves to show, then they'd make up their minds as to whether it's worth their display cabinet space or not. If we could promise them a really colorful exhibit, with lots of first editions, original manuscripts, original interior art, magazines with first appearances of famous stories, correspondence, and the like, preferably related to the Big Name pros like Bradbury and Asimov that even the general public has heard of, they'd be very interested indeed. And we could doubtlessly assemble such an exhibit, especially with the collections of such fans as Forry Ackerman to choose rare display material from. However, as usual, when it came down to doing the work of assembling the various material that would go into the exhibit, nobody seemed really interested in doing anything after all. So the project died of apathy. If we'd be willing to do the organizational work in assembling such a display, we could probably get it accepted by UCLA or LAPL or both with no trouble at all.

Dwain Kaiser -- Some more Pederson covers for Apa L would be appreciated, if you can talk him into doing any more. Would Lynn be interested in getting into Apa L as a regular contributor? ## And what happened to those extra copies to his cover for the 39th Dist'n that you were going to run off for the next Best of Apa L collection? ## The mimeoed Tables of Contents are vastly superior to the hektoed ones in all but ease in running them off. Like we have to drive about 25 blocks each way from the Playground to the Labyrinth and back again to get to the mimeo, and even with Barry's reckless disregard for safe driving speeds (yes, I know about your 10% better reflexes, Barry...), this still takes longer than to hekto the ToC at the Meeting. And we usually have little enough time as it is. So mimeoed ToC's will be an off-again, on-again thing -- mostly off, now that it looks like we'll regularly be getting a late start due to watching "Batman" untill 8:00 on Thursdays. ## I'm wondering what's happened to Steve Barr. He was the one who wrote me that he was gonna get into Apa L whether we liked it or not, but since I told him we had no objections, he seems to have lost interest. I haven't seen anything from him lately, anyway. ## No, I don't think that Jim Wright is Putting Us All On. Unless, that is, you consider it Putting Us On to send fans material you know is postally objectionable and that'll get them investigated by the government (this has happened; Meskys states that he got a call from the FBI as a result of one of Wright's bits of "Communist propaganda"), and then state that it's a free country and you'll send fans what you damn well please and if it gets them into trouble, that's their tough luck. That doesn't come under the category of Putting Anybody On in my book; that's just malicious troublemaking.

[This is being first-drafted Thursday morning, at USC. "Batman" seems to have captured the campus; everybody is discussing last night's show, debating whether it's suitably camp or not, and a flag bearing the Bat-symbol is flying from the tower of the unfinished VonKleinsmid Hall.]

Bjo Trimble -- It's always an experience watching a movie with Ron Elik. Whether you're sitting with him or not; just as long as you're in the same theatre together. ## I guess our parties are just too tame for Len Bailes; he's more used to Heliogabalian profligacies. Maybe we should put Len in charge of the Orgy Planning Dep't to liven things up? (At least one rape per party, or he gets sacked for incompetence.)

Bruce Pelz -- I don't know how much costumery one could get away with wearing into Disneyland, but I'd suspect not nearly as much as one could get away with wearing in D'land -- that is, it wouldn't be very difficult to smuggle a costume into the park and change into it there; once inside the main grounds, you could probably get away with a lot more, or at least wear it for quite a while before the attendants would come to the point of physically ejecting you. Did I ever tell you about my plans to overthrow the park administration by a Nazi Putsch? I figure that you could probably parade around in Storm Trooper uniform for maybe five minutes before discovery and execution by the ancien régime, provided you picked your locale and didn't parade in front of an attendant right away. (For anybody really daring, you could change inside Sleeping Beauty's castle, then make your dramatic appearance on the battlements overlooking the drawbridge into Fantasyland, with a speech proclaiming yourself the Gauleiter of Disneyland, announcing the execution of Donald Duck for the racial defilement of the park, etc. If you could barricade the passageway from the inside of the castle (the Sleeping Beauty walkthrough attraction) to the battlements, how long could you get away with it before the administration fought its way out to you?) This schtick is only for the suicidally-minded, of course -- at least, I haven't been able to figure out a practical getaway yet. You've seen the photos of "Tarzan" in the Jungle Cruise ride? (He got away with it, but he only stayed around long enough to prance around in front of one boatload of tourists (containing a confederate with a camera), and he didn't let himself get trapped on any battlements.) Is interesting situation to contemplate, nyet?

Terry Romine -- Yes; this is what I wanted. Keep it coming!