



## THE ORIGIN OF EGGHEAD

*Vincent Price on his TV villainy, eggstraordinaire.*

By Bob Garcia

The intellectual evil-doer known as Egghead, played by Vincent Price, never appeared in the *Batman* comic books. A similar villain named The Brain appeared in the comics in 1960, but lacked the characteristics that made Egghead unique. While most of the other villains adopted their identities as an affectation, this tall dapper gentlemen had a cranium to match his name.

Egghead was the creation of Ed Self, the son of the Fox executive in charge of production, Bill Self. Ed Self, who would later win an Emmy for the teleplay *THE INCIDENT*, was trying to get into the Writers Guild at the time, and wrote a story for *BATMAN*, handed over to Stanley Ralph Ross.

"My job was to make the story work, which was not that easy," said Ross. "It wound up being almost nothing of what Eddie had written, but at least it got him into the Guild." Eventually, Ross came up with a perfect comedic hook for the villain. "When I started to write Egghead, I looked up every word in the dictionary that started with 'ex' or 'ecc': Egg-centric, Egg-splisive..."

Executive producer William Dozier asked Vincent Price to star as the illustrious villain, and he was egg-static. "They were shows that were very much on the tip of everyone's tongue," said Price. "Everybody wanted to be in them. I was delighted when they called and asked me to do it. The show's villains were nasty, but funny."

When they told Price he would be working with Edward Everett Horton as Chief Screaming Chicken, the deal was clinched. "One of the people I always wanted to work with all my life, was Edward Everett Horton," said Price. "I loved him. He was such a great actor. He was very old at that point in time, and very quiet, but very sweet with that wonderful funny face...I just loved working with him."

Art director Serge Krizman designed a



Price as Egghead, one of the series' original villains created by writer Stanley Ralph Ross, with Ann Baxter as Olga, Queen of the Bessovarlian Cossaks in #102 "The Ogg and I."

lair where Egghead could hatch his schemes. "I had a marvelous time with Egghead's headquarters with its seven-foot-long half-egg couch. It was almost contemporary art," said Krizman. Because the villain was original to the show, there was no comic book reference to work from, and everything had to be created by the production staff. "The most marvelous thing was there was nothing to go on," said Krizman.

"He was brilliant," said Price of his art director. "His sets were marvelous and he too had a sense of humor. In my apartment all the furniture was hard-boiled eggs cut in half. The painting on the wall was bacon and eggs. For all the world it looked like the most modern picture you ever saw in your life. It was so inventive."

Costumer Jan Kemp also had to develop Egghead whole cloth. "It came to my mind to use this yolk-colored costume with white trim in silk, and make it much like a tuxedo," said Kemp. "We discussed this with

Vincent and he was very pleased with our idea." Kemp made three suits.

The Egghead design included an oversized bald cap for Price to wear, created by makeup supervisor Bruce Hutchinson. "The first time we finished for the day, we spent 20 minutes to a half hour gently removing this bald cap, which was glued down," recalled Hutchinson. "The next day, he came in and said 'This is really boring. I hate this.' He reached back and ripped the thing off his head. From that day forward, that was the *only* way he would take it off. He said it was like taking a band-aid off a little bit at a time. 'You just have to rip it off.'

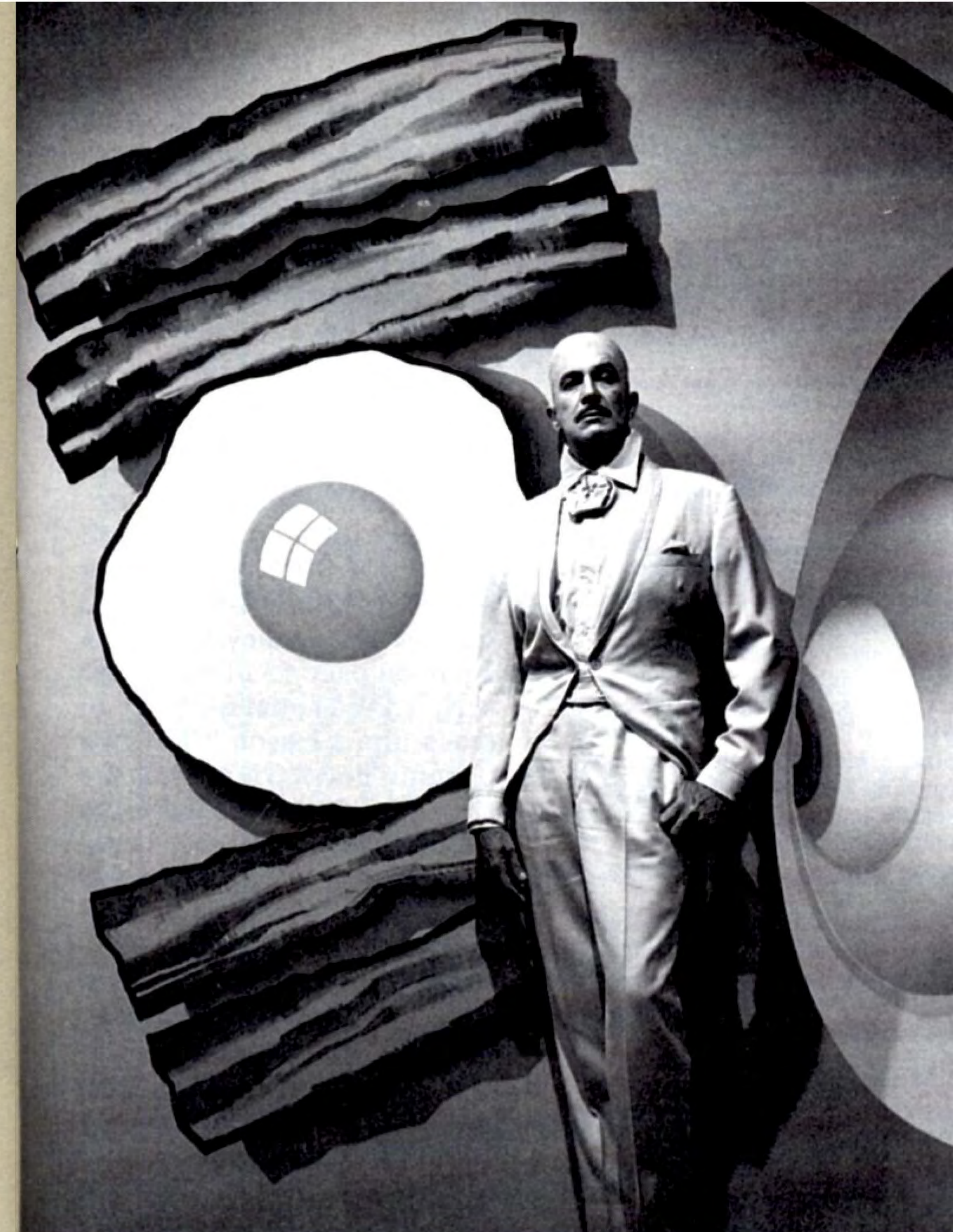
"They had to put a vent on the back of the makeup so I wouldn't sweat," said Price. "I'd get there at seven a.m., because it took so long to get on. I had to wear that all day long, and in a television show, you work *all* day."

"Actually, we left a little bit of it unglued and the perspiration would drain out of the back of his neck," said Hutchinson. "He wore a very high collar which was designed by wardrobe that kept the nape of the neck area pretty well concealed, so you couldn't really see much of that."

After the makeup and costuming problems were solved Price started to have a great time on the show. "I thought the *BATMAN* series was wonderful, so inventive and clever," said Price. "There was such a sense of humor on the whole set. The producers really loved it. They had a huge hit on their hands. They paid great attention to it. It was produced like a real movie. They didn't skimp at all."

Price remembered that the shoot went well, due mostly to the director George Waggner. "He was very good...There was lots of action, and it's always difficult to do action quickly. The camera can't get it or [someone] wants to improve it."

During the episodes' climactic battle, director of photography Howie Schwartz en-



The most stylish of villains, Price in Egghead's "head"quarters, modern pop art decor designed by art director Serge Krizman, costume by Jan Kemp.

listed Price for a little comeuppance for Burt Ward. "I don't think the crew liked him very much," said Price. "They found him very conceited. I think he announced he was the world's greatest actor, and that's pretty hard to get away with. When I had my battle with him, there were two eggs I was to throw at him. The crew came up and said: 'Two dozen. Here's our chance to get even with him.' I think I hit him with a dozen eggs. He had a very good sense of humor about it. A very nice guy."

Price also proved himself to be a very nice guy, as Jan Kemp found out. "During the time we were working on this, his wife and my wife were both expecting," said Kemp. "We became and remained very close friends. Sometime later, he was in New York doing a Broadway play. He sent me a clipping and attached was a note saying he felt he had been remarkably well taken care of, but never more so than by the costume department, particularly Jan Kemp who he said was 'My

personal Pierre Cardin.' I thought that was a very nice compliment."

The show aired October 19th and 20th, 1966 and on November 12th, *The New Yorker* reviewed the show. Much to the crew's delight, reviewer M. J. Arlen was complimentary: "It's a zippy program—sure-footed, full of nifty gadgets and ridiculous costumes, and with a couple of lines that could pass for wit on a foggy night. Vincent Price was Egghead, with a splendid high-rise head and wearing a beautiful white Tweedledum suit that Pierre Cardin ought to think about seriously. Batman was Batman. One is grateful for small pleasures."

Writer Stanley Ralph Ross was grateful that the magazine published such a favorable review. "I thought the sophisticated *New Yorker* was going to kick the shit out of us," he said. But it seemed the magic appeal of *BATMAN* extended even into the hallowed halls of Manhattan's elite. □