



Tim Burton's second **BATMAN** film improves on the original by featuring the most interesting three way face-off since **THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY**. Above: Catwoman (Michelle Pfeiffer), the Penguin (Danny Devito), and Batman (Michael Keaton) are a trio of twisted characters who interact like the fragments of a split personality. Left: even the film's detractors found some redeeming value in the relationship between Batman and Catwoman, which is laced with S&M overtones. Right: in their physical confrontations, the agility of the high-kicking, whip-cracking Catwoman contrasted nicely with the more tank-like stolidity of Batman. Burton will probably never be a great action director, but at least this action illustrates characterization.



BATMAN



**The second time's
the charm for this
superior sequel.**

For Tim Burton, a movie about a tortured aristocrat who dresses up like a bat was probably no more *outré* than one about a young boy who wants to be Vincent Price. By nature, Burton's movies are driven by concepts that defy logic and celebrate the weird. But helming the mythos of Bob Kane's Batman in 1988 meant acquiring a mass of excess baggage that even the most seasoned visionary would have found hard to carry. With hordes of producers clamoring for creative input, a bloated budget worth BEETLEJUICE times three, and a script made semi-nebulous by multiple writers, it's a miracle the film came off at all.

Burton looks back on the experience with an air of abstraction. "Any director will tell you that your first big movie is always a bit shocking. You do everything you can to approach it like any other movie, but it's something you have to go through in order to fully understand how it feels and you can never fully prepare for it."

Pressed for an official BATMAN critique, Burton admits, "I actually couldn't pinpoint anything tangible. What's missing has more to do with feeling and energy than any specific scene. There might have been something about the scale of the film that got a little lumbering and flat, but I feel it had more to do with being a cultural phenomenon than actually being a good movie."

All reservations aside, with \$406 million in worldwide ticket sales and another \$150 million in video sales, it was only a matter of time before the inevitable sequel. Though financially tempting to say the least, the prospect didn't sit well with Burton. "I wasn't going to do it," he insists. "I guess everybody says that, but I really didn't want to do it. It honestly didn't have anything to do with money. I feel like everything I've done is flawed in a way, but I just didn't feel as close to the first BATMAN. It was more of a personal thing for me because I loved the material—the image of Batman and all of the characters—but when I sat back and thought about it, there just wasn't that same closeness, even though there are parts that I like very much.

"One of the reasons I don't like sequels is there's usually a spark missing that was integral to the original," he adds. "They take what worked in the first film and jack it up so that you lose the spontaneity. I don't consider myself a director who can achieve that kind of jacking up. It's not my strength."

While Warner Brothers toyed with sequel ideas, Burton directed EDWARD SCISSORHANDS at 20th Century-Fox, a return to his personal roots that cinematically purged him of the overwhelming BATMAN experience. "I was looking to do something smaller and a bit more under control, so to speak," admits Burton, who co-produced the film with

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by Taylor
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"Albert Speer with a little Dr. Suess thrown in," is how art director Rick Heinrichs describes the expressionistic design of the revised Gotham City.

Denise Di Novi (MEET THE APPLYGATES), as opposed to the overbearing sextet of producers on *BATMAN*.

Meanwhile, *BATMAN* scribe Sam Hamm was contracted to script a sequel. The result was a more frenetic extension of the first film, pitting Batman against art thief Selina Kyle and the oddly

named Mr. Bodiface (a.k.a. the Penguin), a finicky ultra-rich bird trainer. Hamm furthered the relationship between Bruce Wayne and Vicky Vale, even having the two engaged in the finale.

As in his first script, Hamm attempted to introduce Dick Grayson (a.k.a. Robin) in the form of an acrobatic street kid dressed in red and green who embarks on a crime-fighting

spree of his own. The dynamic duo pair up when the costumed boy saves Batman from being tossed off a 12-story building by the Catwoman.

Though true to the first film, retreading familiar territory proved to be a negative for the director. "It was unfortunate," recalls Burton, "because Sam took a crack at it during the time when I was very skeptical. I told myself I'd keep a little dis-

tance and try to respond to the script as freshly as possible. Unfortunately, reading it made me think I was wrong in doing a sequel, which was nothing against Sam. In fact, it was probably a good script. It was just too close, too soon."

Next to don the writer's cape was Daniel Waters, who had scripted *HEATHERS*, a comically subversive tale of death and teen angst pro-

A certain wistful sadness permeates the look of the film, reflecting the characters' damaged psyches. Even the repugnant Penguin receives his share of pathos, as when he enters a cemetery (left), searching for the names of the parents who abandoned him as a baby (below).



duced by Di Novi. Waters, who had met Burton once before to pitch ideas on a proposed BEETLEJUICE sequel, was in Italy at the time grudgingly doing on-set rewrites on Warner's ill-fated HUDSON HAWK.

After another meeting, it became apparent that Waters' offbeat style and wicked sense of humor was perfect for the material, which in turn sparked the director's interest. "Dan re-energized it for me, in a way," Burton comments. "He was the one who started me thinking that maybe these characters could give it a new and different kind of energy."

Though not a follower of the comics or the TV series, Waters took in as much of the Batman mythology as he could in a short time-span. He credits Frank Miller's graphic novel *The Dark Knight Returns* with leaving the deepest impression. "I think it's one of the best things done in any medium in the last five years. In fact, I was one of those naive people who thought, 'Why not just make a movie out of Miller's version?' Then you realize that no studio is going to spend \$60 million on a movie where five hundred people get killed on the DAVID LETTERMAN SHOW."

Waters also felt that BATMAN left room for improvement. "I'm one of those people who came out thinking that, even though it certainly wasn't unentertaining, it still lacked in story and dialogue. But I've learned you can't blame Sam Hamm, because once a budget gets over \$50 million, you have to fight for every little piece of your script. You're lucky if any of it turns out right."

For Waters, the main draw in scripting BATMAN RETURNS was Catwoman. "You can tell from HEATHERS that I've always had a great interest in female psychology. Catwoman was a perfect way to tap into themes of female rage and explode them into this mythical character. Plus, I knew I could get away with more since we were working on a much larger canvas, certainly more than if we

BATMAN RETURNS

THE PENGUIN

Danny DeVito on recreating Oswald Cobblepot for Tim Burton.

During the making of THE WAR OF THE ROSES, actor Michael Douglas handed his then-director Danny DeVito a newspaper article reporting DeVito's interest in playing the Penguin in the proposed follow-up to BATMAN. The story came as a complete surprise to DeVito. "I was stunned," he remembers. "I'd never talked about it to anybody, and frankly I resented it."

A year later, DeVito received a call from Tim Burton, who was himself only recently getting used to the idea of a new, improved Batman and a fresh pair of villains. Upon their first meeting, it became apparent that the director wanted a characterization that bore little or no resemblance to previous Penguins. "The last thing I wanted to hear from Tim was that we were going to do the Penguin from the comic book or the TV series," recalls DeVito. "I knew a little bit about the guy, and I respected him as a director, so it didn't surprise me when he told me his conception of this visual and psychological image of the duality of the character and of the Penguin's origins."

DeVito, himself a father of three, gravitated to Burton's offbeat notions of the character's harrowing birth. "The most glorious and beautiful thing you can ever experience is being in the same room when a woman is giving birth," he attests. "So can you imagine being in the Cobblepott mansion on that night when what emerges is this globular, unformed mass with two eyes, a nose and a mouth, yet nothing that is humanly recognizable? They're shocked and horrified. They hate it and they hate themselves, so they throw it out like a piece of garbage." Following a long, savory pause, DeVito shrieks, "Hey, I'm in! I felt like we could use this as a launching pad to create this huge opera that could be NOSFERATU. It was



DeVito's repulsive Penguin, seen above in all his bile-spewing glory, is one of the hideous highlights of Burton's eccentric film.

exciting and challenging, and I felt immediately that I wanted to explore it more."

While Burton and DeVito worked with Daniel Waters to integrate the Penguin into the script, DeVito had to go through a full physical transformation, courtesy of Stan Winston and his crew. As he recalls, "The most difficult times came during the exploration period when the character was being designed. For instance, we had to take full body and face molds early on, which are very uncomfortable, but once the makeup went on, it was very comfortable and helpful in an odd way, even though it may have looked cumbersome. Usually as an actor you're given the luxury of hiding behind a character to act and react and play the game, but here I could take it even farther. Once I put the mask on an incredible thing began to happen: I was completely free, and I felt like I could do anything. I almost felt like I could turn to the audience and

talk, do a Shakespearean turn on it, like in RICHARD III, where Laurence Olivier with his limp could do the walk and be miserable and lustful and talk about killing kids up in the tower. It was exhilarating."

Coupled with the makeup, DeVito altered his voice without electronic enhancement, giving his Penguin a pained, guttural quality. "Part of it was trying to find out what his deformity was, and it came down to the fact that breathing for him wasn't a natural thing like it is for all of us. He had to force himself to breathe, like a contraction where he'd have to push the breath in and out in order to keep himself alive. He was constantly battling to stay alive."

Due to the uniqueness of the makeup, DeVito found that interacting with anyone outside the crew was impossible. "I couldn't see anybody on the set," he explains. "No friends, no family, no business associates or interviews, and no studio executives, which was a joy," he jokes. "I had to do this because once I put on the makeup and got into character, it would've been too jarring for me to go from this kind of world to the real world. There was no way I could communicate with anybody on a reality-based level. It was okay to do it over the phone because people couldn't see the webbed hands and the beak, but never in person."

DeVito also spent much of his time in seclusion, prepping HOFFA, his next directorial film, starring ex-Joker Jack Nicholson as the famed union leader. When asked if he ever sought advice from his longtime colleague, DeVito quips, "The only thing we discussed was the deal," adding, "It's got more to do with putting your kids through college."

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BATMAN RETURNS

REPRISING THE DARK KNIGHT

*Michael Keaton on his
second bat-performance.*

People are always outside the door with a mallet waiting for you to mess up the sequel," says Michael Keaton of his initial reluctance to reprise the Dark Knight, "and sequels in general aren't very good." But once Tim Burton, Keaton's three-time collaborator, stepped in to put his decidedly twisted and original spin on **BATMAN RETURNS**, the actor conceded. "The main reason I wanted to do it was because of Tim. Also, with Michelle and Danny there, I knew the cast was going to be solid early on. Plus, I'd never gotten to do a role a second time, and since the story was so good, it made me want to do it again."

Unlike **BATMAN**, in which Joker Jack Nicholson played a spirited, scene-stealing clown to Keaton's glum caped crusader, Keaton faced not one but two colorfully written villains. "There were a lot of times when I'd look at the Penguin or the Joker and say, 'Gee, I'd love to chew it up a bit,' but I think I functioned the way I was supposed to function."

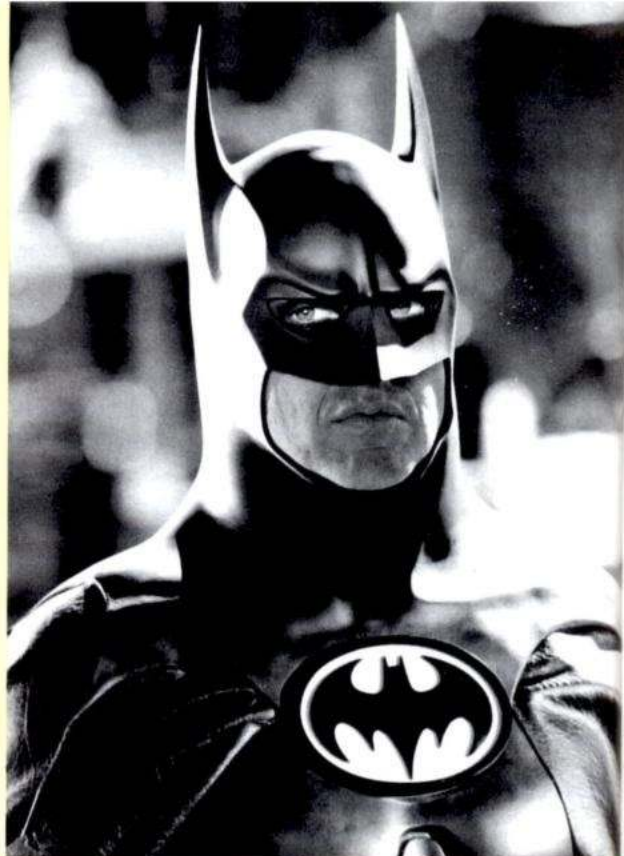
Despite the competition, Keaton found himself more content with his man in the mask than before. "I was more comfortable being Batman but a hair less being Bruce Wayne, just because I think the role's underwritten, though I'm partly responsible. I was actually taking lines out, especially with Batman because I liked him pared down to a more Spartan approach. One of the main functions Tim and I wanted was for him to direct the energy toward his eyes. This was where he expressed himself and where his intentions were made. It's where a lot of his story is told from."

On the flip side, Keaton wanted to add quality, not quantity to his millionaire alter ego's screen time. "I didn't want Bruce Wayne to do more than in the first one, but I wanted him to be richer in character. I wanted to lighten him up more by not letting him fall back on that contemplative, morose, 'Boy, I'm really deep' kind of thing. I wanted to give him more opportunities to be funny and not sulk so much, and even though there's more comedy in this, it's dark comedy."

BATMAN RETURNS also had Keaton doing more of his own stunt work at Burton's request, he says. "Tim wanted me to do more because he's so detailed and sometimes he'd notice differences in movements between my stuntmen, Mike Cassidy and David Lee, and me. I had a certain way I moved in the suit, which had a more distinct attitude this time. It was stronger and more precise."

One scene had him laid out flat on the floor with tongue-happy costar Pfeiffer, an act he says looks more arousing on screen than in real life. "Those scenes always end up being not quite as hot while you're doing them because there's the reality of someone saying, 'Can you put your neck in a different position?' Then they'll say, 'Okay! Now lick him!' But then in the end when you get licked by Michelle Pfeiffer, how bad can it be?"

Unlike Pfeiffer, Keaton is willing to expound more on the racier aspects of the two warring characters. "The interesting thing is that there's this obvious sexual tension that's compounded by this element of physical fighting, which makes it even hotter in some kind of bent way. It's a direct physical contact



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that isn't affectionate, and he's confused by it. We could probably spend weeks breaking this down, and while I wouldn't say it's out-and-out S&M at all, I'm sure it could get into some primal questions."

On the lighter side, Keaton was mildly annoyed by the studio's last-minute addition of the final optical effect showing Catwoman silhouetted against the bat signal, after test audiences found the original ending too ambiguous. "You didn't need to see the visual at the very end. Before, I thought it was just vague enough but still clear. I don't think they give people enough credit, but apparently research cards said, 'What happened?'"

Keaton also admits that **BATMAN RETURNS** is "a tad too twisted for young kids," but he is firm in his response when asked if the violence has any effect on impressionable audience members. "I have to be honest with you; it's a fuckin' movie. I'm sorry, and I'll be one of the first to lead this charge if I think it applies, but Gotham City is a whole different world. It's another reality, and the people in this movie don't necessarily exist. And while I

felt there were a couple of moments that I thought were too violent while we were shooting them, when I saw it on the screen, I thought it totally worked."

When pressed about which specific instances in the film made him flinch, he notes the scene in which the firebreather gets torched by the Batmobile's exhaust. "I was a little shocked by it, mainly because it's so totally un-Tim Burton-like. It's not like him at all, and it's not like me, either. But the vast majority of it is such a cartoon and so far removed from what real life is like."

"I think we're taking movies too seriously; I really do," he concludes. "I think we're so movie-conscious on so many levels, and what worries me are the people who are really movie freaks, more specifically, the science-fiction and Batman freaks, whom we used to call the DC fundamentalists. I know they pay a lot of money to see these movies, so I'm not going to make fun of them, but I just don't relate. I don't get it. I mean, there are movies, and there are books. Then there's life!"

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were making a movie about 'normal' people."

The script also gave the writer license to create his own villain in the form of Christopher Walken's nefarious Max Shreck, named after Max Schreck, the star of F. W. Murnau's *NOSFERATU* (1922). "Max Schreck played a character who sucked blood from the population," says Waters, "and Max Shreck is also something of a vampire, sucking up energy, power, and money from Gotham City. With Shreck I wanted to touch on the theme that the biggest villains aren't necessarily the ones who wear costumes but the ones who are respected members of society. Sure, you have this flamboyant mutant who is definitely a strong, out-there, in-your-face kind of villain, but I wanted to have fun with the fact that the real villain—the guy who's more powerful than anyone else in the film—is also the most upstanding citizen."

During script meetings, Waters found himself jousting with Burton over the director's insistence on keeping the two movies separate. "He was obsessed with the thought that this had to be an entirely different film. Whenever I'd make an occasional reference to the Joker or Vicky Vale, I'd have to fight with him to get it in. I remember, when we were trying to come up with titles, Tim suggested that we call it *BATMAN* again. He literally wanted to redefine the meaning of the title."

When writing the script, Waters was well aware that Danny Devito was the likeliest candidate to play the Penguin. "It actually hurt, in that I made that common mistake of thinking 'Well, what would Danny Devito say?' It was funny talking to Danny after he read my first draft because, if he was going to do *BATMAN*, the last thing he wanted was another 'Throw Ruthless People from the Train' kind of thing. He really wanted to get wild, which I think inspired Tim a lot."

After several drafts were completed, Wesley Strick (*ARACHNOPHOBIA*) was hired to polish the script. Waters reflects, "My script was written a little on the operatic side in terms of dialogue:

SEQUEL SYNDROME

"They usually take what worked in the first film and jack it up so that you lose the spontaneity," says Burton. "I don't consider myself a director who can achieve that."



Tim Burton directs the splendid character actor Michael Gough as Alfred.

everybody speaks a little over the top. Wesley had to 'normalize' some of the dialogue. Maybe it was HUDSON HAWK that scared them," he jokes.

He also adds, "I'm definitely from the school where I tried to have psychology everywhere. I made a lot of the characters more reflective and cynical than Tim wanted, especially the Bruce Wayne/Batman character. I originally wrote him as a burnt-out super hero who would complain that 'Gotham City probably deserves the Penguin.' Tim and Michael [Keaton] rightfully felt that he shouldn't be so self-aware. They thought of him as a wounded soul who was still dealing with his own psyche and probably wouldn't be able to formulate those kinds of opinions yet. So with Wesley they wanted someone who could go in and turn a lot of my text into subtext, which is admittedly where it belongs. I don't think anybody wants to hear Batman talking about how he's 'the light and the dark.' Let Pauline Kael tell us that."

Coupled with the dialogue adjustments, Strick found himself giving the Penguin a more

cohesive master plan than his atypical, Joker-like need to destroy Gotham City. "When I read the script over a few times, I started to get associations that were slightly biblical," he recalls. "There were little hints and clues and images that already suggested there was a Moses thing going on with the Penguin being thrown into the sewer by his well-to-do parents. So even though he was born evil and malignant, in his mind he was denied his birthright, his position in the world and in Gotham City. The idea of having him singlehandedly bring this Old Testament plague on all the first born sons of Gotham City was just a logical fulfillment of what had already been established in earlier drafts. There's a reason why this type of thing retains its power over three or four millennia: it works every time."

On the lighter side, Strick admits to initially being drawn to Waters' sly interplay between bat and cat. "This script gave the story an added dimension I didn't find in the first movie. It's much more rounded with the whole subplot approaching issues of sex and

desire and love and romance in ways that the first movie didn't get into at all. I really liked the whole Batman-Catwoman and Bruce-Selina story, which reminded me of Elizabethan plays and even the later Shakespearean comedies, like *TWELFTH NIGHT* or *A MID-SUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM*, with people falling in and out of love with others in costume. They were all about romance and deception and disguise and had moments of high and low comedy. I think the comedy of Bruce and Selina trying to get together is sweet and emotional but of course ultimately very sad."

The masked duo's predicament bears a curious resemblance to other Strick scripts, namely *CAPE FEAR* and *FINAL ANALYSIS*, where the romantic aspects get mutated into darker territory. "I'll agree that there is a notion that romance and eros leads to misery and death, but there's also poignancy to this story that rescues it from being completely nihilistic. I wanted to engage the audience emotionally and have them be moved by the belief that even a failed attempt at romance is better than none at all."

In the end, Hamm received co-story credit alongside Waters, mainly because it was his draft that introduced Penguin and Catwoman as the main villains. Strick's credit in turn fell by the wayside after a Writers Guild arbitration opted to give Waters solo writing credit.

While the script went through development, Burton and Di Novi assembled a crew, mostly of alumni from earlier Burton films, including director of photography Stefan Chapsky, physical effects specialist Chuck Gaspar, and composer Danny Elfman. Those first to be brought on board were production designer Bo Welch and art directors Rick Heinrichs and Tom Duffley, who labored on Gotham's decadent surroundings for over a year.

Welch was faced with modifying the late Anton Furst's darkly vibrant designs for the first film. "I don't feel we were

chained to the first movie," he says. "We basically worked within the same parameters: that Gotham is a caricature of a city. But our approach was a little more loose and fun. The first one to me was very nostalgic; ours was more fascist. That's partly why we blanketed everything in snow: it radically changes the environment by giving things a stronger black and white contrast."

According to Heinrichs, who describes the new Gotham as Nazi architect "Albert Speer with a little Dr. Suess thrown in," the approach reflects the expressionist influence that has surfaced in various Burton-Heinrichs collaborations dating back to their 1982 black-and-white Disney short, *VINCENT*. "German Expressionism has always been a great way of using light and shadow to make a visual statement. To a degree, we drained some of the colors in this movie to give the city a muted, more oppressive and claustrophobic quality. It's a way of visually adding subtlety."

Borrowing from sources like the Rockefeller Center and the neo-fascist World's Fair, Welch and the art directors concocted a phantasmagoric conglomerate of colorful decadence. "We wanted Gotham to represent the old American city—rotted, corrupt, and full of character and life," he explains. "There had to be that juxtaposition of old and new, and decay and fascism, like in Gotham Plaza where you have these poor citizens trying to celebrate Christmas with this beautiful 40-foot tree stuck in the middle of the dreariest, most imposing buildings we could fit on the sound stage."

Filming began under a well-cloaked shroud of secrecy in September 1990. In keeping with the casting of high-powered names in the villain roles, Danny Devito and Michelle Pfeiffer were pegged as the leads, despite a well-documented attempt by uber-actress Sean Young to fill the cat-suit left empty by the previously cast Annette Bening's pregnancy.

Although Devito was always first choice for the Penguin, creating the actual character for him to play proved a tough

BAT MEETS CAT ROMANCE

"Bruce and Selina trying to get together is sweet and emotional but ultimately sad," says Wesley Strick. "Even a failed attempt at romance is better than none at all."



Wayne unwittingly falls for the alter ego of his nighttime nemesis; ironically, at this masked ball, he and Selina Kyle are the only dancers sans costumes.

task. As Burton explains, the beaked menace's nebulous history represented what impressed him least about comic book movies. "I always hate it when there's just a bunch of weird people running around, like in *DICK TRACY*, where there's no basis to the world that's been created. I personally don't find much power in the fact that these are funny looking people and nothing more. There should always be a foundation no matter how absurd or ridiculous it may be.

"The Penguin was always the character I liked the least because he never made sense in the same way that the Joker or Batman or the Catwoman did—he never had that simple, weird strength," the director continues. "I mean, what is the Penguin supposed to be anyway? I felt that if somebody was going to be called 'The Penguin,' there should be a reason for that.

The result, as scripted by Waters, was to give Oswald Cobblepot (the Penguin's given name, as in the comic books) a solid origin, from his bizarre birth and upbringing to his inevitable downfall. "That

aspect of the film is the one that went through the most real creation," says Burton. "He really was an invention that had as much to do with the script as it did with Danny Devito, myself, and everybody from the costume people to the makeup people. We went through the process of taking it as far as we could go without losing the spirit of the original until he finally really transformed. We worked very hard, but it was one of the most gratifying parts of making the film."

"The bottom line is that I borrowed more props than psychology," Waters concurs of updating the villains. "With the Penguin and Catwoman I tried to move away from the stock Bob Kane versions."

Burton adds that Devito proved an excellent subject in the demanding role which not only called for him to spend hours enduring the Lon Chaney-like makeover with Ve Neill applying Stan Winston's design but also put him in a full-body silicone fat suit and webbed rubber latex flippers constructed for the specialty costume. Says Burton, "The good thing about Danny is that

he was very passionate and had a 100% commitment to creating something different, and having directed himself made him a more understanding person to work with."

To bring the Catwoman into the '90s, a dose of *THELMA AND LOUISE* feminism was added. The character "has gone through several different incarnations in the TV show and the comics, but I think our portrayal is much more modern," explains Burton. "One way to portray feminism is to show strong women beating up on men, but the Catwoman is a positive and negative character who's just as screwed up as any of the other characters. She's a lot like Batman in that she was transformed due to negative events, and even though she's trying to be good in a way, she's completely screwed up just like he is. I actually find that much more realistic in terms of a metaphor for life."

For Pfeiffer's costume, it was Burton himself who opted to obliterate the comic and TV renditions by dressing her in a kinky, skintight outfit. "I'm always thinking about what we can do to keep things fresh," he explains. "There's too much work involved to just copy the costumes out of a comic book or a TV show. You might as well try to do something different, especially when you've got this kind of material that gives you room to push the boundaries a bit."

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ith all of the sequel's changes, the one element that remains largely the same is Batman himself—still the stoic, silent type, as Keaton insisted on keeping his character methodically aloof. "Michael had a very shrewd grasp on the Batman character," says Waters. "He's the only actor who can look at a scene and say there's too much. And since he didn't want Batman talking very much it made the character very tough to write. There came a point when we figured we needed more. But the problem is that, since the guy is so impulsive and keeps to himself so much, when he does talk,

BATMAN RETURNS CATWOMAN

*Michelle Pfeiffer on
feline feminism.*

If Sigourney Weaver and Linda Hamilton introduced a new breed of tough but maternal genre heroine, then Michelle Pfeiffer's whip-cracking dominatrix of **BATMAN RETURNS** is their dark, psycho-feminist alter ego. Bubbling just beneath the battered cowl is enough ripe sensuality and twisted rage to make them look like mere kittens to her spitting panther.

Catwoman is a far cry from Pfeiffer's demure performances in **DANGEROUS LIAISONS** and **THE RUSIA HOUSE**. "I was getting sick of the melancholy roles, so I was delighted when the opportunity presented itself," she says. That opportunity arose after Annette Bening's much publicized parting, but Pfeiffer couldn't fully comprehend the magnitude of her decision until it came time to don the head-to-toe rubber catsuit. "The first few weeks were miserable," she groans, "painful to the point where I couldn't really walk or breath or hear or talk. I kept wondering how I would I ever get beyond all of these uncomfortable obstacles to do a decent job."

Despite the initial discomfort, Pfeiffer found that being inside the suit helped her with the Catwoman characterization, for which she adopted a deep Joan Crawford-inspired voice. "I found it much easier playing the bumbling, nerdy Selina. I really had to work my way towards Catwoman," she says. "When you look at yourself in the mirror, you can't help but feel different wearing this outfit. And on the last day, it was so liberating finally taking it off, yet at the same time it was kind of sad to hang up my suit."

While the costume sealed her exterior, Pfeiffer found that raw inhibition was the key to the character. "I'm dressed up like a cat, totally

exposed and behaving in ways that women aren't normally conditioned to behave. In order to do this, I had to let go of all my inhibition in a bigger way than I've ever had to do before. I knew I was in good hands with Tim, but in the hands of a lesser director, it would've been a very broad thing to do."

Though she had a hoard of stunt doubles and world champion kickboxer Kathy Long doing her flashier routines, Pfeiffer went through her own rigorous training for the role. "I loved the physicality of the character. I started training about a month before shooting and averaged four hours a day doing kickboxing, some martial arts, yoga, and gymnastics."

She also became proficient with the character's trademark bullwhip, courtesy of maestro Anthony DeLongis. "I loved the whip," she laughs. "There was a beauty and an elegance and a sexuality and almost a graceful dance-like quality to it that at any moment could turn violent. I thought this made it much more threatening and certainly more feline and feminine."

On the subject of whips and provocative black attire, Pfeiffer tends to sidestep the more sado-masochistic overtones of her character. "I don't think it's an issue," she says defensively. "I mean, what, I lick Batman's face. Big deal. I'm not tying him up or beating him up and having sex with him. It's all open to interpretation; besides, there are far more explicit things on television."

Instead, she prefers to take a different slant, saying, "I look at the movie more metaphorically, in that it's a statement about empowerment and about this character's coming into her own, and part of



"I don't think it's an issue," says Pfeiffer of her S&M attire, based on Mary Vogt's costume designs (r).



that is her sexuality. It's a strong theme in today's society because there probably isn't a woman alive who doesn't know what it feels like to be in the work force and not be listened to. There are so many out there who are harassed and are terrified of their boss, who haven't been able to find a voice for themselves. I think she's an inspiration and a positive role model for women, even though she's also very tragic."

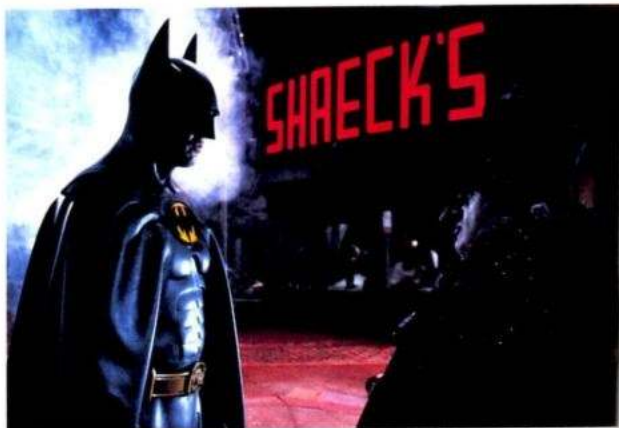
According to Pfeiffer, her Catwoman reflects the times as much as the comic book character has over the years. "When you look at the evolution of Catwoman in the old comic books from the '30s, she was obviously representative of women from that era. And when you look at her in the '50s, she's more voluptuous and kitten-like while in the '70s she became much more muscular and streamlined. The Catwoman in this movie is definitely a reflection of what's happening today."

As a tyke, Pfeiffer confesses to being a fan of Julie Newmar's Catwoman from the 1966 TV series. "I liked the fact that she did forbidden things and broke a lot of social taboos at the time. I mean little girls are brought up to be good and behave and certainly not act in any

kind of physically aggressive manner, and yet here was this woman who dressed up like a black cat and was mean and vicious, yet you were allowed to love her at the same time. Those to me are always the most memorable and engaging villains."

With **BATMAN FOREVER** directed by Joel Schumacher, it has been widely reported that Tim Burton is interested in pursuing a separate film featuring Pfeiffer's Catwoman. "I'd love to do it if Tim were up for it, but these movies take a lot out of him," the actress admits. "I feel like I just began. Toward the end of shooting **BATMAN FOREVER**, I was really up to speed where I began having lots of fun with the character. I'd really like to see how much further it would evolve."

Taylor White



The film's real monster is Christopher Walken's Max Shreck, whose respected name looms large over Gotham City (above). Shreck orchestrates a mayoral campaign for Cobblepot (left), who craves recognition and acceptance.

he gets to the point so fast that there's no real ornamentation to his character."

The writer's alternative for embellishing Batman's dual personalities was to mix him up with the bad guys. "Having him entangled with Catwoman—not only by day with his tentative romantic relationship with Selina Kyle, but also at night while they're beating the hell out of each other on the rooftops of Gotham—helps to meld the characters together so that it doesn't become a question of 'we need a scene with the hero now.'"

According to Burton, the complexity of the characters adds substance to what could be standard comic book fodder. "To me, the interest in the world of Batman is that it's not as simplistically good-versus-evil as a lot of the comics. There are a lot of grey areas within these characters, like Batman, who is basically good, but is also very screwed up. I find there's something quite appealing about a bunch of

screwed up characters. It's more twisted in a way. That's what's hard about it, but that's also what's fun about the material. It's all these characters who are very serious, but who are also completely absurd.

"I've always liked the freakish nature of the Batman material," he adds. "The biggest problem is that we were trying to make a big movie that had to satisfy on a certain popular level, yet we were dealing with what I consider somewhat subversive material that isn't really cut and dry. It's not exactly the kind of material that lends itself to an expensive movie, and I think it's what tends to make the studios nervous."

A character who once again didn't make the roster was the elusive Dick Grayson, despite then-studio head Mark Canton's insistence on including him. "We always saw him as problematic," comments Burton, "even when Sam and I were trying to fit him into the first one. He's practically in a no-win situation, since Batman

isn't psychologically integrated enough to surround himself with other people like Robin."

A more critical Waters says, "We never liked him in the comics or the TV series, and he certainly didn't fit in with our Batman, who is definitely a brooding loner." Burton concurs: "It's funny, but there's a lot of people who don't like Robin. I've heard it from people who are into the TV show; and even some people who are into the comics don't like the character either."

Waters made several attempts to fit the character into the new script. Taking a minor cue from the Bob Kane comics, Robin was portrayed in Waters' earliest drafts as an acrobatic member of the Penguin's gang until discovering that the beaky crime boss is responsible for his parents' demise. In drafts written closer to the start of production, Robin was a garage mechanic who assists Batman in retaking the Batmobile after the Penguin hijacks the vehicle for his wild ride through Gotham. "It was probably the way to go," says Waters. "We even wrote him as tough and cynical, certainly not like the Dick Grayson of the comics; but as the film went into production, there were just too many characters. It got to be absurd."

"I know everybody looked for him," admits Burton, "but if you're going to do justice to the character, you have to incorporate him into the story from the

very beginning. Even though Dan was the first person to make me realize it could work, we ultimately felt there was too much going on."

One of the few key crew members to make the cross-over from BATMAN was costume designer Bob Ringwood. The sequel's expanded budget allowed Ringwood and his crew to more clearly realize the hyper-stylized look Burton wanted for his new denizens of Gotham. One of the designs that benefitted from the extra funding was the new Batsuit. "In the first film, the producers wanted the suit to be more muscular, which was confusing since you never knew whether he was actually a muscleman or he was wearing a suit," says Ringwood. "Tim felt this suit was too strong and powerful and wanted it to be softer for the sequel."

Ringwood's original unused designs for BATMAN rendered the outfit with sharper edges, giving it an armor-like exterior. When the opportunity arose to modify the suit, Ringwood pulled out his initial drawings; and Vin Burnham, who sculpted the first suit, was flown in from England to sculpt and oversee the creation of the new outfit, with the assistance of sculptors Allison Eino, Jose Fernandez, and Steve Wang. More pre-production time allowed the crew to perfect both the interior and exterior, using a collapsible core to eliminate the glaring seam on

THE STRONG, SILENT TYPE

“Michael’s the only actor who can look at a scene and say there’s too much. Since he didn’t want Batman talking too much, it was very tough to write the character.”

the back of the first suit’s cowl and having an exact digitized replica of Michael Keaton’s head made by Cyberwear to assure a perfect fit. “Superficially, it looked like the first costume,” says Ringwood, “but it was much more sleek and intimidating. We changed the shape of the eyes and strengthened the brows and the nose. We even changed the shape of the chin slightly.”

Directing **BATMAN RETURNS** gave Burton an opportunity to recreate his own brand of action. “I’m not an action director, which was part of the problem on the first movie: it was like I was trying to make my own movie; then all of a sudden it tried to be this big action movie,” he admits. “There are people like Jim Cameron who are good at doing action, so I didn’t feel there was any point in doing the kind of stuff they do. I wanted action with a different tone that could be more filtered through the process I go through and that would be a more integral part of the movie we were making. Good or bad, I think it fit better this time. The work was very representative of the movie, so I felt better.”

But perhaps the greatest leap Burton made between **BATMAN I** and **II** was over the giant gap of ever changing visual effects technology. Burton, whose first two films celebrated the art of cheap and cheesy, admits to missing the mark on his first big-budget foray. “I went into **BATMAN** thinking I could do the same funky effects we did on **BEETLEJUICE**,” he explains, “which was a real mistake, partially because we were dealing with people from another country and things got a bit lost in the translation. I quickly learned

that **BEETLEJUICE**-style effects in a big movie end up looking cheesy as opposed to being more fun.”

To realize the spectacular effects presented by the script, hundreds of artists and technicians throughout numerous L.A.-based facilities were recruited. Along with Stan Winston, participating shops included Richard Edlund’s Boss Film, Robert and Dennis Skotak’s 4-Ward Productions, Video Images Associates, and Marin County’s Matte World.

While the film required over 25 matte paintings and 100 miniature shots, major strides in computer technology offered Burton the chance to bring flocks of bats and penguins to Gotham City in a startlingly realistic manner. “Using computers had become less experimental,” effects supervisor Michael Fink remarks. “It was no longer a novelty where I risk my entire career whenever I suggested doing something with computers. For example, the Batmobile’s security cloak was done as a computer graphic image, along with the flying bats. Those were all shots that could have been done in traditional ways, but not nearly as successfully or with as much flexibility.”

Though Boss Film’s computer imagery created hordes of warbound penguins, Stan Winston and his crew were called upon to create three-dimensional penguin puppets and suits for various shots. “It’s impossible to direct real penguins,” says Winston. “You can’t get them to hit a particular mark or march in sequence like the script needed them to do. So we did the best we could to replicate real life, to make them anatomically and cosmetically correct, so that we were able to get a performance out of a creature that oth-



“He gets to the point so fast that there’s no real ornamentation to his character,” says Waters of writing for Keaton’s version of Batman.

erwise couldn’t perform.”

Also integrated with the puppets were a flock of live penguins provided by Richard Hill of England’s Birdland. As Mary Mason remembers, the real birds sometimes integrated almost too well with the mock-ups. “One day we finished filming, and the trainers rounded up the real penguins into their corrals, leaving the static puppets on the set. Lat-

er, when Tim was standing on the island, he looked over and suddenly saw one of the penguins turning its head. It turned out to be one of the live penguins, which had stood perfectly still between two of the puppets for over an hour and nobody noticed. That tells you that under the right lighting and conditions, the puppets were wonderful facsimiles.”

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IMAGI SALES

BATMAN RETURNS

continued from page 41

the sixth and most ambitious musical collaboration between Burton and composer Danny Elfman, who shared his first foray into film scoring on Burton's own feature debut, *PEE-WEE'S BIG ADVENTURE* (1985). "I knew that it wouldn't be a rehash of the first movie," says Elfman. "True, it is a sequel, but it's very different in tone. It's a lot sicker, a lot more twisted—and more Tim, for lack of a better word."

The score proposed numerous challenges for Elfman, such as providing *leitmotifs* for "not one but two new characters, who occupy more screen time than Batman. It's quite fun in that respect because the bulk of the score revolves around them. Also, it's unusual to have three main themes. Usually you only have one, maybe two, and then the secondary themes which play underneath, but here it's literally three main themes, each one as dominant as the next."

The result, he claims, goes far beyond its predecessor. "This score is much more of a theatrical onslaught than the first. *BATMAN* was more traditional, while this one is very over-the-top and peculiar. In fact, I didn't realize until halfway through that it's as much an opera as it is a movie, almost as if you'd expect the curtains to open and close after each scene, like some weird little sideshow."

According to Elfman, "I'll take rough ideas and spend a few weeks refining them by looking at the key scenes for each character. Then I'll see if these scenes lend themselves to being bent in different directions. For instance, will the Penguin's theme play both sinister and bittersweet? Will the Catwoman's theme play both fun and twisted? Will it play both as a loss of innocence and as a frolic in a department store while she's destroying stuff? Once I've put the raw material through this test, I'll bring Tim in and play him a presentation of maybe a half dozen key scenes where the thematic material stretches in these different directions and we'll talk through it."

Burton adds, "When you're dealing with material that's completely unreal and showing characters trying to have real emotions in an unreal world, it's crucial to have the music set the tone and provide the audience with that emotional guidepost. It seems like the more out of reality you get, the more you tend to lose people, so the music just grounds it. It even helps tell you what the movie's about a lot of the time. It's so important and I've been very lucky with Danny because he's completely got that tone now."

Though scheduled to wrap in December, production ran through to late February with Hollywood gossip mongers touting a bloated budget of \$80 to \$90 million, and that's before the marketing costs. Warner spokespeople quote a more realistic figure of \$50-\$55 million. According to co-producer Larry Franco, any cost overruns and overscheduling is the price the studio pays for directorial ingenuity. To make his point, Franco compares Burton to director John Carpenter whom he partnered on most of his pictures from *ESCAPE TO NEW YORK* to *THEY LIVE*. "Carpenter is a craftsman who takes the written page and actually puts it on screen," he says. "He's very mechanical in that he knows he's got to get a certain amount of work done in a certain day. He's responsible to the budget and the schedule and he comes in planned knowing each shot and how it's going to be laid out for the day's work."

"Tim Burton on the other hand works in an entirely different way," he continues. "He can give us the elements that he's going to need for a certain scene, but he can't specifically tell us what he's going to do and how he's going to shoot it until he sees everything all together. This makes it very difficult for us to assess how long it's going to take to shoot a specific scene. At times it gets completely frustrating, but I just keep bearing in mind that Tim Burton is a genius and his movies are brilliant. I found myself constantly having to remind the studio of that."

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