

TELEVISION

Holy men in tight pants! It's a Bat-series!

Batman

voices of Adrienne Barbeau, Kevin Conroy, Mark Hamill, Richard Moll, Paul Williams
Weekdays, 5:30 p.m.
WFL, Fox 22

When I was growing up, I was an absolute fanatic about anything associated with Batman. I bought the comics, religiously watched the campy TV show and dreamed of the better life I would lead within the confines of Gotham City. Having this high level of esteem for the Dark Knight Detective, I was not overwhelmed by Michael Keaton's portrayal in either of Tim Burton's films; he just never quite cut it. But take heart Gothamites. There's a new Batman who embodies the grittier version of the comics and retains the better qualities of the hero from the movies. This is the Batman of Fox's *Batman: the Animated Series*.

The best thing about Fox's updated Batman is the quality of the animation. Action in the series is so smooth it actually seems better than that in the movies.

Violence is prevalent in Gotham, and the animators capture the action of the city fluidly. Fox's more violent Caped Crusader frequently swoops down on villains, snaps their wrists and sends them crashing into walls in his search for justice. Not quite Adam West fare, huh?

Not only is Batman more violent this time around, he is also more vulnerable. Viewers see Batman get floored, get bloodied, and even get his ass kicked. The ZAPs, BOOMs and POWs of the '60s show are gone forever, and Fox has replaced them with a grittier hero for grittier times.

Viewers also get to see more of Bruce Wayne, the man behind the mask. With his square jaw and ever-present brown

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JON RICH

smoking jacket, Bruce shares equal time on the screen with his caped counterpart, something I always thought the films lacked.

Another intriguing aspect of the show is the caliber of talent that voices the series. Mark Hamill (yes, Luke Skywalker himself) does Jack Nicholson's Joker one better with his effeminate Clown Prince of Crime. Adrienne Barbeau gives Catwoman an especially vivid touch, and Richard Moll (Bull from *Night Court*) has played both sides of the coin with his portrayal of the psychotic Two-Face.

Kevin Conroy's voicing of Batman and Bruce Wayne is impeccable. With his gruff Dirty Harry-esque enunciation, Conroy gives Batman the gritty appeal the hero has always deserved. Conroy's vocal talents also provide Bruce Wayne his false preppie attitude, something necessary for the square-jawed millionaire to hide his crime-fighting identity.

Batman also has revamped some of the more obscure villains plaguing Gotham in order to expand the scope of the series. Not content to rely only on the adversaries of Burton's films, such foes as Mr. Freeze, Man-bat, the Scarecrow and the Mad Hatter have been reworked into the show.

Of the renovations to the *Batman* cast of characters, the addition of Robin into the series is my favorite. But be warned, this is not the "Holy hole in a dough-nut, Batman!" Robin that annoyed Adam West in the '60s TV show. Fox's Robin is a boy wonder of the '90s complete with spiked hair and a funkier costume than his predecessor.

All in all, some of the plots are a little cheesy (probably in order to sell thousands of *Batman* T-shirts), but at the same time they are an engrossing way to spend a half-hour.



Batman: Where are his eyes?

Anyone who wants to join the growing legions of Bat-fans can do so by tuning to by tuning to Fox 22 any week-

day afternoon at 5 p.m. Gotham will be up for grabs there every day, same Bat-time, same Bat-channel.

Makin' Whoopi with a different person every night

The Whoopi Goldberg Show

Whoopi Goldberg

Weekdays 10:30 p.m.
WFL, Fox 22

1/2

Remember that scene from the *Fabulous Baker Boys* when Michelle Pfeiffer croons *Making Whoopi* on top of a sleek, black grand piano while wearing a dress so tight that she probably had to inhale really hard to zip it up?

Yes. No. Maybe? Well, it doesn't matter. Michelle Pfeiffer, her disgust-

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LAURA SILVERMAN

ingly skinny body and her crooning have nothing to do with *The Whoopi Goldberg Show*.

But there is a link between Whoopi and piano. Whoopi has one on her show. And let me tell you, I prefer some classy tunes to carry me off to the dreaded commercial breaks than some mounded-up dude blowing his sax like a wild banshee.

And that's just the tip of the dreadlock. If there was any justice in the world, under "class" Webster would have "see Whoopi." This woman knows what is tasteful for optimal viewing enjoyment.

No woofing audience, no new-age band, no polyester curtains with twin spotlights chasing each other like two dogs in heat. Best of all, there are no lame monologues on world events, the kind that make Jay, Arsenio and Dave look like Dan Rather on laughing gas.

Whoopi doesn't even have an announcer shrieking "Heeeeeeee-

rrrreeee's Johnny" — or Jay or Arsenio or Dave, whatever. Her show opens up with her guest talking. And notice that I said guest, singular. That's right. One whole half-hour (minus the commercials, of course) dedicated to only one person each night.

Whoopi's new show definitely casts off all late night clichés. No sofas, no coffee mugs with microscopic, cutesy pictures turned towards the camera and best of all, no naming a part of the audience with a bizarre name like "carnivorous chicken with an attitude." Whoopi and her guest sit in these enormous, comfy-looking armchairs that a family of five could lounge on. The only laughs you hear come either from her and the guest, or from the crew.

And who are these guests? Stephen King, Tom Metzger and John Travolta, to name a few. If you did a double take at Tom Metzger, I promise you I'm not lying. Whoopi and the white supremacist from hell had a, shall I say, nice little chat with each other. This goes to show that Whoopi doesn't just seek out high status, here-today-gone-tomorrow stars on her show. She has the ovaries to break the late night rock and movie-star barriers — something the "big boys"

definitely lack.

I'm telling you that this lady has come a long way from her mid '80s HBO specials. Whoopi in the '90s is a little more mellow, a little less schizoid flamboyant and a little sadder around the eyes. But her humor has skyrocketed, reaching new peaks. Whoopi has grown up. But don't worry. That I'm-on-my-back-with-my-knees-in-the-breeze-submerged-in-a-bathtub-of-milk-while-Annie-Lebovitz-snaps-my-picture-for-the-world-to-see woman is still lurking inside that dread-locked head. *That Whoopi* is not always clamoring for air time, but more content to emerge on cue.

I'm just amazed that the woman has the energy to make five shows a week. With *Comic Relief Specials*, movies and frequent guest appearances on your favorite show and mine, *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, I would not be surprised to find out that Whoopi has to stick a dread into a socket and juice up every once in a while.

That's Whoopi for you. Wonderwoman herself. I guess the only thing she hasn't done yet is write a book. But if she ever does, here's a great title: *Making Whoopi*. Catchy or what?

nielsen ratings

1. (2) **60 Minutes**, CBS
24.6 rating, 22.9 million homes
2. (1) **Roseanne**, ABC
20.7, 19.3 million homes
3. (16) **Deadly Matrimony**, part 2,
NBC Monday Movie
18.9, 17.6 million homes
4. (5) **Murder, She Wrote**, CBS
18.8, 17.5 million homes
5. (8) **Home Improvement**, ABC
18.6, 17.3 million homes
6. (X) **Barbara Walters**, ABC
18.2, 16.9 million homes
7. (4) **Coach**, ABC
17.7, 16.5 million homes
8. (3) **Murphy Brown**, CBS
17.2, 16.0 million homes
9. (10) **Full House**, ABC
16.8, 15.6 million homes
10. (6) **Monday Night Football**,
ABC
16.0, 14.9 million homes

Listings include the week's ranking, with last season-to-date ranking in parentheses, rating for the week, and total homes. An "X" in parentheses denotes one-time-only presentation. A rating measures the percentage of the nation's 90.4 million TV homes.

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ratings

- — miss it
- — watch it and rag on it
- — use it as a study break
- — watch it religiously
- — tape it