The Dark Knight

2008

Production

Director ................................................................. Christopher Nolan
Writers, Screenplay ........................................ John Nolan, Christopher Nolan
Story ............................................................... Christopher Nolan, David S. Goyer
Characters ............................................................... Bob Kane
Cinematographer ....................................................... Wally Pfister
Music ....................................................................... James Newton Howard, Hans Zimmer
Production Design ...................................................... Nathan Crowley
Costume Design .......................................................... Lindy Hemming

Cast

Bruce Wayne/Batman ............................................................................. Christian Bale
The Joker ......................................................................................... Heath Ledger
Harvey Dent/Two Face .......................................................................... Aaron Eckhard
Alfred Penneyworth ........................................................................... Michael Caine
Rachel Dawes .................................................................................. Maggie Gyllenhaal
James Gordon .................................................................................. Gary Oldman
Lucius Fox ......................................................................................... Morgan Freeman

Other Notable Characters

Detective Anna Ramirez
Mayor Anthony Garcia
Salvatore Moroni
Detective Michael Wuertz
Commissioner Loeb
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A Quick History of Batman

Created in 1939 by Bob Kane and Bill Finger, Batman quickly became a popular character and was given his own series in 1940. His character has consistently been marked by a brooding persona, though early on, he showed no remorse at killing or maiming villains, but the first episode of Batman’s solo series, in which the hero shoots and kills giants, led the editor to forbid future killing or use of a gun by the character. The pulpy aspects of his character diminished when Robin, his child sidekick, was introduced. In the years following World War II, the franchise further softened, moving away from the dark and bleak depiction of the world that originally typified the comics. A campy, sunnier feel was adopted into the comics in the 1950s after Batman (along with other comics) was scrutinized for potential corruption of youths. In the 1970s, the franchise was diminishing and was redesigned, returning to the dark roots of the series with great success.

Film information available at www.IMDB.com. Other information and sources available on the heavily footnoted Wikipedia page.
Television and Film

Batman's first on-screen incarnation came in the form of a 15-part film serial, beginning in 1943 and starring Lewis Wilson. In 1949, a second movie serial--*Batman and Robin*--began, starring Robert Lowery. A television series based on the Batman comics began in 1966 and ran until 1968. This series starred Adam West as Batman, and it quickly became a pop culture phenomenon despite criticism from some comic fans that it was too campy. West later asserted in his autobiography that the show was not campy, but rather an intentional farce. This series produced on theatrically-released film, and also inspired the first animated versions of the franchise. Animated versions of Batman aired in various forms between 1968 and 1986.

In 1989, Batman returned to the big screen with a film directed by Tim Burton, starring Michael Keaton. The popularity and success of this film led to three more films, *Batman Returns* (1992, which saw the return of Burton and Keaton), *Batman Forever* (1995, directed by Jerry Schumaker and starring Val Kilmer), and *Batman and Robin* (1997, starring George Clooney). These films moved away from the lighthearted television series and moved back toward the franchise's dark roots. However, exaggerated villains, dramatic dialogue, and unrealistic set design give the movies a cartoonish feel that lightens the overall mood, particularly in the last two.

Batman returned to television in 1992 with a new animated series, and has continued to have a t.v. presence since then.

Director Christopher Nolan rebooted the franchise in 2005 with the wildly popular film *Batman Begins*, which he followed up with a sequel, *The Dark Knight*, in 2008, both starring Christian Bale as Batman. These films have been a huge success, marked by huge box office intakes as well as general critical acclaim. Nolan's revision of the franchise has moved it fully back to its original dark, grim tone, with a serious, brooding Batman. His films are marked by dramatically understated scores and simple, bleak set design, as well as a full technological upgrade to Batman's suit, utility belt, and vehicle. Critics have praised the bold direction of the films and excellence in directing and acting. In fact, the films have received several award nominations, and Heath Ledger was awarded a posthumous Academy Award for his portrayal of the Joker. Thematically, these films are considerably more serious than previous incarnations and grapple with difficult issues, such as the nature of heroism, the ethics of privacy invasion as a means to stop terrorism, and human potential for good and evil. Rumors of a third film are rampant, though little information beyond speculation is currently available.

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**Batman Begins**

This film chronicles the events that lead billionaire Bruce Wayne to become the masked vigilante, Batman. Young Bruce witnesses the seemingly-pointless murder of his wealthy and morally-incorruptible parents, leaving him deeply troubled. He becomes obsessed with avenging his parents, eventually taking a gun to the court proceedings of their murderer only to witness the man being shot by someone else. Unable to take his revenge and lacking direction in his life, Wayne suddenly leaves Gotham and travels, living below the law for a time somewhere in Asia. There, he is discovered by the mysterious figure, Henri Ducard, who takes him to a secret, cultish training facility of the even more mysterious Ra’s Al Ghul, who leads a group called the League of Shadows. Here, Wayne trains to become a ninja-like militant with the group, which claims that it is concerned with restoring justice in the world. Wayne excels in his training, but fails his final test, during which he is asked to execute a man who is labeled a criminal, but whose crime is not disclosed. He refuses, insisting that the man should be tried for his crimes. It is at this juncture that Wayne learns of Ra’s Al Ghul’s plan to destroy Gotham. Hoping to prevent this, he fights his way out of the training facility, burning it down as he goes. However, he saves the life of Henri Ducard.

Thinking that he has subdued the League of Shadows and Ra’s Al Ghul, Wayne then returns home to Gotham filled with a new sense of purpose. He is convinced that, despite rampant crime that reaches the highest levels of civic government, Gotham can still be saved. He decides to use his skills to fight crime and become a symbol to remind Gotham that evil can be overcome. His family’s butler and his lifelong caretaker and friend, Alfred Penneyworth, aids Wayne in his exploits, as does Lucius Fox, a longtime scientist and product developer for Wayne Enterprises (the family company). As Batman, Wayne forms an alliance with (apparently) the only Gotham police detective who is not on mafia payroll, James Gordon. Gordon provides Batman with information in addition to acting in partnership with him to fight crime.

Batman’s attacks against the mafia reveal that the mob are not importing illegal drugs, as suspected, but rather a hallucinogenic compound that, in its gaseous state, causes intense fear. After experiencing the effects of compound, Wayne recognizes it as something he experienced during his training with Ra’s Al Ghul. His investigations lead him to Arkham Asylum, where Dr. Jonathan Crane has people dumping the compound into an open water main. Additionally, Gotham’s assistant district attorney and Wayne’s lifelong friend Rachel Dawes has been captured by Crane. Batman rescues her and gets her safely to Wayne Manor, where Lucius Fox has developed an antidote to the compound. Discovering that a machine capable of vaporizing water has been stolen from Wayne Enterprises, Wayne deduces that Crane intends to vaporize Gotham’s water, thereby turning the compound into a gas that would spread dangerous panic throughout the city.

However, before he can act on his new information, Wayne discovers that Crane is just a pawn for his enemy, Ra’s Al Ghul, the man whom Wayne had believed to be Henri Ducard and who has arrived in Gotham with the League of Shadows. He explains that the League believes that Gotham has become too corrupt and must be destroyed to restore order and balance to the world. The League sets fire to Wayne Manor and leave Wayne for dead, but he is rescued by Alfred. Batman then enacts a plan to save Gotham, and succeeds.