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Adam West, star of the classic Batman television series, gives a behind-the-scenes account of what really went on when the cameras stopped rolling. Includes candid photos and an episode guide no Bat-fan should be without.

Back to the Batcave Details

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Dustin says

I read Burt Ward's tell-all style book first, unaware that Adam West also a BatBook out there predating Ward's. ("Why the sudden interest", you may not be asking yourself? A Batman marathon over the Fourth of July weekend. I still love that show). So, where Ward's book was a cheesy sort of scandal sheet style that went on at great length about Batman and Robin's sexual conquests, Adam West's book was more of a civilized remembrance of the Batman era. As the introduction states, it is not a full fledged autobiography. Just an honest look back on the period of his life involving the show and character that he's best known for. (Assuming you're not under the age of twenty and only think of him as the Mayor in 'Family Guy'). It's a quick, fun shot of BatNostalgia.

Dominick says

I guess I shouldn't be surprised that this was something of a letdown. Actually, I'm a bit sad that I didn't like it better, as West comes across as honest and fairly decent, acknowledging (tastefully) his peccadilloes and being generous (usually) in his comments about others. But the book just doesn't have that much to offer. Even within its narrow scope--West is up-front from the beginning that this isn't a full-blown autobiography but specifically a book about the Bat-phenomenon--it just comes across as superficial. Seasons two and three are glossed over with barely a comment, other than West's general expression of disappointment with how they panned out. There are few recollections that provide significant insight into the mechanics of the show or its cult status. At times, I almost found myself wishing he *had* opted to do a full-bore autobiography, as that might have been more diverse. West does provide some worthwhile comment, as in his argument against viewing the show as camp (I see his point), and every now and then the uglier side of Hollywood seeps through, but West is perhaps too much of a gentleman really to delve into the nitty-gritty. Not a good sign that, even with the book being relatively short (only a bit over two hundred pages, with pictures and short chapters), several pages at the end are merely episode summaries, many with tantalizingly brief specific recollections. Recommended for inveterate enthusiasts for the show, not so much for others.

Travis McClain says

In his introduction, Adam West makes clear that *Back to the Batcave* is "about the show, the phenomenon, the legacy, the stars and the spectacular highs and difficult lows" that accompanied being Batman from 1966 until 1968. This isn't a full-on autobiography; West only explores other facets of his life as they pertain to providing a larger context for the meaning of the series in his life.

Fans have decried for years that the TV show was "camp," a point that West refutes throughout this book. He makes a good case, and fans may well be surprised by how well West knows his comic books. West's insights into the character--not the licensable property, but the actual fictitious individual Bruce Wayne/Batman--makes for particularly interesting reading. I've read and heard quite a lot about the character over the years, and was surprised to discover something here that's more than a synthesis of previously espoused positions.

Perhaps the most interesting remark is a knock on Tim Burton's 1989 film, which bothered West because, "in the film, he destroyed those first two hoods but did nothing for the people they'd mugged." In West's world, Batman should place the victim ahead of the perpetrator. It's a sensibility that informed his take on the character, and is really the heart of the book. It's a recurring theme in *Back to the Batcave*; West reconciling his off-screen life and choices with the values personified by his on-screen persona. West isn't Bruce Wayne and falls short of the ideal, of course, but it's telling that he clearly *wants* to be as respectable as the Caped Crusader.

Those looking for a tell-all may be disappointed; he has a few harsh words for Otto Preminger but mostly the book is reverential for the cast and crew of *Batman*. Allusions are made to his notorious swinging lifestyle but only occasionally and rarely in much detail. What comes across, ultimately, is a grateful man saying thanks to a role and the impact it had on his life.

Ed Nemo says

I like Adam West. It is that simple. He is an actor that has been one of my favorite characters of all time. Reading this book you get the feel of what it is like to be the most desired TV star in the world for an all too brief amount of time. Girls in the trailer, getting thrown out of Hollywood orgies with the Riddler, (this part was thankfully written as an aside and tastefully).

I find the comparisons between William Shatner and Adam West to be frighteningly accurate. Both were extremely famous for roles that were absolute gold. Money and fame, until the series ended and then typecast to the point where finding work is difficult.

The characterization of producers and directors are absolutely unfathomable. People that make the big decisions all appear to be power-hungry jerks will make you dance for a coveted role. The one thing I learned above all else, I would not make it in Hollywood. If I had to deal with one of these guys, they would get punched, I would be blacklisted and...well, I guess I could write a memorable biography. Adam West did that without hitting anyone! He truly is a great actor!

Mick Meyers says

Really enjoyed this book, Adam adds just that touch of pathos to his assisted auto biography. working hard coming up through the ranks to take a chance with the batman series. i got the impression he would have liked to take it further than the three series but alas the short sighted TV execs and advertising had the last say. u like in the UK programmes are given time to prove themselves before cancellation. he says he was more then upset not to do a cameo in the Michael Keaton version of batman which I think I would have been good but alas his version is looked on as camp (sorry to use that term adam) and a parody. i read burt wards biography some years ago and I think he seem to get more enjoyment out of it. a good read and more poignant since the death of Adam.

Tina says

A charming and entertaining memoir of Adam West's involvement with the 1960s Batman TV show and

movies. Lots of fun!

Mike Jensen says

A mixed bag, this book. First the positive: West and Roven were wise to make the vast majority of the book about the experience of being Batman in the TV series that began in 1966, for Adam West has not had a very interesting life apart from that, which he confesses without realizing he is confessing it. The first 50 pages about his life before Batman seem much longer as you read them. The rest is a very personal view of making the series that goes into more detail than I expected. Most of this will satisfy the curious.

The negative: West's perspective can't be in only one, and I would like to know how others view the same events. Quite differently, I imagine. There are times, many times, that he is so full of himself that he seems an unreliable witness. He tells us how important his children are to him, and I daresay he believes it, but it is also clear that he neglected them for long periods of time, rationalizing it with the importance of his career. He confesses promiscuity, and well-known women are named. It is not his place to out them as his lovers unless they consented. It seems pretty sleazy to name other well-known women who wanted him that he turned down. Does anybody really believe he had a shot at playing James Bond, with an offer on the table? Many actors were sounded out during the transition from Sean Connery to George Lazenby and again in the transition from Connery to Roger Moore. Somehow West's name never turns up in the press releases and gossip columns of the time or in the later Bond film documentaries. I could add twice as many other problems with the content.

As a material book, this one has its problems. The page layout was obviously made with a desk-top publishing program with all the ugly quirks that such programs had in the mid-nineties. The art program is terrible. Given the desk-top program, pictures could be dropped in anywhere, but often appear a dozen chapters after the event described. One picture has no reference in the book at all. The slick cover and premise sell the book, but the execution within is not very professional.

Brain-dead fans will no doubt lap this up. The rest of us can see the value of having West's reminiscences about this, let's face it, awful series, even if it is in such an ill-package.

Mary Lou says

Interesting and amusing. A quick read.

Jonathan Roth says

interesting entertaining for those who loved the show and for those who want to know what happens behind the scenes

Andy says

Adam West autographed my copy. How much did he charge? I don't remember, ha! ha!

Let's face it, he's an awful actor but was perfect in playing a two-dimensional comic book character. I like everything about this book, even the end where Burt Ward and he are reduced to wearing their costumes to supermarket openings in the early 1970's. Adam West will always be Batman, fuck Michael Keaton, George Clooney and all those other fakes!

Matt says

As a child, I was a huge fan of the 1966 Batman television series. I watched it in reruns when I was in elementary school, and the nostalgia factor has made it a favorite of mine to this day. In this book, the TV show's star, Adam West (the man that played Bruce Wayne/Batman) gives us his bat-centric autobiography. I say "bat-centric" because the book doesn't describe a lot of West's life outside of his involvement with the Batman series.

It was fun to read behind-the-scenes anecdotes about the show's storylines or his co-workers. I also enjoyed learning of West's true appreciation for the Batman comic book.

There were some weird things about the book. For example, there were a lot of great photos from West's time on Batman, as well as from his other works. Unfortunately, the photos were scattered haphazardly throughout the book. They didn't line up with what was being discussed in the chapter the picture showed up in. There were times when the pictures would have helped to get across what West was describing in his narrative, yet, for some reason, the pictures would show up chapters earlier or chapters later.

Also, West talks a lot about all the women he slept with (or tried to sleep with). This with mostly uncomfortable because he was married during many of these liaisons with other women.

As a final score, I'd give this book a 3.5 out of 5. I feel comfortable rounding it up to a 4-star rating, though.

This is an enjoyable book about the history of the Batman TV series, and it reads very quickly. I'm glad I had a chance to read this before the release of the television series' Blu-ray collection later this year.

The back of the book has a list of every episode of the Batman TV show, as well as their original air dates. West gives a brief summary of each story, and for many of the episodes, leaves some short comments or insights about the guest stars that appeared on that episode, or something else that he found interesting.

Stormcrow says

Very enjoyable reminiscence on the original 1960's Batman show. I read half the book in my first sitting and I would recommend it to any Bat-fan!

Gef says

We leave you good citizens of Gotham and the world as we move on to new crimes cappers and mysteries to solve. Adam's memories and stories return to the Bat-files of earlier days, forgotten youth. Truly a good read, will never know what took so long to get to it. Until we return.... same Bat-time same Bat-channel.

Michael says

I was born in 1967 and became an avid Batman fan as a result of encountering reruns of the television show, back when I was too young to know it was a comedy. That led me to the comic books, in which I discovered the artwork of Neal Adams and the grim, gritty Batman of the early seventies (which, at least in part, eventually led to a career in illustrative design). So the pop art sixties Batman and "The Batman" in his darker incarnation always co-existed for me. Regardless, in my mind Adam West was the REAL Batman. This was confirmed when I actually shook his gloved hand at a Cleveland autorama in second grade.

I remember seeing West show up here and there on television while growing up, half the time as Batman or with other cast members. I was always kind of puzzled as to why he didn't have another show. Mr. Spock was hosting "In Search Of", and Capt. Kirk showed up on T.J. Hooker eventually. I remember seeing him in a few old movies or TV shows on Saturday afternoons.

This book tells the whole story, and as an adult, a few things strike me about it: 1) Adam West has had to deal with a lot of career disappointment in a life that probably seemed to have no limits at all at the height of the Batman craze, and that's rather painful to think about. 2) When I shook this man's hand, he was driven to wear his costume again by sheer economics and desperation for paying work. 3) Where many would have given up or drowned in self pity or humiliation, Adam West emerged as an appreciative and gracious man.

I suspect the book will be of little interest to those who are not fans of the Batman TV series, particularly because the author maintains some decorum and respect and dishes virtually no dirt. I found that refreshing. I gave the book four stars instead of five only because it seemed a little bit cursory.

As some have noted elsewhere, the book's epilogue about the Tim Burton film is somewhat regrettable. I can fully understand why West sees himself as the definitive Batman character, much in the same way Clayton Moore views himself as the true Lone Ranger. But he's wrong. Batman was a lot of things before Adam West, and he's been a lot of things since Adam West, and the TV show was just a sliver of the character's history (and a peculiar one at that). So while I agreed with West's assertion that a new Batman movie starring the old TV cast would have been interesting and possibly successful (particularly on television), there was nothing wrong in 1989 with a new approach that steered entirely clear of any connection to the comedic sixties incarnation. That said, Michael Keaton was a horrible Bruce Wayne.

It's been great in recent years to see Adam West embrace and capitalize on his pop icon status, and to see his humor and good natured self-deprecation on display. I find this almost heroic coming from a guy who reluctantly spent a couple of decades scratching out a living on the county fair and car show circuit. I personally think he's a brilliant comedian, a one-of-a-kind personality who could have accomplished nearly anything. It's nice to see him in demand and enjoying new popularity.

David Halford says

This is a great book for any bat-fan. I grew up on this show and it gave me a lifelong obsession with the worlds greatest detective, and I have Adam West to thank for it. The book is an easy read, and while it's really a biography about Adam West, 95% of it is about his time as the caped crusader. There are a lot of fun 'did you know'-moments and some surprises for the fans, and most of the book is very lighthearted.

The final few chapters however are a bit heavier as Adam tells his side of the downfall of the series, which is a pretty sad tale and, sadly, will leave you with a melancholic feeling of nostalgia. I'd have loved to see the book end on a high note, but let's face it, the show didn't, so the book doesn't. Still, the last few chapters are worth a read and everything before them are a great read and will make you feel like that little kid dressing up as batman all over again!

As a bonus, and to lift your spirits after the last chapter, the book includes a complete episode guide with Adam's notes on each episode, the villains, and the story. Especially fun if you still have all of those episodes. (They have never been released on DVD but if you're a little internet-savvy you can find people that have recorded reruns.)

Bonus tip: you can get an autographed paperback (ie. a real book, made of paper) from Adam West's website, which will be made out to you personally if you ask for it, which makes it much more than 'just a book', it makes it memorabilia of your childhood.
