



# Batman: The Complete History

By Les Daniels

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The super-powered trilogy that captured the world's greatest superhero triumvirate of all time is now available in paperback. Relive the adventures of Krypton's favorite son inside and outside the comic book world in *Superman: The Complete History*. Uncover the Caped Crusader's mysterious real-world origin and his evolution into a hugely successful TV and movie franchise in *Batman: The Complete History*. Follow the Amazon Princess as she evolves from curiosity to feminist icon in the Eisner Award winning *Wonder Woman: The Complete History*. Each book is filled with enough archival comic book art, photographs, and in-depth history to satisfy the most demanding fan—and is now priced to appeal to the most casual reader.

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## Batman: The Complete History By Les Daniels Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #1445991 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Chronicle Books
- Published on: 2004-06
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 10.00" h x .70" w x 8.10" l, 1.96 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 208 pages

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## **Editorial Review**

### Review

These days we devour super-sized meals, ogle strutting supermodels and experiment with superconductivity. But once upon a time there were only superheroes. Murmur their names, and from out of memory's deep emerge lazy summer afternoons spent on covered porches with a bottle of Orange Crush and a bag of Fritos, weekly bike rides to the revolving wire racks in corner drug stores and, of course, our increasingly daring leaps, from picnic tables and brick fireplaces, with an old sheet fluttering from 9-year-old shoulders: "I can fly, I can fly." And we could -- if only during that moment when we flexed our knees and pushed off into the air. Then, for one blissful second, we were commensurate with our dreams.

But, ah, those names, how they thrilled and fed our imaginations: the Flash, Green Lantern, Green Arrow, Aqua-Man and Hawkman, the Mighty Thor, and a little later the Silver Surfer, Spiderman and the X-Men. To the ignorant eyes of parents, our carefully tended stacks of 20, 50 or 200 issues of Action Comics, World's Finest, Detective Comics, Marvel Comics and so many others merely appeared to tell the same story, again and yet again: A gaudily costumed crime fighter battles a seemingly unbeatable enemy -- sometimes the oddly loquacious alien from another planet or dimension, sometimes the white-coated mad scientist with his destructo-ray, often (and best of all) the monstrous result of some laboratory experiment gone horribly wrong.

Never such innocence again. Nowadays, comics have grown up and taken steroids: They are swarthy, mean, perverse, complex, adult. They even require specialized stores -- like X-rated videos -- and aspire to literature. "Graphic novels" can be intricate and wonderful -- ask any student of Neil Gaiman's *The Sandman* or look at the pastiche brilliance of Alan Moore's *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* -- but they would likely frighten or puzzle the children who lingered for hours over the early adventures of Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman.

Three oversized histories now document the life and times of these most durable of all the comic-book legends. Les Daniels's cleanly written text reveals not only the artistic, business and marketing decisions that have made Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman recognizable round the world, but also the ways in which each of their comics differs from the others in style and tone.

Superman's adventures, for instance, were nearly always laced with humor and frequently relied on slightly screwball situations: For instance, Mr. Mxyzptlk -- the impish troublemaker from the future -- and Lois Lane's niece Susie Tompkins generally treated the Man of Steel as either an amusing buffoon or a playtime doll. Bizarro -- the simple-minded partial clone of Superman, who resembled a crystallized Frankenstein's monster -- provoked endless chaos without being truly threatening. The entire reporting cast of the Daily Planet often tended to be exploited just for laughs: wide-eyed Jimmy Olsen, love-struck Lois Lane, even gruff editor Perry White with his favorite ejaculation, "Great Caesar's ghost!"

By contrast, Batman dealt with obsession in all its forms (a theme underscored in Tim Burton's two Batman films). Bruce Wayne transforms himself into a caped crusader to avenge the brutal death of his parents. But his opponents are even more seriously damaged individuals, usually driven to crime by psychological trauma: the Joker, who yearns to be acclaimed the world's greatest comedian; Two-Face, who struggles with a Jekyll-and-Hyde personality after his disfigurement; Cat-Woman, a mousy secretary who escapes repression by releasing her inner tigress.

Wonder Woman is, of course, the supreme avatar of that particular myth. The ludicrously bespectacled Diana Prince is actually an Amazon princess, at ease with her physical strength and beauty. She grew up in a world -- Paradise Island -- where sisterhood was truly powerful (and telepathic to boot). As a result, she presented a usable role model for the girls who would eventually spearhead the feminist movement of the 1970s. (Compare Xena and Buffy in the 1990s.) In some ways, Wonder Woman, though popular as a comic book, actually found her true identity in dark-haired, busty Lynda Carter, star of the television series. Nearly all the comics touched on, usually obliquely, the issue of sex: Indeed, Batman's adventures sometimes resembled a fetishistic daydream of skintight leather and rubber. But TV's Wonder Woman could often seem beyond sexuality, utterly serious and focused, hardly aware of that low-cut metallic breastplate and the bounty it scarcely contained.

Daniels covers the "complete history" of these three modern myths, from their inception to their latest incarnations. For instance, he touches on the influence of pulp-magazine heroes like the Shadow and Zorro on the creation of various super crime fighters, and also stresses the widespread inspiration of Douglas Fairbanks's acrobatic film stunts. But no mere nostalgist, he sympathetically delves into the camp TV shows, blockbuster movies and highly revisionist 1980s interpretations of the Man of Steel, the Dark Knight and the warrior-princess. I do think Daniels might have stressed more fully the pervasive influence of science fiction on all these comics. There were, for instance, several popular novels of the 1930s on the theme of supermen -- e.g.. Philip Wylie's *Gladiator* (1930) and Olaf Stapledon's *Odd John* (1935). Moreover, he actually refers to Murray Leinster, Edmond Hamilton and Otto Binder but without pointing out that these are honored figures not only in the history of comic books but even more so in the development of sf.

All this said, Daniels offers plenty of shrewd insights:

"The Joker became the model for other Batman bad guys who were to follow: a seemingly endless parade of tormented, avaricious lunatics who would sacrifice anything to earn a place in the moonlight. A peculiarly American form of expressionism developed, in which characters lived surrounded by countless emblems of their obsessions, treated crime as a series of publicity stunts, and dressed up in crazy costumes as they struggled to dominate the night. Some critics have suggested that Batman was a more realistic hero than Superman because the former had no incredible powers, but Superman's stories generally followed the logical patterns of science fiction. Batman's world, by contrast, was sheer fantasy, featuring multiple maniacs striving to turn their dreams and nightmares into concrete reality, with only a man dressed as a bat to say them nay." It's important to stress how good Daniels's text is, if only because the illustrations and layout of these three volumes display so much eye-popping, gosh-wow, full-color razzle-dazzle. Chip Kidd, the highly regarded designer, created the look of these books, and no page is like any other. He enlarges single images, plays with type size, reprints entire stories, reproduces advertisements, movie stills, toy collections and just about anything else pertinent to the iconology. As a result, each of these glossy colorful paperbacks seems part chronicle, part comic book and part collector's catalogue. Thus Kidd has made sure that in their layout these dossiers exemplify the exuberance and imaginative daring of the classics they celebrate.

These are, finally, tantalizing cultural scrapbooks, and as such they remind us of how much our pop myths have reflected the mores and anxieties of their times, whether the 1930s, the 1960s or the present. Superheroes certainly feel as American as jazz, baseball and the Fourth of July -- and their espoused values have traditionally been those that matter to most Americans: determination, self-sacrifice, a desire to protect and help the underdog, an essential, deep-down goodness. Yet note that all of these virtues have been questioned, quite legitimately, by the latest generation of artists who have reinterpreted Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman. We are currently far more wary of homegrown vigilantism, and we know all too well that being a superpower, like possessing super powers, may not suffice in the 21st century. Indeed, every contemporary comics hero repeatedly, even neurotically, questions the troubling relationship between might and right. Superman's own willingness "to fight the never-ending battle for truth, justice and the American

Way" still seems, nonetheless, a soul-stirring, admirable credo, especially on this day of family picnics and evening fireworks. And yet even the most patriotic citizen might look out on the world and sadly pause over that one distinctly disheartening word: "never-ending." --**The Washington Post**

From the Inside Flap

In 1939, Batman's dark shadow swooped over the comic book scene, and his vigilante battle with the vicious villainy of Gotham City has been thrilling his fans ever since. Once the tragic victim of a horrible crime, Bruce Wayne's nocturnal alter ego became the ultimate crime fighter--teamed with Robin the Boy Wonder and equipped with a formidable array of Bat-accessories. *Batman: The complete History* offers the first definitive history of the most popular super hero of all time. Author Les Daniels traces Batman's evolution from his comic book beginnings to the campy theatrics of the Adam West TV show, to the emergence of Frank Miller's hard-edged *Dark Knight*, to today's blockbuster motion pictures. Illustrated throughout with rare comic book art, sketches, movie stills, and Batman merchandise, this tribute to the Caped Crusader reveals the multidimensional crime fighter in all his complexity. No matter which side of Batman's persona you find most appealing, you will treasure this rich and colorful tribute to an always intriguing super hero.

About the Author

Les Daniels is a renowned comic book expert. He's the author of *DC Comics: Sixty Years of the World's Favorite Comic Book Heroes*. He lives in Providence, Rhode Island.

## **Users Review**

**From reader reviews:**

**Ernie Swisher:**

This *Batman: The Complete History* book is just not ordinary book, you have it then the world is in your hands. The benefit you have by reading this book is information inside this book incredible fresh, you will get facts which is getting deeper a person read a lot of information you will get. This kind of *Batman: The Complete History* without we know teach the one who reading through it become critical in considering and analyzing. Don't be worry *Batman: The Complete History* can bring whenever you are and not make your case space or bookshelves' become full because you can have it within your lovely laptop even cell phone. This *Batman: The Complete History* having very good arrangement in word and layout, so you will not truly feel uninterested in reading.

**Bobby Townsend:**

Information is provisions for those to get better life, information currently can get by anyone at everywhere. The information can be a knowledge or any news even restricted. What people must be consider whenever those information which is inside the former life are hard to be find than now could be taking seriously which one is suitable to believe or which one often the resource are convinced. If you have the unstable resource then you get it as your main information we will see huge disadvantage for you. All those possibilities will not happen inside you if you take *Batman: The Complete History* as your daily resource information.

**Pete Dominguez:**

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**Melissa Becker:**

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