

Assignment TV

By **TERRENCE O'FLAHERTY**

"Batman," the new ABC grope toward the midsection of mass American taste, is a strange mixture of squareness and awareness. It's either a very low camp or very high treason. But there's one comforting thought: I'm sure the producers don't know exactly what it is either.

First we get this bit of baloney from William Dozier, the executive producer of ABC's series:

"While the show is certainly designed to satisfy the 8- to 14-year-old audience by providing a living picture of the comics they have read, it is also very much attuned to the millions of adults who remember reading them and can appreciate the humor and nostalgia of these incredible feats of daring."

Then Adam West, the actor who plays the title role, comes out with this gem: "Playing Batman is a serious responsibility. Two generations of Americans have grown up with a love and respect for this devoted defender of the good and the pure. I am deeply and humbly aware of the moral obligations that accompany my work on this series."
Golly, Batman!

IT HAS BEEN produced with live actors in lavish Sunday Comics color and has preserved a funny paper air of unreality in its quick cues — Pow! Whammy! Boing! Yeow! The characters speak the stilted language of funny-paperese. Like the comic strips it is gimmicky and foolish; its heroes are infallible, its villains are fiendish; and GOOD always triumphs over BAD.

What ABC has created is a new pop art hero for those who are weary of seeking one in more normal channels.

Much has been made of the word "camp" in the publicity connected with ABC's "Batman" serial. After seeing the first few installments it is hilariously apparent that the poor, square ABC executives who devised this romp are totally unaware of its meaning. Their intent, however, is abundantly clear. They are attempting to capitalize on "camp" humor without having the faintest idea of what it is.

LAST YEAR the original "Batman" serial — all 15 episodes of it — was amalgamated into one theater feature which runs for hours and is still showing around the country. It was an instant success with "camp" followers whose bulls-eye sense of humor found the old films wildly funny. "Batman's" clothes are absurd, the language is pompous, and the relationship between him and his young roommate "Robin" appears to an audience of the Sixties to be happily homosexual.

In other words, the whole thing is a "camp" — something that was done in dead seriousness and comes off funny, making fun out of something, not making fun of something. "Batman" and "Robin" were terribly square.

The idea of their fighting CRIME and apprehending master crooks is a derisive laugh — but a delicious one, for "camp" humor is never vicious. It is fun.

NOW, WE must visualize a meeting of the Master Minds at ABC. They have observed the success of the reruns of the old "Batman" serial. They have heard talk of "camp" humor. They don't have the remotest idea what it is but they know it's new and therefore commercially potential.

"Let's remake a television version of 'BATMAN!'" cries one vice-president, and so they do. What they don't realize is you don't START OUT to make something that is a Camp. That's impossible.

An old Tiffany glass shade is a genuine, grade A American Camp. A copy made today is not only NOT camp, it is a gravely unsophisticated error in judgment. From this standpoint, ABC's "Batman" is a phony. However, for the uninitiated, it may represent a new look — the Comic Strip Look — on television.

Low Camp or No Camp, who could resist that final scene when "Batman" and "Robin" have apprehended the notorious "Riddler," taken off their Crime Fighting costumes and settled down before the fire at home as just plain Bruce and Dick. "Like some help with that algebra, Dick?"
"Sure thing, Bruce."



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Research Key to Good Writing, Authors Say

"Know your subject, and research it well," Gordon advised members of the Southwest Manuscripters at their meeting last week.

Following "The Undercover Cat" from which Walt Disney's "That Darn Cat" was made, the Gordon Gordon's started their 13th fiction work, "Power Play" published by Doubleday.

"Mildred and I had been mulling around the idea for this story for several years, and finally the time seemed right to do it," Gordon said. "We based our characters on combinations of persons we knew when living in Washington, D.C., and the plot concerns a power play by a ruthless politician to seize control of the FBI when J. Edgar Hoover steps aside."

HE SAID that once the characters and plot had been determined and they had completed an outline of the story, they went to Washington to do their research.

"Imagine our surprise when, we were reading up on the FBI, we found that in 1951 there actually was a man who had tried the very scheme we were using in our story! That

was in pre-Hoover days, of course."

Although the Gordon's had lived there previously and knew the settings they planned to use, they revisited each one, taking numerous color slides and verbally describing the scenes onto tape as they went.

"THIS IS A truly effective way to capture the exact description and flavor of your settings. You will be surprised at how many details you will see in your slides that you didn't observe at the time you took them," Gordon said.

This was the 16th consecutive year in which the Gordon Southwest Manuscripters.

MEMBERS of the club announcing sales of their writing were: Polly Booth, Beryl Pierce, Marguerite McLain, Marilyn Lynch, and Earl Stowell. Carrie Blanchard announced that she placed 15th in the nationwide Writer's Digest article writing contest for 1965.

Southwest Manuscripters meets on the third Friday of each month at Clark Stadium in Hermosa Beach.

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