The "Bat-Man" Case Story

The Tale of Bob Kane's Dark Night Detective that "Could Have Been"

by Arlen Schumer

Bob Kane's recent passing made me overcome for Bill Finger, who, by all accounts, was the uncredited co-creator of Batman. Finger, who passed away in 1974, had as much to do with the creation of Batman as artist Joe Shuster had with Superman. Though Finger was a writer, the visual suggestions he made to Kane's first "Bat-Man" drawing were key to the story. Without them, the character might never have been published. To test my theory, I set out to recreate that mythical first drawing of Kane's. According to Kane, the impetus for the creation of Batman came from a meeting with DC editor Vincent Sullivan (also recently deceased), who had made the decision prior to publishing Superman's Superwoman, which Kane claims Sullivan told him was earning his company $500 a week: "I was only making $35-50 a week at the time." Kane recounted to writer Tom Andrae in 1989's "Batman: Batman & Me." "My God, if I could make that kind of money!"

Sullivan himself recollected in an article written by Will Eisner: "Says Corniscone #52, that 'Bob was astounded to hear that these two fellows, Siegel and Shuster, were making so much money with Superman. Of course there was no way I could compete with that, either, because I was only making twenty-five dollars a week, not that much money for any financial dealings. He said, I think, I can do something as good as Superman."

Kane continued, "So over the weekend I laid out a kind of naked super-hero on the page, with a figure that looked like Superman or Flash Gordon. I placed a sheet of tracing paper over him so that I could cut out the batman that might strike my fancy... Here is where my recreation begins. I needed a figure of a character, published prior to '35, that Kane might have used in his early models. Even though Bill Finger went on record for Jim Steranko's 1970 History of Comics saying that Kane's first "Bat-Man" drawing "looked very much like Superman..." I decided to evolve a figure of Flash Gordon instead, because Kane admitted he had been actively drawing Flash Gordon cocktails at the time, even bringing some to that fateful Friday cocktail meet with Sullivan. "I was a great copyist and he said, 'You know, Bob, your stuff looks just like Alex Raymond...""

I went to my collection of Kitchen Sink Flash Gordon hardcovers hoping to find any figure of Flash that could easily serve as Kane's foundation for the figure Finger (and Kane) would later describe as a character..."with kind of red trousers, black tights. I believe, with boots, gloves, spectacles..." with a small domino mask, swinging on a rope. He had two stiff wings sticking out like big bat wings. "The figure that I made did not at all fit a figure of Flash that would work in that position—I found the figure. I found what had to be Bob's model for the cover of Detective Comics #27."

"In a mad attempt to kake Dale, Flash swings downwards, effecting the missing step—such a difficult step on the Shadow cover, I must have done into my watershades—resulting in the character's major influence as Batman, with published, both are conceptually, not chronologically, correct. I placed the Shadow cover over the Bat-Man logo. I replaced the first panel of the character's debut story. Detective #27's 'The Case of the Chemical Syndicate,' since Finger described being in charge under Kathy Figure..."

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"One of the saddest contributions #3 for Flash. Kane himself supported this account, which relates to the later appearance of Batman's distinctive cool and ears, as well. Neither mannerisms or any of them..."

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DC
Real Facts & True Lies
THE TRUE STORY BEHIND "THE TRUE STORY OF BATMAN AND ROBIN"

by Arlen Schumer

Our speculation [in the previous article] into what Batman might have been like without Bill Finger, brings us to the ultimate "after the fact" document of Batman's origin, "The True Story of Batman and Robin! How a Big-Time Comic Is Born!," the cover story of Real Fact Comics #5, published by DC in 1946. I came across this oddity about 10 years ago at a comic convention—the reworking of Jack Burnley's classic Batman and Robin spotlight cover from Batman #9 leapt out at me from a back issue bin.

The five-page story, illustrated by the legendary DC artist Win Mortimer, written in omniscient,
uncredited house organ prose, details the supposed creation of all the major elements of the Batman legend up to that time. It's a whopper of a tale—and that's an understatement.

Speculation has it that since the story was created and published the same year Jerry Siegel initiated his lawsuit against DC following their publishing his Superboy concept while he was away in the service, the two are interrelated; supposedly Siegel asked Kane to join him and Shuster in wrestling control of their creations from DC, but Kane refused. Perhaps the Real Fact story was DC's way of staking its claim to ownership of the character, insuring that Kane—and only Kane—would be considered the one legitimate Batman originator, akin to a publisher printing an "ashcan" issue of a title to secure copyright.

This altered-state of history was maintained by DC—and especially by Kane himself in numerous public utterances—up until Finger's death in 1974. Only then, after Finger died almost penniless, feeling "disheartened by the lack of major accomplishments in his career," according to Kane in his '89 memoir, feeling "he had not used his creative potential to its fullest and that success had passed him by," only then did Kane begin his partial reinstatement...
of Bill Finger's collaborative role in creating The Batman as we know him.

I say "partial," because the same paragraph in *Batman & Me* that begins with Kane stating, "Now that my long-time friend and collaborator is gone, I must admit that Bill never received the fame and recognition he deserved," ends with Kane noting that, "Superman... carried both Siegel and creator of the Bat-mythos.

You'll laugh... you'll cry. Read it and weep for Bill Finger, the true co-creator of Batman.

Shuster's names because they had collaborated in creating him," ignoring all the evidence presented detailing Finger's contributions.

The panels and pages printed here of the *Real Fact* story give you a good idea of the grandiose hyperbole and outrageous manipulation of the facts bordering on the absurd, the dada, the surreal—a fair description of the panels wherein Kane is shown sketching his friend "Larry" wearing a complete Batman costume Kane's mother made!!!--which serve to gargarantly inflate Kane's sole role as
Flash Gordon by Alex Raymond, and Bob Kane’s Batman. The Batman duplicates Flash’s body position, head angle, and even the curvy, twisting vine in Flash’s hand.

This swipe was discovered by Arlen Schumer!