

MOVING PICTURES

Holy fantasy, 'Batman,' where's the pow, zap?

Expectations often are more rewarding than realization and "Batman" (C+, PG-13, 120 minutes) is a perfect example of that premise.

Despite its excellent, stylized look and Jack Nicholson's first-rate performance as the Joker, the caped crusader flounders through two hours of questionable plot that works on continuity and credibility. Most of the acting is uninspired and the heroics are laughable while the script generally isn't.

Anton Furst's production design is appropriately dank and gloomy, an image of urban decay and corruption set somewhere in "no-time" between "Metropolis" and "Blade Runner." That exactly fits the heroic fantasy not dependent upon specific history or technology, and Furst's heavy, gothic forms are among "Batman's" best features.

Jack Nicholson as the Joker may be the villain of this piece, but from a viewer's point of view, he's the real hero. "Batman" only sparkles with excitement and electricity when the Joker is on screen. Exit Nicholson and out go the lights. Figure that one out on your decoder ring, kiddies.

Nicholson plays the Joker with manic delight and such verve that even stupid lines like "You wouldn't hit a guy wearing glasses, would you?" are delightfully energized. As well, he gives new meaning to the old cliché about "bats in the belly." Nicholson alone is worth the ticket price.

Michael Keaton, however, is dull and leaden as Batman with one of the lowest energy levels to appear on screen in a long time. The intellectual, philosophic approach just doesn't work here.

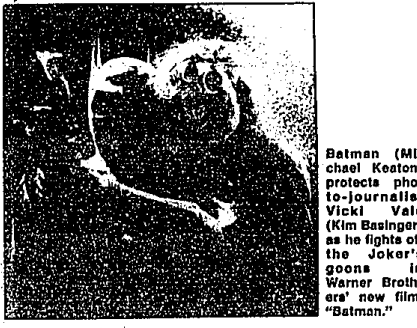
THE SAME is true of Kim Basinger, who puts on glasses and tries to play intellectual photojournalist/love interest. The serious comic style she displayed in "My Stepmother Is an Alien" is totally absent . . . and missed.

The film's major faults, however, are murky continuity and a strange mixture of comic books, heroic fantasy and realism. The mixture doesn't work unless the performances are inspired which, with the exception of the Joker, is not the case. The entire conclusion of the film turns on one unlikely pistol shot by the Joker which doesn't work, given all the technology at Batman's command. There are a number of other questionable plot structures and the story of Batman's childhood is told twice — and the two versions disagree. Sorry, guys, I can't decide that on my ring.

"Honey, I Shrank the Kids" (B+, PG, 105 minutes) is a cute and clever update of the several "Incredible Shrinking . . ." movies with Rick Moranis as the nerdy head of the Szalinski household who's suffering from some minor marital strife because Mrs. Dian Szalinski (Marcia Strassman) apparently is trying to realize her potential while Dad is off in his own, inventive little world. This unnecessary plot complication slows down the film's opening.

Once the snotty kid next door, Ron Thompson (Jared Rushton), hits a baseball through the window and sees off Father Szalinski's Incredible Shrinking Machine, proceedings are off and running. Ron and his brother, "Little Rusa" Thompson (Thomas Brown), come to apologize and suddenly, along with the Szalinski kids, Apy (Amy O'Neill) and Nick (Robert Oliver), they're reduced in size and forced to fight their way home through the backyard "jungle." It's an exciting, good-spirited trek.

THE FOUR are excellent in their portraits of a cross-section of childhood without condensation and stereotyping. The parents are also well-done characters although "Big



Batman (Michael Keaton) protects photo-journalist Vicki Vale (Kim Basinger) as he fights off the Joker's goons in Warner Brothers' new film, "Batman."



the movies
Dan Greenberg

Grading the movies

A+	Top marks - sure to please
A	Close behind - excellent
A-	Still in running for top honors
B+	Pretty good stuff, not perfect
B	Good
B-	Good but notable deficiencies
C+	Just a cut above average
C	Mediocre
C-	Not so hot and slipping fast
D	The very best of the poor stuff
D	Poor
D-	It doesn't get much worse
F	Truly awful
Z	Reserved for the colossally bad
*	No advanced screening

"No Holds Barred" (*) (PG-13). Hulk Hogan grunts and grins.
"Pe Seminary" (D+) (R) 105 minutes. More gore for Stephen King fans.
"Plak Cadillac" (B+) (PG-13) 90 minutes.
"Clint Eastwood is unexpectedly humorous in comedy about bounty-hunters, gangland treasure and a girl with a baby."
"Rain Heat" (A+) (R) 130 minutes.
Tom Cruise and Dustin Hoffman star as brothers in every sense.
"Rebeldes" (C+) (R) 105 minutes.
Violent buddy film with Kiefer Sutherland and Lou Diamond Phillips.
"Road House" (D) (R) 110 minutes.
Clichéd, violent and unpleasant Patrick Swayze vehicle with weak acting.
"See No Evil, Hear No Evil" (*) (R). Richard Pryor and Gene Wilder in comedy about murder.
"Star Trek V: The Final Frontier" (C+) (PG) 100 minutes.
Starship Enterprise on collision course with terrible plot structure.

VIDEO VIEWING

By Dan Greenberg
special writer

American society tends to select popular heroes less for their contribution to the betterment of society and more because of outrageous behavior and material success.

The elevation of gangsters, sports figures and media stars to legendary, mythical proportions fulfills our innermost, secret desire to escape from the tension and boredom of daily life.

Public personalities have "escaped" much of life's drudgery hence they're allowed to ignore or break the rules — or so it seems these days. This principle applies to rock'n'rollers more so than to anyone else.

"Jerry Lee Lewis: I AM WHAT I AM" is a 60-minute, 1987 video which reflects that attitude. Despite all the lurid publicity surrounding

ALTERNATIVE VIEWING



The magical adventure, "Lawrence of Arabia," brought international stardom to then-unknown Egyptian actor Omar Sharif (left) and known British actor Peter O'Toole. The new-

Restoration recaptures grandeur of Lean's work

By John Monaghan
special writer

A man alone, exhausted from the heat, walks across the desert toward a blistering yellow sun and almost certain death. It's a grand emotional moment, yet its impact is all but lost on the confines of a television screen.

Even during an occasional theatrical showing, the desert sun has faded through time to an almost cool pink — far from the filmmaker's original intent.

With the director's cut of "Lawrence of Arabia," beginning an extended run this Wednesday at the Fox Theatre, a film classic is not only rereleased, but reborn. With 20 additional minutes and heightened color, the new "Lawrence" is actually clearer in image, sound and story than it was in its original release in 1962.

Director David Lean faced an unpredictable desert and countless budget overruns in the grueling year it took to film "Lawrence of Arabia." His biggest battle, however, occurred back home. Without his approval, producer Sam Spiegel cut the film considerably to increase the amount of times theaters could show it in a day.

While some critics noticed the cer-

tain lack of coherence in his construction, audiences flocked to "Lawrence." It won seven Academy awards, including best picture and best director. Today, the uncut version has played to great acclaim in several American cities. My own experience with the film during a screening on San Francisco soared well beyond any expectations.

WINSTON Churchill called Thomas Edward Lawrence (1888-1935) "one of the greatest beings alive in our time." While American and British soldiers perished in the trenches of World War I, Lawrence was singlehandedly leading the Arab nation to victory against the Turkish army. Behind the scenes, however, British generals and politicians were busy exploiting his seemingly endless energy and charisma.

A virtually unknown Peter O'Toole became an international star upon the release of "Lawrence." (Marlon Brando, originally chosen for the role, was busy filming "Mutiny on the Bounty.") Unbelievably handsome, O'Toole adds the desired mystery to the complex Lawrence — who also is seen as an exhibitionist and masochist.

Among other things, the restored version shows in more detail exactly what Lawrence is trying to accom-

plish in the desert. There are also added shots in the controversial scene between Lawrence and a homosexual Turkish general (Jose Ferrer) who captures him. The salute general's lips quiver more lecherously than ever at the sight of Lawrence's milky white flesh.

The real star of the film is still director Lean, who has managed to keep the epic on a very human level. His "The Bridge Over the River Kwai" (1957) and "A Passage to India" (1984) also have this quality, yet, "Lawrence" remains his grandest and most personal epic to date.

FILM ARCHIVIST Robert Harris originally contacted Lean about the reconstruction in the early 1980s. The director was shocked to find that brittle splices and fading color were taking their toll on the original negative. With the help of Martin Scorsese and Steven Spielberg (and their personal teams of technicians), four tons of visual and sound elements were sifted through to create the final cut.

Some of the new shots came from Lean's private collection, others from the Columbia Studio vaults. The team, including the film's original editor, Anne Coates, worked closely not only to add scenes but to lighten existing ones. It now clocks in at 218 minutes.

THERE'S NO question that his performance has tremendous energy, a force, which in and of itself, is attractive, no matter how anti-social that energy may be — substance abuse, singing about sex without responsibility or breaking up piano stools.

The original footage in this program features complete performances which is one reason this video cassette is so attractive. Then add in testimonials by just about everybody in the business — Paul Anka, Chuck Berry, Johnny Cash, Mickey Gilley, Tom Jones, Kris Kristofferson, Roy Orbison, Ron Woods and a host of others, including family members, DJ's, record production personnel and Lewis' cousin, evangelist Jimmy Swaggart.

That's the clear message this documentary projects. Timed for release with the Dennis Quaid biopic, "Great Balls of Fire," "Jerry Lee Lewis: I AM WHAT I AM" is a slick, entertaining hour of original footage and contemporary testimonials which leave viewers with a positive image of Lewis.

But old footage and contemporary testimonials, in and of themselves, don't make an entertaining program. It takes intelligent editing to avoid the boring pattern of old clips, talking heads, old clips, talking heads, etc.

Producers Gregory Hall and Charlie Dick, along with director/critic Mark Hall have fashioned a very cleverly edited collection of original footage, old stills and contemporary interviews.

They intercut their material so well and so rapidly that the program never lags. The energy of Lewis' music is maintained as one person finishes the other's sentence in perfect phase.

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