

MOVIES

Batman' does justice to comic series

FROM THE BEST-SELLING NOVEL BY THE AUTHOR OF JURASSIC PARK

"BREATHTAKING ACTION! AMAZING SPECIAL EFFECTS."

"YOU ARE IN FOR A TREAT!"

"DON'T MISS IT!"

"PURE MAGIC! A MUST-SEE!"

"ADVENTURE AT ITS BEST!"

WHERE YOU ARE THE ENDANGERED SPECIES.

AMC AMERICAN WEST	AMC BEL AIR 10	AMC EASTLAND 5
AMC SOUTHFIELD CITY	AMC WOODLAND	AMC CANTON 1
QUO VADIS	RENAISSANCE 4	SHOWCASE 4
SHOWCASE 7	STAR TAYLOR	STAR WINCHESTER 8
STAR 10	STAR 10	STAR 10
STAR 10	STAR 10	STAR 10
STAR 10	STAR 10	STAR 10
STAR 10	STAR 10	STAR 10
STAR 10	STAR 10	STAR 10
STAR 10	STAR 10	STAR 10

TICKETS PLEASE

Holy block-buster! "Batman Forever," the third in what could be an endless franchise of movies about the caped crusader, isn't that bad. It has so much eye-popping color, action, and special effects that "cool" seems the only word to aptly describe it.

Sure it's overblown, overhyped, and director Joel Schumacher relies much too heavily on MTV-style editing. It nevertheless holds its own with Tim Burton's first two entries, which had major problems of their own.

Just when I was getting used to Michael Keaton in the lead, he backed out, saying the movie's bad guys were upstaging his performance. He's got a point, especially when box office phenom Jim Carrey dons the skin-tight, question mark-covered costume of The Riddler.

A scientist at Wayne Industries, Carrey's Edward Nygma idolizes billionaire Bruce Wayne and wants to make him a partner in a venture that uses TV signals to alter brainwaves. When Wayne warns him about messing with people's minds, Nygma becomes arch villain The Riddler.

His invention, which looks like a Dadaist blender, sends waves of green energy into homes, draining people's brains while making The Riddler even smarter. His riddles to Batman, perverse twists on kids' pop-up books, get more and more cryptic as the film goes on.

As in "The Mask," Carrey's own talents with physical comedy and facial contortions are accentuated by the movie's special effects, especially when he undergoes the mind blast. Not only upstages Batman, but also partner-in-crime Two-Face, an admirable attempt by Tommy Lee Jones.

Val Kilmer, meanwhile, offers a very reserved Bruce Wayne. In costume, it hardly matters, but when he's a regular guy, he needs an extra something — Keaton's expressive eyebrows perhaps — to keep us interested in between action scenes.

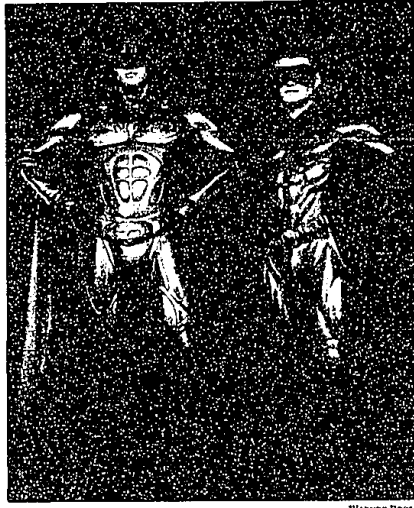
Back in the Batcave, Bruce Wayne undergoes some heavy therapy with a curvaceous criminal psychologist (Nicole Kidman) who has made it her mission to diabolize Batman both physically and mentally. This becomes a double threat for Bruce Wayne, who has fallen in love with her while outside the costume.

Most interesting in "Batman Forever" is the introduction of Robin. Played with a surprising just by nice guy Chris O'Donnell, the former acrobat watches his family die at the hands of Two-Face. He swears vengeance, just as Wayne did long ago when the Joker gunned down his parents.

Director Tim Burton, who serves as producer here, has left his mark on the series. His intriguing blend of ultra-modern imagery and dark moody lighting remain in many scenes, especially when the sleek Batmobile is chased by sedans usually driven by Prohibition-era gangsters.

In "Batman Forever" director Schumacher adds wild, cartoonish colors to the movie's palette, best displayed in a neon-bright black-light fight with Robin and skeleton-masked thugs. When he resurrects those tilted camera shots from the '60s television show, I know it's just a matter of time (Batman 12?) when those "POWS" and "THWACKS" will make a comeback.

Schumacher, who directed the fascinating "Falling Down," also makes some mistakes. He feels that if he slows down for a second he'll lose his audience. When he needs three shots to show an ac-



Crime fighters: Batman (Val Kilmer, left) and Robin (Chris O'Donnell) join together as crime-fighting partners to defend Gotham City in Warner Bros.' all-new adventure, "Batman Forever," opening Friday at metro Detroit movie theaters.

tion (Robin sliding into a slowly closing Batcave door, for instance) he gives us about six shots too many.

By the end of the movie, characterization takes a backseat to gadgets as the Dynamic Duo unveils a Batboat, a Batplane, and some awesome new black rubber costumes. The only thing not "cool" about this mega-blockbuster and cultural phenomenon

is the idea that we'll all be walking around in black rubber by summer's end.

To leave a message for John Monaghan, dial 953-2047, mailbox number 1866, on a touch-tone phone, for him a note at 691-7279, or write him in care of Entertainment, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.

Deliver love letters to win 'The Postman' tickets

Tell us about a love letter that won your heart to win prizes in reader write-in celebrating "The Postman" (IL Postino) opening Friday, June 30, at the Main Art Theater in Royal Oak.

Briefly describe the love letter. Tell us who it was from, and what made it memorable. Maybe it was a letter from a boyfriend or girlfriend in the service, or someone who lived in a distant city? Did you marry the person who wrote the letter? Or are they just a fond memory?

The first 10 readers to respond will receive a prize package consisting of a movie soundtrack cassette tape, book, and two tickets to the movie. You must be 18 or older to enter.

Send or fax entries by Friday, June 30 to: Keely Wygonik, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, Inc., 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150. To fax entries: call (313) 591-7279. Call (313) 953-2105 for more information.

"The Postman (IL Postino)" is a funny and moving story about a postman whose eyes are opened to a world of new possibilities when he finds himself delivering letters to one of the most romantic poets of the 20th century. The film was inspired by an incident in the life of renowned Chilean poet and diplomat, Pablo Neruda played by Philippe Noiret, who was forced into exile from his native country in 1952 and granted sanctuary on a remote, beautiful island off the coast of Naples.

The local postmaster, overwhelmed by the daily mail being sent to Neruda, even prior to his arrival, hires Mario Ruoppolo (Massimo Troisi), the son of a local fisherman desperate for an escape from his father's fishing boat. The young postman's first instinct is to take advantage of his close contact with Neruda, celebrated poet of love, to improve his own profile in the community, especially with women.

All that changes as Mario slowly gains the poet's confidence. A friendship develops as Neruda introduces Mario to the world of poetry. Almost as a consequence,

Mario falls in love with the beautiful, but unapproachable Beatrice Russo (Maria Grazia Cucinotta). In enlisting Neruda's help, Mario discovers a sense of himself he's never had as his inner soul blossoms. He learns that a way with words can be a marvelous way to a woman's heart.

"The Postman (IL Postino)," a Miramax Films release, is rated PG.

SCREEN SCENE

A sampling of what's playing at alternative movie theaters across metro Detroit as reviewed by John Monaghan.

MAGIC BAG THEATRE
22218 Woodward, Ferndale. Call (810) 644-3030 for information. (\$4; \$3 student/seniors).
"Pulp Fiction" (USA - 1995). 9 p.m. June 27. The theater has turned Quentin Tarantino's supercharged comedy thriller into a "Rocky Horror" of sorts, with intermission twist contest and T-shirt and poster giveaways. You can count on one hand the audience members who haven't seen the movie already.
Japanese Monster Double Feature — "War of the Gargantuas" (USA/Japan - 1966) and "Destroy All Monsters" (Japan - 1968). Beginning at 9 p.m. June 28. In "War," American actor Russ Tamblyn looks appropriately embarrassed as humanoid giants battle to the death, leaving Japan in ruins again. "Destroy All Monsters" features Godzilla, Mothra, and Rodan in its all-star cast.

MADAM ART THEATRE
118 N. Main Street at 11 Mile, Royal Oak. Films play through at least Thursday, unless noted otherwise. Call (810) 842-0180 for information and showtimes. (\$6.50; \$4 students and matinee; \$3 twilight).
"Braveheart" (USA - 1995). Mel Gibson both directs and stars in this epic saga of the legendary Scottish warrior who united warring clans against the English. Long and bloody, it still packs an emotional punch.
"The Bridges of Madison County" (USA - 1995). Skepticism greeted Clint Eastwood when he decided to bring Robert James Waller's much-loved, equally maligned novel to the screen, but it's not bad at all. Meryl Streep plays the Iowa farm wife whose chance encounter with a worldly photographer (Eastwood) changes her life forever.
"The Underneath" (USA - 1995). This new psychological thriller reunites "sex, lies, and videotape" director Stephen Soder-

bergh and actor Peter Gallagher. When a man returns home to Austin, Texas, he realizes that things have changed and he doesn't know who to trust.
"Wigstock: The Movie" (USA - 1995). RuPaul, Lypsinka, Crystal Waters and Dee-Lite are among the luminaries who celebrated the 10th anniversary of Wigstock last year. The multi-media event, a glamorous drag version of Woodstock held in New York City, is chronicled in this acclaimed new documentary. Starts Friday.

MAPLE THEATRE
4135 W. Maple, Bloomfield. All titles play through at least next Thursday. Call (810) 855-0090 for information. (\$6; \$2.95 twilight).
"Braveheart" (USA - 1995). See Main Art Theatre listing above.
"The Bridges of Madison County" (USA - 1995). See Main Art Theatre listing above.
"The Underneath" (USA - 1995). See Main Art Theatre listing above.

REDFORD THEATRE
17360 Lahser, Detroit. Call (313) 837-2540 for information. (\$2.50).
"The Searchers" (USA - 1956). 8 p.m. June 23; 2, 8 p.m. June 24 (organ overture begins a half hour before showtime). John Ford directed and John Wayne stars in this influential western about a confirmed Indian hater who leads the search for his kidnapped niece. A must-see on the big screen.

TOP OF THE PARK
Free movies atop the roof of the Power Center Parking Structure, Ann Arbor. Movies begin at dusk.
June 22 — "The African Queen" (USA - 1951). Bogie and Hepburn roll down the river.
June 23 — "Dr. Seuss Night with 'The Cat in the Hat' and 'The Lorax'."
June 24 — "Rio Grande" (USA - 1950). John Wayne in John Ford western classic.
June 27 — "Yellow Submarine" (Britain - 1968). The Beatles meet psychedelic animation.
June 28 — "Airplane" (USA - 1980). Gags fly fast and furious in this spoof of disaster movies.

THE MOVIE EVENT OF THE YEAR!
THE ADVENTURE OF A LIFETIME!

"A SUCCESS! GLORIOUSLY COLORFUL, A LANDMARK FEAT."

— *John Munn, THE NEW YORK TIMES*

"A FILM THAT EARNS A PLACE OF HONOR AMONG DISNEY'S FILM STUNNERS!"

— *Robert Collier, THE WASHINGTON POST*

"TWO THUMBS UP!"

— *KEELY & JEFF*

Disney's
POCAHONTAS

STARTS FRIDAY, JUNE 30

AMC AMERICAN WEST	AMC BEL AIR 10	AMC EASTLAND 5
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"A THRILL-PACKED JOY RIDE!"

There's no fun machine this summer that packs more surprises.

— *John Munn, BELLING STONE*

BATMAN FOREVER

AMC BEL AIR	AMC OLD ORCHARD	AMC SOUTHFIELD CITY	AMC LAUREL PARK
AMC SOUTHFIELD CITY	AMC WOODLAND	AMC CANTON 1	AMC CANTON 1
QUO VADIS	RENAISSANCE 4	SHOWCASE 4	SHOWCASE 4
SHOWCASE 7	STAR TAYLOR	STAR WINCHESTER 8	STAR JOHN R
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