

ADAM WEST NAKED:

DO NOT STARE
DIRECTLY INTO
DANGLY PARTS

NIC WILSON LEARNS WHAT ONLY THREE CATWOMEN (AND ONE BATGIRL) HAVE KNOWN FOR YEARS: WHAT'S REALLY BEEN STIRRING BENEATH THAT UTILITY BELT.

YOU'RE here to find out about the wondrous life of Adam West," Adam began, punctuating it with a laugh. There was immediately something exuberant to him, almost youthful. He told me he was speaking from his home in Ketchum, Idaho, and I asked why, of all the places in the world, he hung his hat in Idaho. "We keep a place in Palm Springs - and a little place in LA. But physically, the area's just amazing. We're up in the mountains. We have one of the best ski mountains in the country. It's reasonably rustic. And there's culture. Theater, music, whatever."

He described how he fills his time there: "I hike, and I ski, and I fish, and I work around a lot at our place up here. I love my tractor. I drive my tractor to town on the bike path, and nobody likes it. Late at night, down to the casino to have a drink. Just a lonely guy on a tractor." I interrupted him, to be sure he only meant one drink. As a responsible publication, Dangerous Ink cannot advocate tractoring under the influence. "That's a funny way to put it. But it might be kind of fun to get a DUI on a tractor." →

There was a sense of amused humility about him when he said, "I really am one of the luckiest guys around." He grew up on a dirt wheat farm in Walla Walla, Washington (the state, not the capital, or a cored-out hole in the dead President's colon)- to hear him tell it, it sounds like he had almost nothing to do with his success- at least at first. "How many of us are responsible for what we get? We're presented with choices, to go through doors or not. And some of those opportunities we make ourselves, some of them are given to us. And this is a competitive industry, sometimes almost hideously so. But the way you make it is if you have the drive and ambition. Timing and luck matter, too."

Timing and luck came together when he starred in a series of Nestle's Quick commercials as a James Bond-spoofing spy character. This seemingly innocuous role resulted in a call from "Fox to come in and read for a part. And that's how I got Batman." And while he admits that chance played its part, "sometimes you make your own timing just by being there. But you better damn have what it takes, you better bring something." →

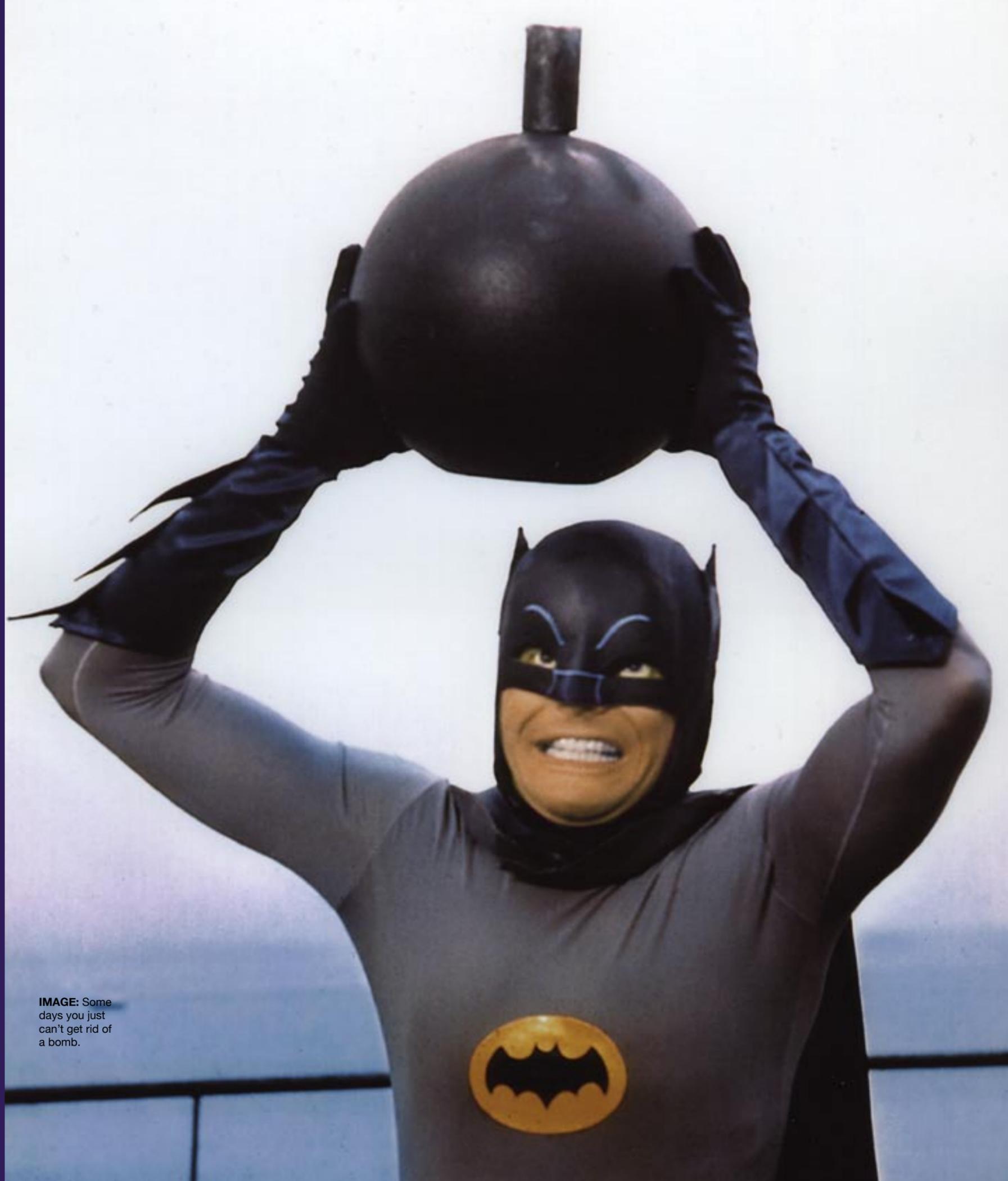


IMAGE: Some days you just can't get rid of a bomb.



THE PILOT INCLUDES A VERY TONGUE-IN-CHEEK SCENE WHERE ADAM GOES “UNDERCOVER” AS A HOBO AT A BLACK TIE PARTY, SPOUTING UNFORGETTABLE LINES LIKE, “THE SIDEWALK IS MY PILLOW,” AND “HOBO COMING THROUGH”

He described acting like being a hired gun, then thought it might be too immodest, comparing his profession to paid assassins. “All actors are whores, basically.”

He explained, “they slap make-up on us, and we go out there and tell lies the writer’s written for us. And there’s no big deal about it, you can do it or you can’t. And you’re either fortunate enough to get hired because of it or you’re not. It’s given me a good life-ups and downs and all-arounds, but a good life all around. But I’ve worked my ass off.” He described one of those, “a time I was living in my car because I didn’t want to ask anyone for anything.” But he couldn’t quit. “Maybe I’m just lazy. I felt that because I could cut it, that I could affect an audience, I might as well stay and be an actor.”

Adam has starred in a number of TV series, and I asked which was his favorite. Without pause, he dropped the Batbomb on me; so I asked which one came in at Number 2. “The first one, which was a big break for a young actor, *The Detectives*.”

He added. “I enjoyed playing comedy, and

some actors say it’s tough, and it is tough. And I’m not being arrogant, but I think I have a gift for it. The one pilot that I really wanted to go somewhere was *Lookwell*, because I love that kind of absurd comedy, like a modern-day *Office* or something. But hey, I’ve always been ahead of my time.”

Lookwell, for the uninitiated, is probably the funniest pilot that never got picked up. It features Adam as the title character, an out of work actor with delusions of being the crime-stopping cop character from his long-since-cancelled television show. The pilot includes a very tongue-in-cheek scene where Adam goes “undercover” as a hobo at a black tie party, spouting unforgettable lines like, “The sidewalk is my pillow,” and “Hobo coming through.” It’s well worth digging up on YouTube for a watch, and TV executives, because I know you govern by my proscriptions, it would be well worth reviving, and with a little polish could make for a very good show.

On the comedy front, Adam has a new internet series called *The Bangors*, about an infamous Hollywood family, of which he is the

patriarch. He said, “it gives me the chance to play something that’s funny, but different from tough, irascible, mean, selfish, gritty, all those good writer words.” I asked if the *Bangors* were based off any specific Hollywood family. “I mean accomplished and famous as well. For example the *Barrymores*. Now how many people reading this will give a shit about the *Barrymores*?” He added, “Besides *Drew*, of course” (*Drew*, if you are reading, I’d be more than happy to give you a chance to respond). He finished with, “I don’t think anyone’s going to identify with these people, but they will laugh at them.”

At that point he paused, and worried aloud that I would crucify him in print. I was in the process of reassuring him when my cell phone cut out. I had programmed his number into my phone, and almost immediately it rang, with “Adam West” on the screen. As soon as I picked up he began to facetiously chastise me, “That’s an interesting way to end an interview, in the middle of one of my answers, just hang up the phone.”

I apologized, and we switched gears. I asked him about his art. Adam has begun →

ARTIST: Dave Chung



“I’M NOT PARTICULARLY FOND OF LOOKING AT MYSELF OR WHATEVER I DO. EXCEPT FOR BATMAN, OF COURSE, BECAUSE THAT WAS SO MUCH FUN. I CAN SIT THERE AND SAY, ‘LOOK AT THOSE IDIOTS’ ”

exhibiting pieces of artwork ranging from pencil drawings to sculpture. I asked him what his process was. “I think the simple answer is, without being glib, I paint what I dream.”

He explained, “In other words, I get images- for instance, if I feel someone wants something related to Batman, maybe six days later I get an image of the Joker, or Bookworm, and I just sit down and do it.”

“The nice thing about it, the way the work’s been greeted critically, and I know it’s raw, and unschooled, but it does get an emotional reaction.”

But he hasn’t stopped with painting. “I’ve done all sorts of stuff, even sculpture with found objects and baked bread.” I stopped him to be sure I’d heard that right.

“You know, if you see something in the process of being baked, and it has a fascinating shape that can be applied to some other material, you know, I’ll do it. And that sounds a little avante garde, doesn’t it? But I certainly don’t sit around doing much plain air or painting vases with flowers in them.” En plein air, and I explain this because I had to ask the wiki myself, from the French meaning “to create outside with your fanny in the breeze,” originally applying only to outdoor copulation, but eventually

employed for artists as well (as artists were notorious nudists up until cubism).

I asked which piece that he’d produced he was most proud of. “You know, I’ve never thought of it in those terms. I don’t think I’m that proud of anything. I don’t feel like I guess some people that you know I just gave birth to this wondrous critter, and I’ve got to hang on and nurture it. No, I just do them and kind of forget them, move onto something else, that’s it. It’s like acting in a way, you know, you can’t really plan too many things, and the actor’s abilities to craft, it’s really mysterious in many ways. First of all, I know I don’t like to talk about it, and analyze it. I’m always afraid that if I do I’ll lose it, because it’s so intuitive.”

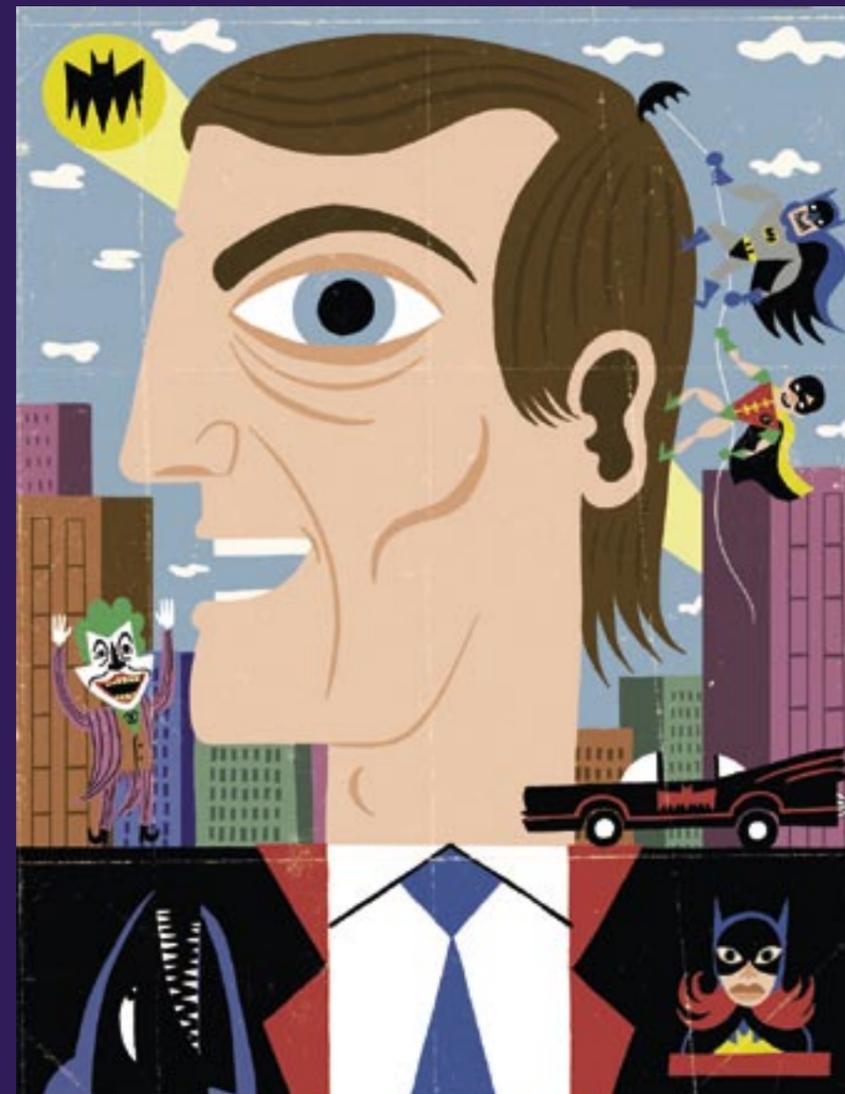
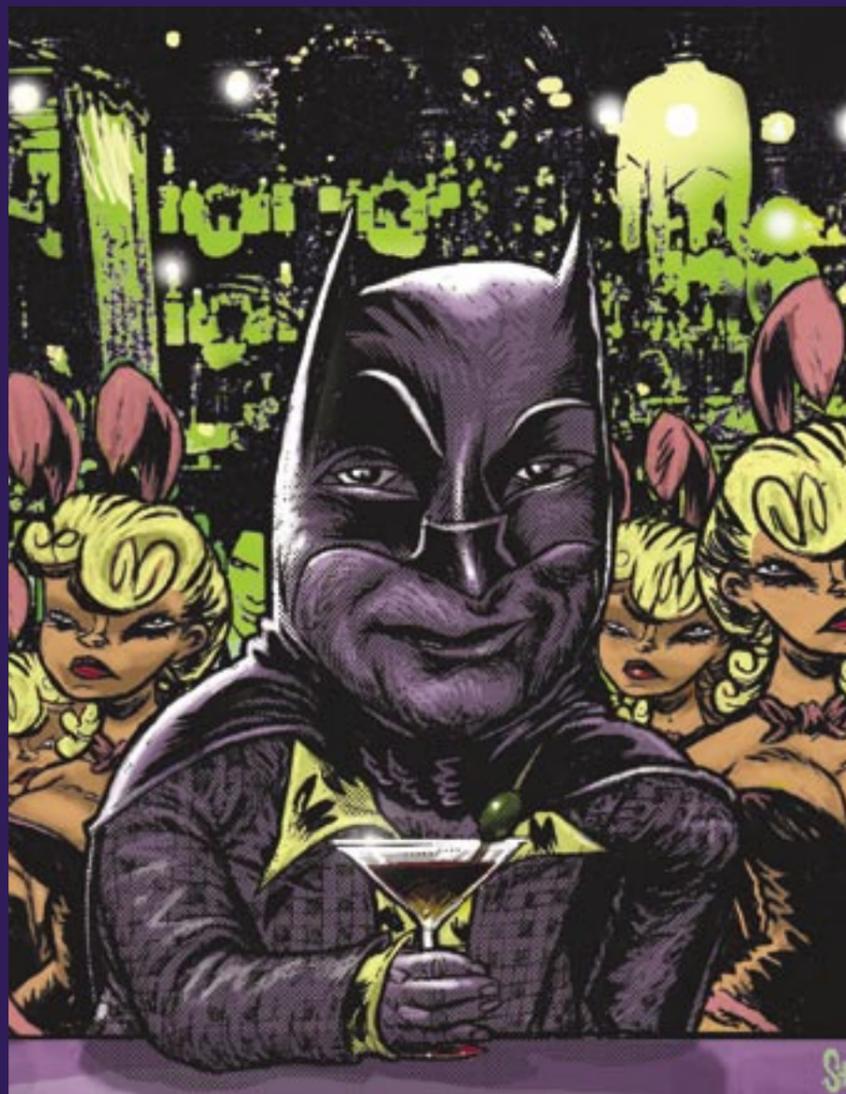
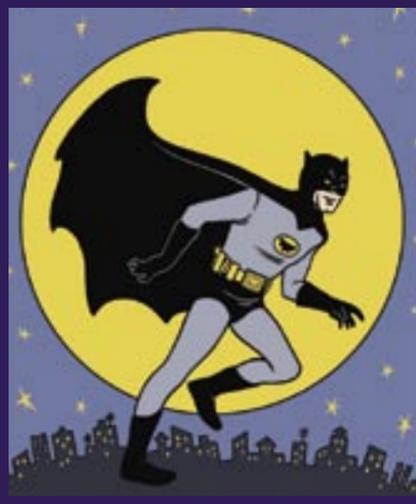
He went on: “It’s a matter of gathering what you’ve accumulated along the way inside and making choices and having the confidence and reassurance to just do it, which is tough sometimes, you’re doing a project and you think, ‘Oh, I can’t do this, I don’t know about this.’ But then you start to cook with it, and it usually turns out okay I guess. I’m not particularly fond of looking at myself or whatever I do. Except for Batman, of course, because that was so much fun. I can sit there and say, ‘Look at those idiots. Who was that strange boy in the tights?’ Yeah, Batman was fun.”

I asked him how long he’d been creating physical works of art. “I’ve been drawing, →



© 20th Century Fox

FROM RIGHT CLOCKWISE: Coming Undone
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painting, for probably thirty-five, forty years. And I think only in the last 2 or 3 years have I done an exhibition or had any desire to get my stuff out there- I just hadn't thought about it that way." I told him I was curious why he hadn't made his art public earlier.

"I'm pretty pragmatic. If someone tells me it's pretty vital, that it strikes a nerve, I say- 'How much?' I think it's the Mitchum attitude, you cook with the role, bring as much as you can, you do it, get out and say, 'Cut the check.' Because once you've done your thing, you don't have any control over it anymore."

He finds himself inspired most by "the French impressionists like Rouault, and Monet, and I suppose of course Picasso. And some of the more ancient, Velazquez, people like that, yeah. Even Dali and Chagall, because they were so inventive and seemingly carefree and humourful."

He mentioned some of his artwork would soon be gracing the pages of his website, AdamWest.com. He also said the site is getting a makeover. "Well, I don't think it's been up to

snuff- good enough and dynamic enough if you will- so it's being worked on, and I think there'll be more things on it." He also said he'd be starting a blog of his own, joining such luminaries as the Monarch, a cancer-stricken Superman and Fake Steve Jobs in the globe (combining blog and globe; admit it, it's more fun to say than blogosphere).

There was a moment in the interview when I asked Adam about the defining moment of his life, and he said that question would be difficult to answer, because "in a sense, it gets under my skin." I thought that was it: Adam West was going to kill me with his disapproval. Not that his disliking me would have crushed my ego (though it might have), but that he had some kind of supernatural ability (honed, no doubt, on his red Batphone) to destroy his nemeses via telephone with the mighty weight of his charisma. He asked for ten seconds, and there was a long silence on the other end.

"I think marrying my wife, Marcelle. Who's really bright, with the greatest sense of humour. And she's managed to put up with me."

HE STARTED TO TELL ME ABOUT DOC, THEN HE STOPPED HIMSELF, AND SAID, "IT SOUNDS LIKE I DABBLE, BUT IT'S OKAY TO BE A RENAISSANCE MAN. JESUS, NIC, YOU'VE GOT TO GET ONE FOOT OUT OF BED NO MATTER HOW DRUNK YOU ARE, AND GET GOING"

Relief is too tiny a word to describe it, as he continued. "I suppose that's obvious to many, but when you're fortunate enough to find a really good woman and have a really great family- not that my family's perfect, a few of them have gone through some dramas. But right now, I think we've managed to pull things pretty well together. It's only taken me fifty years. But I want to go on- I'm just midlife now."

I asked if that meant he'd think about retiring sixty years from now. "I don't think creative people retire. The agent calls and says 'Hey, I've got this project,' and 'Hey, talk to me about it. Well, I think I can handle that. It kind of scares me to death, but I think I can handle that.' Can you stop writing?" I told him that, contrary to what Tom might think (and understandably so, given the sometimes deafening silence coming from my keyboard), I can't.

"I stop acting, because you need other people, and a stage, but the painting, the writing. I really appreciate writers. I sold a series." He started to tell me about Doc, then he stopped

himself, and said, "it sounds like I dabble, but it's okay to be a renaissance man. Jesus, Nic, you've got to get one foot out of bed no matter how drunk you are, and get going."

When I asked what his most personally satisfying role had been, he quickly replied, "As a father. In real life, as a father." I asked what his proudest accomplishment as a father was, and he said that he'd managed to stay "very close to my kids, and always listened to them, and given them the confidence and sense that I'm always there, even though they're on their own. I guess that they can come to me with whatever. I think that's important."

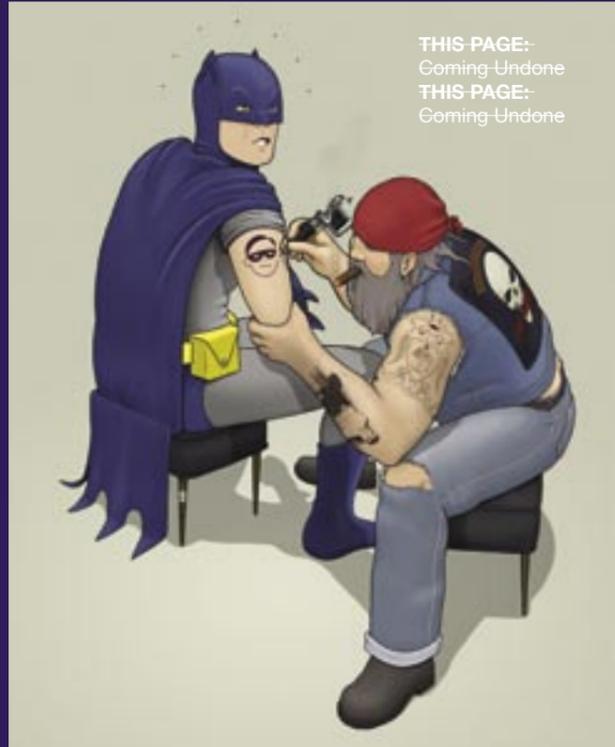
I asked if he had any life advice to share. "Life advice? Good God, I've never thought of giving anyone life advice. If I had to, I'd probably say something like 'Ignore arrogance and hypocrisy- and live with a sense of humour.'" He added that it was important to, "Live true to yourself, and try to have a sense of humour about everything, because life can hurt."

Adam also let slip about a new project he's working on, one I've stolen part of the title for

this piece from, a DVD set called Adam West Naked: Uncensored and Unscripted. "I turn on cameras in several locations and talk to the audience and tell them everything about every episode of Batman."

Adam has a way of slyly mentioning projects or products, a talent that might be a byproduct of a life in the "showboat biz." When I asked him for a title for this piece he suggested "Adam West Shows His Bust," expressing disbelief at having his own statuette (certainly in better taste than my initial ideas of "Touch Adam West's Penis" or "Cradle Adam West's Balls"- which is why Tom rarely lets me write my own standfirst). The television show he sold to Columbia in his pre-Batman days, Doc, was about a wild west doctor who was seen by many of the people he met as a snake-oil salesman, when in truth he was anything but. There's a charm to Adam that makes you wonder if it isn't your own cynicism instead- that perhaps Adam, like the title character in the series he wrote, is genuinely as "aw-shucksy" olde-fashioned as he can seem, and it's that charm that eventually convinces you of his innocence. →

“WELL, YOU KNOW, THERE ARE THOSE FANS WHO ARE CREEPY, BUT THEN YOU KIND OF GET INSIDE THEM FOR A LITTLE BIT, AND YOU TALK TO THEM FOR A MOMENT OR TWO, AND THE CREEPY IS PRETTY MUCH SUPERFICIAL. UNLESS, YOU KNOW, YOU’RE TALKING TO A SERIAL KILLER.”



THIS PAGE:-
Coming Undone
THIS PAGE:-
Coming Undone



In his fantastic autobiography *Back to the Batcave*, Adam said that he was married to the cape, tied irrevocably to his most famous character (though the marriage is only recognized in Vermont and the UK). He remains vigilantly passionate about Batman, and not just his series, but the character and all of his potential. At several points he brought the conversation back to his former masked persona. “I could even play Batman as an older guy. Maybe an alcoholic who wanders around Gotham City, and has to get himself back into shape, like a Rocky.” I asked, if he were ever offered the part, if he’d be willing to portray the harsher, older Batman from *The Dark Knight Returns*, Frank Miller’s apocalyptic opus. He said, “It would be a wonderful challenge. I think I could cook with that.”

He said his most surreal moment as a cultural icon came “on a commercial flight, and the flight attendant very loudly says, ‘If you’re afraid of flying, if you have any anxieties, don’t worry, because Batman is on board.’ Imagine me staggering to the cockpit, taking over a 757.” I said he’d do better than most; he used to pilot a small tourist plane in Hawaii. “I’d try. Yeah, I did fly, but nothing like that.”

He expresses surprise that people “think that Batman was a big accident. It wasn’t. It was

carefully constructed, the sets, the acting, scripts, directing. Maybe that’s one of the reasons we’ve been out there for so long. My god, we were only out there three seasons-120 episodes. Just like *Star Trek*, it goes on and on. And people watch it today, and say it looks just as fresh. And we just created our own little world, with our own little crazies.”

Adam, a longtime veteran of conventions and the autograph/appearance circuit, has been a defender of the much-maligned fan culture and its oft-creepy and unwashed members. “Well, you know, there are those fans who are creepy, but then you kind of get inside them for a little bit, and you talk to them for a moment or two, and the creepy is pretty much superficial. Unless, you know, you’re talking to a serial killer.”

Still, he insists most “people have been really nice to me, I think I told you that before. They always have something fun to say or talk about. I go through airports now, like the other day, and these big guys come up to me and say to me, ‘How do you stay in such great shape?’ And I’m thinking, ‘Oh god, he knows my real age.’ But all I could say was, ‘Hey, you know, just curling with vodka. Or is it the genes?’ Or I try to listen.”

Over the nearly two hours we spoke, I was

impressed by the breadth and depth of his knowledge, experience, and interest. At times he wanted to speak about things as diverse as the new Hadron Supercollider on the Franco-Swiss border, and the Beijing Olympics.

But it was not his intellect, his stature, or his stories of daring-do that impressed me most: it was his humanity. Adam has been, for better or worse, typecast in his most famous role as a hero. It’s a part few men could pull off for an evening, leave alone as long as he has, or with his flair. “I have to walk tall. I can’t be caught with a cane and a walker. I don’t want to disappoint.” I told him that had to mean a great deal to his fans, and he replied, “That’s just the way of the West.”

I mean no disrespect to any of the other actors who have and will portray Batman, because they’ve been fine artisans (and likely excellent people) one and all; but from all of them I sensed that there was craft and design as much as foam muscles and batnipples standing between the audience and the people they were. Adam West is the Batman he played. His cowl was just another mask. ■

Find out more about Adam at his site, www.adamwest.com

Batmook.

by James Howard





"In recent months, no one has come to embody the dangers and romanticism of seafaring life than Nikola Dante.

"Not content with already being a highly successful thief, the hero of a failed revolution against the most powerful ally the world has ever known, and the 'Most Wanted' man in the Empire...

"Dante has embraced the life of a pirate with passion and panache.

"In the months since he was seemingly reconciled with his mother, Katrina Dante, his piratical prowess has come to rival hers, if not exceed it.

FIRST DEGREE BURNS

THE LEGENDARY BRITISH ARTIST JOHN M. BURNS OPENS UP ON HIS CAREER SO FAR AND WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS FOR UK ARTISTS →



PREVIOUS PAGE:
Nikolia Danti
THIS PAGE:
Jane Eyre,
???, and Jane

What is your earliest memory about being interested in art?

As a young child of 6-7 years old watching and asking my brother to do drawings for me and to show me how to do them.

Was anyone else in your family artistic?

Most of my family could draw; 3 older brothers and my dad. My mother and sister showed no interest.

You went straight from school in to working in a studio. What was that like? How did this influence you and your work?

I left school (North Westham County Tech) in 1954 and started at Link Studios after the school summer hols; September I think. Link Studios was an agency for artists and specialised in comic strip illustration.

The studio provided desk space and facilities for strip artists, mainly working for Amalgamated Press and D.C. Thomson of Dundee. Every 2 years the studio took on a boy as an apprentice for 4 years while at the same time (until the next boy) looking after the needs of resident artists. They in return helped in our training and one of whom took you under his or her wing. Mine was Dora Rodrick who drew 'Dilly Dream' for, I think, 'Schoolfriend', or was it 'Girl's Crystal'? Anyway, comics for Amalgamated Press.



“DIGITAL IS HERE. I THINK SOME ARTISTS THINK IT'S THEIR SAVIOUR BUT IT'S ONLY AS GOOD AS THE ARTISTS USING IT. I STILL PREFER DRAWING AND PAINTING MY OLD WAY.”

I was also lucky in having Harry Lindfield as the boy ahead of me and an artist called Gerry Haylock who came before him, still working in the studio. In 1970, a long time after we had left Link Studios, we all 3 of us worked on 'Countdown' drawing the 3 main colour strips. So you can see how these artists helped shape my work. Then there were the American magazine illustrators working for mags like 'the Saturday Evening Post' etc. Artists like Austin Briggs, Ken Riley, Joe Bowler, Robert Fawcett, and more, all fantastic draughtsmen!

At the same time American newspaper strip artists like Alex Raymond ('Rip Kirby') and Stan Drake ('Heart of Juliet Jones') were an even greater influence.

What are you working on at the moment?

'Nikolai Dante' for 2000AD, and I've just finished a 125 page full colour comic of 'Jane Eyre' for Classical Comics and soon to start on an even longer 145 page comic of 'Wuthering Heights'.

What for you are the highlights so far from your illustration career?

Highlights? It's hard to pick any particular jobs in 54 years of working in this business but...drawing the newspaper strips 'The Seekers' (Daily Sketch), 'George and Lynne' (The Sun), 'Jane' (Daily Mirror), and best of



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THIS PAGE:
Judge Dredd
© Rebellion
BELOW:
Modesty
Blaise

all for me, 'Lilly' (Bilt of Hamburg), a German newspaper. I still really think of myself as a B&W newspaper strip artist – the colour work just happened.

Have there been any bad moments?

Bad moments? Most jobs have their 'bad moments'. One of my biggest was trying to draw 'Modesty Blaise'. They, the 'Evening Standard' kept asking me to change her, similar to Remero's style having let me start drawing her in Jim Holdaway's interpretation of the character. Still, enough said... I was sacked!

Is there anything you've wanted to work on but haven't yet?

I would have liked a shot at 'Garth' (Daily Mirror) after Frank Bellamy... or even before!

You're obviously a very technically accomplished artist. Is it fair to say you hold technical expertise in high regard?

We were always told that good drawing was essential. Night school 3 times a week at St. Martin's, drawing in the South Kensington museums at the weekend, and projects in any spare time. I guess the technical side is ingrained.

Have you seen a downturn in that kind of pride people take in their work?

I don't think "downturn" and "pride" can be linked. I think there is just not enough, if any, training facilities nowadays. Nothing



similar to my apprenticeship. Standards are not always high so art editors find it hard to find suitable artists and so it seems there's a "downturn" quality-wise. People translate this to lack of pride in ones work; not so. Someone somewhere should start a school just for strip illustrators as they did in America. Ask David Lloyd ('V for Vendetta') – he tried.

On a technical point, can you describe your working process?

I should imagine my way of working is similar to many other artists. I start with a frame layout for the page about A5 size, and then I draw thumbnails of the frames to work out the continuity of the page.

I then produce a finished working drawing

that can be inked if necessary or not and then painted using acrylic paint/acrylic ink/ gouache/water colour paint.

What are your views on the trends for artists to go digital with their work? Do you think anything is lost by removing the tactile experience of painting and drawing?

Digital is here. I think some artists think it's their saviour but it's only as good as the artists using it. I still prefer drawing and painting my old way. Old fashioned? Maybe. ■

The graphic novel of 'Jane Eyre' is out now and available from all good book and comic shops.