



Batman: The Black Casebook

Edmond Hamilton, Bill Finger, Dick Sprang, Sheldon Moldoff

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Gotham City is plagued with crime and corruption in places high and low, but one man has taken a stand against evil of all forms: the dark avenger known as Batman. The inspiration for visionary writer Grant Morrison's acclaimed series of Batman books - including "The Black Glove" and "Batman R.I.P." - is revealed in this collection of the Dark Knight's strangest cases from the Silver Age of comics! Thrill to Batman's adventures as the superhero of Planet X! Meet the Club of Heroes, the Batmen of All Nations and the Bat-Mite! Witness the death of Robin - or is it? Written and drawn by classic Batman talents, and including a new introduction by Grant Morrison, this is the ideal companion for Bat-fans both old and new!

Featuring stories from BATMAN #62, 65, 86, 112, 113, 134, 153 and 156; DETECTIVE COMICS #215, 235, 241 and 267; and WORLD'S FINEST COMICS #89.

Batman: The Black Casebook Details

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Author : Edmond Hamilton , Bill Finger , Dick Sprang , Sheldon Moldoff

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Jim says

If I had read these stories individually, I would have wondered what the heck they were trying to do with the Batman character.

Instead, they're given a good intro and tied together as the back story for Morrison's time writing Batman. As such, these are an interesting lead-in that develop the character in a way you're not expecting.

Michael says

Don't let the title fool you, the dark cover doesn't hide anything that could possibly claim to be noir. To reveal the contents of this book I have to relate two words that when combined are enough to drive even the most rabid and nostalgia obsessed Batman fan into the depths of denial. Those two words are: Batman & 1950s. Unless you're gathering material for a thesis on Batman R.I.P., or just interested in comic book history I don't see many reasons to recommend this book. There's a nice intro by Grant Morrison detailing how these stories shaped and influenced his penning of Batman R.I.P. (though even he admits how reviled this era has become). Each of the stories has at least one element, be it an image, an idea or a concept that he drew on for the work. The first Batman (Thomas Wayne), Batman of Zur-En-Arrh, Batmite, Club of Heroes, Dr. Hurt etc. It's all here and more in day-glo, beamy grinned cheesiness.

Kenny says

I thought 2013 wold be the year in which I tackled Proust. Instead it became the year I read Neil Gaiman's Sandman Omnibus and now, I'm about to undertake Grant Morrison's R.I.P. Batman series.

Required reading for the R.I.P. Batman series is Batman: The Black Casebook. It's a scant 144 page trade paperback — flat colors printed on off-white newsprint to capture the feel of 50's comics — with reprints of the stories Morrison used as research for Batman's history in R.I.P. He focused on the most outlandish of the 1950s comics, filled with atomic fear, aliens, personality switches, and anxiety. It's a wonderful book in a lot of ways

I was warned about the campy content throughout The Black Casebook (Robin is a wimpy crybaby in green bikini bottoms), but I thought that it would be worth it as context for amazing work Grant Morrison has done on his run with Batman. In that sense it absolutely was. Morrison lays out for his readers some really interesting precedents for what he's doing, drawing from the deepest recesses of Batman's past. I love the idea that Morrison treats the disavowed history of the character as canonical. He simultaneously re-imagines the history of the property by bringing those stories back into print.

Morrison is a smart writer who cleverly weaves Batman's past, present and future together in R.I.P. Batman by drawing on from the stories in The Black Casebook. If only other writers were brave enough to do the same with iconic comic book heroes -- Captain America, Spiderman, Superman and Doctor Strange immediately come to mind. In the end, The Black Case book harkens back to a time when there was joy in the silliness of superhero comics and life was so much simpler.

JB says

You can't fully appreciate a legacy as vast as Batman's without taking a look at his early stories. This book is filled with stories of Batman's early years, written by Bob Kane. It's interesting to see the stories that inspired Grant Morrison's run on Batman in combination with his introduction that further explains why and how each story inspired him. I'm now going to start reading Morrison's run. I haven't read it yet as I had and still have a very long to read list. But now it's time for some more Batman. And I'm glad I began with this book. I'm curious to see how Grant Morrison uses the stories in the Black Casebook in his run. After reading some of the older stories with the classic art, it will be a big difference reading modern Batman stories with modern art.

The storytelling, the art and the coloring are great! I love the first page of each issue. Each of these introductory pages is a little summary of the story to come. I always loved how the golden age and silver age comics made use of this.

Every one who is about to read Morrison's run or already has read his run, should read this book.

Patrick says

Highlights some of the more absurd Batman adventures that were incorporated in Morrison's Batman RIP. It's a fun look back at a time when comics were aimed at kids and didn't require much plausibility.

Jean-Pierre Vidrine says

Some time before this collection, there was a collection published entitled Batman in the Fifties. That book collected Batman stories from the 1950s with emphasis on the weirdness and embarrassment of some of them. This book also collects stories from that era, some of the same stories even. There's plenty of weirdness; but here there is no embarrassment. Grant Morrison unashamedly selects stories that inspired his own psychologically unhinged take on Batman, effectively putting these odd tales into a context that may or may not make them more palatable for more "purist" Batman fans. Maybe I'm just weird, but I did not need that context. Instead of embarrassing or just plain strange, I see these stories as a testament to the versatility of the Batman mythos. Morrison's after-the-fact framework is just icing on the cake.

On a side note: Fans of James Robinson's amazing Starman series, there is a story in here you must read!

Eric says

I had a passing familiarity with many of these stories thanks to a long history of reading Batman reprints, but a few of these stories were new to me. This is more helpful as it's packaged; a kind of primer on the more outre elements of Morrison's Batman run (which the introduction is very helpful in unpacking). The stories on their own range from "not good" to "what the hell" in the way that most silver age Batman tales do. Your own enjoyment will probably be based on how well you tolerate kids entertainment. At times it's got the taste of Adventure Time, while other times it has the sophistication of say, Gilligan in Space.

Donald Kirch says

Bill Finger is the proverbial "heartbeat" of Batman. Bob Kane was an absolute "dick" not giving this man the credit he so richly deserved. Kane died in the comfort of wealth. Finger died poor and alone. Batman would have something to say about THAT, I'm sure. Great writer!

Madeleine says

This is a difficult collection to rate. On one hand, I think the introduction by Grant Morrison explaining how these 50s and 60s Batman comics served as inspiration for his (in)famous Batman run makes them worth reading once. And Morrison's introduction also serves a nice reminder that creatively interpreting fiction (and non) can lead to interesting results and inspiration.

However, these are 50s and 60s Batman comics when the series was at the height of absurdity and camp. The writing is repetitive, using the technique of SHOWING and TELLING that I hate so much. Obviously, written for a younger market than a lot of current DC and Batman comics are written for.

So, Grant Morrison's reframing of these seemingly random issues = cool. The issues themselves, not so much.

Daniel says

On their own, the stories average about 2 stars each. As a collected record of Batman's goofy 1950s period, it gets bumped up to 3 stars for novelty value. But treated as either a prologue or an appendix to Grant Morrison's Batman comics (particularly "The Black Glove" and "Batman R.I.P."), and these stories take on a newfound relevance and a nightmarish quality in context.

Bradley says

A cheap excuse to put Grant Morrison's name on the cover in big letters, but I love old comics.

Bryson Kopf says

This was a lot of fun, Grant Morrison selected the Batman tales which provided the inspiration of his current run on the character, predominately from the 1950s, Sci-fi era of the character. I had read several of these tales including *The First Batman!*, the weirdly moving *Robin Dies At Dawn!*, and the very trippy *Super Batman of Planet X!* Most of the other tales have very challenging threats that are more cerebral than physical for Batman and Robin, and some could be seen as hallucinations, an idea that Morrison proposes. The art is nice by Sheldon Meldoff, and features so many of the classic over sized sets of this era (for example, Batman pummels some crooks on a giant turntable which is part of a hi-fi exhibition). Recommended for fans of classic comics and Batman tales that are on the weirder side.

Bobby says

This collection of odd Batman tales from the fifties through the early sixties really only exists to serve as a companion piece to the much-championed Grant Morrison run on Batman.

Without reading it through that prism, these strange one-off stories do not age well (to be fair, very little from their era in general has aged gracefully).

There are a couple of standouts among the dozen stories. *The First Batman* (from *Detective Comics* #236) has some fun playing around with the well-known Batman origin and suggesting that there was more to that mugging in Crime Alley than met the eye. Also, *Am I Really Batman* (from *Batman* #112), introduces the paranoia that would come to play in Morrison's RIP.

Craig says

A ridiculously delightful romp through 50s era Batman stories; features my favorite version of the Bat Plane. This volume simply and succinctly illustrates that, with creativity and intelligence, the baby of continuity need not be thrown out with the "bat" water.

Danny says

Terrible for a read on its own, but incredibly entertaining when reading Morrison's Batman. Really fun to see Grant Morrison make use of these cheesy tales in a darker way.
