DRESSING BATMAN

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BY ADAM PIRANI

A s well as creating clothes for the whole spectrum of life in Gotham City, costume designer Bob Ringwood had one primary task — making an appropriate costume for the new screen Batman.

A graduate of the Theatre Design course at London's Central School of Art and Design, Ringwood spent 14 years designing sets and costumes for plays, operas, and ballets worldwide before be-coming involved in filmmaking.

His first film was *The Corn is Green* directed by George Cukor, and since then Ringwood has designed costumes for the Arthurian Round Table saga *Excalibur*; the science-fiction epic *Dune* (7,000 cos-tumes — more than 4,000 of which were made in Mexico, Los Angeles, London, Rome, and Spain); *Santa Claus; Prick Up Your Ears*, the biopic of the 60s play-wright, Joe Orton; and Steven Spielberg's *Empire of the Sun* (10,000 costumes). Ad-ditionally, he was production designer of Peter Greenaway's cryptic English country house and garden movie, *The Draught-man's Contract*.

Ringwood has designed the bulk of cos-tumes in *Batman* from the perspective that the movie is set in "a sort of retro world. The way I rationalised it," he says,

"is it's how 1989 would have looked if somebody in 1945 imagined it."

But his central task has been to design a costume for actor Michael Keaton to wear as Batman. Armed with a library of 400 comics from all periods of the charac-ter's fifty-year history, Ringwood set about creating "the definitive Batman" for the movies.

"Tim [Burton, the director] didn't want to find a great hunk with a dimpled chin who couldn't act. He wanted to go with Michael who he'd worked with before in *Beetlejuice*," Ringwood says, "and Michael isn't what you'd imagine casting for that part. But then Tim wanted to play it in a stranger way, a more intellectual way — that at night, in the man's fantasy life, he was this big creature, and in the daytime he was this ordinary guy.

"So when he became the Batman at night, we had to give him a costume that would turn him into the shapes of the cartoon, even if we didn't make him bigger, in scale. You can't suddenly make him six foot four, that would be silly, but you could give him the outlines. So you had to give him the chiselled features and the musculature and everything.

"We did several prototypes. It's like a prosthetic costume — it's putting a whole