

Interview with Jonathan Markiewicz, Director of "Batman: Revenge" The Batman LEGO Film - Posted on 19-10-2005 21:15
By Spencer from Batman: Yesterday, Today, and Beyond

Jonathan Markiewicz: First, I'd like to thank you for your questions, and hope that you enjoy reading the interview transcript as much as I enjoyed answering your questions!

Batman: Yesterday, Today, & Beyond: Was this always intended to be a LEGO film?

JM: When I decided to make "Batman: Revenge", I knew that there were several key elements that had to be included in the movie, not only from a director's standpoint, but also from the standpoint of a Batman fan. I decided to make it a LEGO film because I knew I could incorporate all of those key elements, such as Batman's vehicles and the many locales of Gotham City, into the movie, by building whatever was needed for a scene.

BYTB: Was this always intended as a "silent" film, or had you written spoken lines to go with it?

JM: At the time "Batman: Revenge" was in production, the majority of LEGO films available on the Internet had no dialogue, so my film was created in that similar style; one which relied on animation and music to tell the story.

BYTB: Was this what you thought the third Batman movie should have been in the '90s?

JM: In short, no, because my film takes place after "Batman Forever". However, though it takes place after the third film, I tried to make "Batman: Revenge" reminiscent of "Batman" and "Batman Returns" in terms of set design, lighting, and music. I wanted "Batman: Revenge" to have a "Tim Burton" feel to it in the way Gotham City was portrayed. During the end of "Batman Forever", Edward Nygma is psychologically classified as more insane than when he became the Riddler. That concept was used as a springboard for "Batman: Revenge", as viewers will notice the Riddler having a greater taste for revenge and a lesser desire to leave riddles for Batman to solve.

BYTB: Were the other models you built, like the Batmissile and '60s TV show car, ever intended to be in the film?

JM: The Batman vehicles other than the ones seen in the film were

created after the movie was completely filmed and edited, so they served only as publicity photos.

BYTB: Did you look to the Burton films for some of the camera shots?

JM: The most recognizable camera shots in "Batman: Revenge" are the shots filmed at an angle, and though much of the film is modeled after the "Burton films", the idea to use camera shots at angles came from the '60s TV series, though the reasoning behind the use of the angles are different. In the television series, the "crooked" angles were used when the villains appeared on screen, to show that they were themselves, "crooked", or crooks. In "Batman: Revenge", the "crooked" angles have no significance to the action or characters portrayed on screen. The angle shot was mostly used to get certain background elements into the scene that would otherwise not have been seen, and to provide unique perspectives for the viewer.

BYTB: How long did it take from conception to finished product to do all of this? The sets alone must have taken forever to build.

JM: The sets and vehicles took about one month to build. This includes designing Batman, building the Batmobile, the Batwing, Gotham City streets with statues and architecture reminiscent of "Batman" and "Batman Returns", the Gotham City alley, the interior of Wayne Manor, the interior of Arkham Asylum, the Riddler's lair, and several other city elements, including the different newspapers and vehicles. Filming took about three months to complete, as I concentrated very heavily on getting the correct lighting for each, individual scene, and making the stop-motion animation as smooth as possible. From the pre-production stages to its Internet premiere, the project has taken hundreds of hours to produce, incorporating pre-production, principle photography, and post production.

BYTB: Did the finished film include any computer-aided effects?

JM: There are no computer-aided effects in the film. The first time we see the Batsignal, there is a panning shot from left to right inside Wayne Manor, and the camera finally steadies on the view of Bruce Wayne looking out from the balcony into the night sky, where the Batsignal is brightly lit. The background of this scene is often thought to be computer generated, but is actually a printout of artwork I designed of the Batsignal among the clouded sky, lit by three flashlights of different intensity, aimed from different angles.

BYTB: If I remember correctly, this film came out before the C3 Minimates were available. Would you have done anything differently if you had access to those figures & sets?

JM: You remember correctly! "Batman: Revenge" was made years before the Batman Minimates line was for sale. Being that all of the elements needed for "Batman: Revenge" were to scale of the regular LEGO "mini-figures" and not Minimates, I probably would still have used LEGOs to produce the film. Also, I think that LEGOs are much easier to animate than Minimates for a stop-motion film. Being that there weren't any Batman LEGOs for sale, I had to build the Batman sets from scratch, which allowed me to model them whichever way I chose. However, this is not to say that one is better than the other. I'm a fan of both LEGOs and the Minimates!

BYTB: What are your thoughts on Batman Begins?

JM: "Batman Begins" was a really good movie. In my opinion, the film captured the essence of Gotham City, and I really enjoyed seeing the screen adaptation of how Bruce Wayne became the Dark Knight. The action scenes kept me enthralled, and the story was very well written.

BYTB: Do you have any other films, Batman, LEGO, or other currently planned?

JM: Right now I'm in talks to act in another independent film, which would be released in 2006, and I'm planning on directing a short, independent comedy within the next year.

I would like to once again say thank you for your questions, and your interest in "Batman: Revenge"!