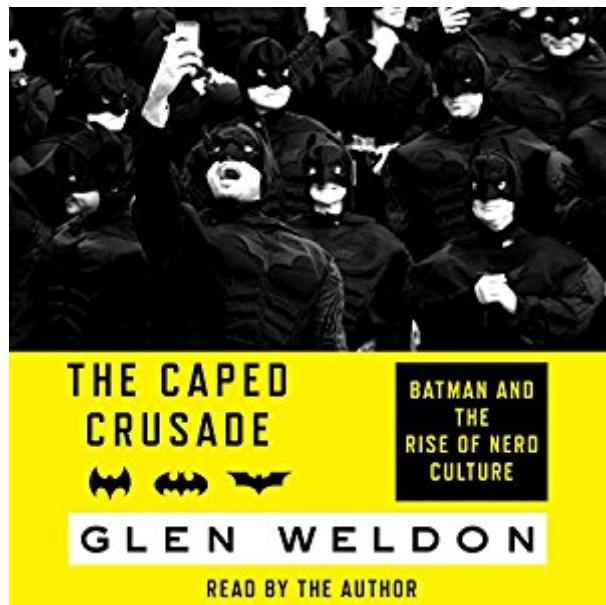


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# The Caped Crusade: Batman And The Rise Of Nerd Culture



## Synopsis

A witty, intelligent cultural history from NPR book critic Glen Weldon explains Batman's rises and falls throughout the ages - and what his story tells us about ourselves. Since his creation, Batman has been many things: a two-fisted detective; a planet-hopping gadabout; a campy pop-art sensation; a pointy-eared master spy; and a grim and gritty ninja of the urban night. For more than three-quarters of a century, he has cycled from a figure of darkness to one of lightness and back again; he's a bat-shaped Rorschach inkblot who takes on the various meanings our changing culture projects onto him. How we perceive Batman's character, whether he's delivering dire threats in a raspy Christian Bale growl or trading blithely homoerotic double entendres with partner Robin on the comics page, speaks to who we are and how we wish to be seen by the world. It's this endlessly mutable quality that has made him so enduring. And it's Batman's fundamental nerdiness - his gadgets, his obsession, his oath, even his lack of superpowers - that uniquely resonates with his fans who feel a fiercely protective love for the character. Today, fueled by the Internet, that breed of passion for elements of popular culture is everywhere. Which is what makes Batman the perfect lens through which to understand geek culture, its current popularity, and its social significance. In *The Caped Crusade*, with humor and insight, Glen Weldon, book critic for NPR and author of *Superman: The Unauthorized Biography*, lays out Batman's 78-year cultural history and shows how he has helped make us who we are today and why his legacy remains so strong.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Glen Weldon first wrote my favorite book to date on the history, real world effect, and many

iterations of Superman. Now he has done an equally well researched and compelling book on Batman. Even the most deeply entrenched fans of the character are such to find new information on the lore surrounding the Batman in *The Caped Crusade*. Strong recommend.

I bought this on Audible because I'm familiar with Glen from *Pop Culture Happy Hour* and wanted to hear it read in his voice. I don't care a thing in the world about Batman--or at least, I didn't. Not until I listened to this book. Glen made me care. He helped me understand Batman as an idea and assured that I can choose which Batman I want to care about. For now, that's the Lego version, although I am seriously thinking of checking out the Adam West iteration.

I am a lifelong Batman fan, who has read more than his share of Batman criticism, but this book is leaps and bounds the best one I've ever read. Weldon's writing is easy to read, with a fun voice. As the title says, the book shows how fan reaction to Batman has reflected nerd culture in general, so it's not just a point by point, "And then in 1967 this happened with Batman, then in 1968 this happened," but a look at the way people reacted to all the things that were happening in the comics, movies, and TV. Recommended for any pop culture buff or anyone who has enjoyed Batman in any form.

Glen Weldon tackles the entire history of the BATMAN comic book, franchise serials/films, TV series, and pop cultural staple, all from the perspective of a gay fan—“the very thing Dr. Fredric Wertham feared might happen! Weldon is a gracious, generous, candid, and erudite guide into this universe, and it's a fun and informative read. Here's the book on BATMAN that should have been written and published long ago; we're in curious and expansive times for THE CAPED CRUSADE to land a mainstream publisher and release. This is the kind of writing that used to be relegated to fanzines (including the likes of AMAZING HEROES); now its a welcome addition to libraries and wider audiences. I covered some of this turf in my own book (TEEN ANGELS AND NEW MUTANTS: RICK VEITCH'S BRATPACK® AND THE ART, KARMA, AND COMMERCE OF KILLING SIDEKICKS), but Weldon's book will reach a much bigger readership with far more authority, and deservedly so. RECOMMENDED!!!

I could tell you this is a comprehensive history of Batman but that does such a disservice to Weldon's work. It's of a comparative history of Batman, how the character and American culture have influenced one another, Batman's role versus other superheroes and the impact all of these

have had on fans, how they communicate and ultimately how the Internet has affected all of these. Like Weldon, I became a fan of Batman in syndicated reruns. I've read the comics sporadically but was always more of an X-Men girl. That said, Batman has always been a favorite precisely because of the lack of superpowers (except, yanno, money) and the intensity (insanity) that seemed inherent in his role. Weldon brings all of the appreciation of a fan but with an unsparing (and fun to read) critical view. This is one of the few books I've read this year that I'm recommending to everyone I know.

Glen Weldon can deliver a pithy line of pop-culture critique that, in one sentence, provides insight, causes reflection, and incites laughter. As a long-time fan of all of his opinions on the podcast Pop Culture Happy Hour, getting a full book's worth of Weldon's particular brand of simultaneous affection and mockery did not disappoint. Weldon is uniquely positioned to author this book as one deeply entrenched in, yet sometimes estranged from nerd culture. He holds Batman and the culture surrounding him in the tension between the devotion of a nerd and the analysis of a critic – the perfect place for a well-informed, insightful, and fun read. I suggest getting both a print and audio copy. You don't want to miss Weldon's voice performance. Also, he left me the perfect dumb compliment.

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