



Connie Sheehan/Daily Nebraskan

Brian Schur sits among just a few Batman items sold at the store he owns, Cosmic Comics.

Bam! Batman's back invading local shops

By Bryan Peterson
Staff Reporter

Break out the Bat briefs, boys and girls.

Batman is back, bigger than ever, according to Lincoln merchants.

Stores in Lincoln are filled with Batman merchandise and collectibles to fill the needs of a new generation of Batman fans.

Larry Lorenz, owner of Trade-A-Tape/Comic Center, 227 N. 11 St., said he has seen a great surge of Batman interest. He said a new, younger audience has joined the older core audience.

"He's always been a popular character, but there is a buzz about it now for some reason," he said. "I've always liked him. The comic quality has varied. When done right, he is a good character."

Cosmic Comics, East Park Plaza, carries a wide variety of Batman paraphernalia, including boxer shorts, watches, lunch

boxes and two dozen t-shirt designs.

Brian Schur, the store's owner, said he is expecting much more merchandise soon.

Schur said Batman's popularity rose with the appearance of the 1982 book, "The Dark Knight Returns." In the book, a 50-year-old Batman came out of retirement to battle urban blight in Gotham City.

The interest in Batman has continued to rise since then, being fueled by two monthly comics, a series of graphic novels and anticipation of the movie "Batman," which will open in Lincoln on June 23.

The movie will feature Michael Keaton as Batman and veteran bad-guy Jack Nicholson as the Joker. Schur said long-time Batman fans were skeptical at first, especially concerning Keaton's portrayal of Batman.

Now that he has seen clips from

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Attack of the new releases

Well, this is it: the last summer of the 1980s.

Music and other trends shape society's perception of an era -- and are usually the most powerful in the latter half of a decade. All the great 1960s classics were recorded after 1965. Most trashy 1970s disco, which is currently being revived in underground clubs, was recorded in the late '70s.

But during these identity-lacking, retro-crazed 1980s, most of the interesting music was recorded before 1984 -- when the second British invasion and MTV opened doors for groups like New Order, Bauhaus and The Smiths.



Relentless nostalgia and baby-boomers' arrogance shot a sedative into the arm of pop culture in the mid '80s. And we're still feeling the effects as oldies radio stations and powerful yuppies saturate the airwaves and media with the sounds and styles of the "Big Chill" generation.

It has been hard for new bands to get breaks because programmers and record label executives would rather re-hash the Beatles and Jefferson Airplane than listen to people who don't feel sentimental after watching an episode of "thirtysomething."

But the '80s artists are finally fighting back. As a few of the following new releases prove, it's not too late to end the '80s with fresh ideas and have this decade remembered as something more than a paean to yesterday's paisley.

Love and Rockets, "Love and Rockets!" (RCA):

England's Love and Rockets have finally risen from their subterranean days in Bauhaus and Tones on Tail. And they are destined to be embraced by the black-wearing trendies and frat boys who staked a claim on REM, U2 and The Cure. This eponymously-titled, fourth effort from Daniel Ash and company is now No. 1 on the alternative and college charts in the U.S. Don't ask why, for their sound is basically the same -- lots of reverb (sometimes too much), psychedelic drum and guitar arias and flat, droning vocals. As usual, Ash leaves in numerous dramatic pauses between vocals, but for no real reason. Otherwise, few of the band's old pretensions abound: no heavy lyrics about old world mysticism, no peace and love pleas. Evidently, these are simpler days of darkness for Love and Rockets. Ash has said the album is about "motorcycles, leather and girls." And he's right. Tracks like "Motorcycle" pack on a driving beat, copious industrial noise, the ever-present Jesus and the Mary Chain fuzztone bass -- and seem to be



Courtesy of RCA Records

Love and Rockets: subterraneans surfacing into the mainstream.

about nothing more than cruising the streets on a Harley. "The Teardrop Collector" and "I Feel Speed" are slower, baroque and closer to Ash's work in Tones on Tail. But that doesn't matter to the trendies. The Rockets have the right haircuts for the inevitable, upcoming photos of themselves with Bono and Michael Stipe arriving at Hollywood premieres. They're ready for their well-deserved close-up. Mr. DeMille. Stay tuned. (Grade: B+)

Debbie Harry, "Once More Into the Bleach." (Chrysalis):

Re-mixes of both old and new songs are always a gamble because they usually strip most of the original hooks from a tune and add endless drum-machine beats that go on for a millennium. But that's hardly the case with this re-mixed retrospective of Blondie and Debbie Harry classics from the late 1970s and early '80s. Blondie hits like "Heart of Glass," "Call Me," "Atomic" and "The Tide is High" -- as well as Harry's solo efforts "Feel the Spin" and "French Kissin' In the U.S.A." -- are all included with just enough high-tech, synth-pop polish and techno-house sampling to give them a modern feel. And the re-mixing wasn't done by some corporate sound engineer; Harry and her husband, Chris Stein, did all the studio work. The re-mix of "Rapture" makes Harry's golden oldie sound like the latest favorite on Brooklyn and Bronx homeboys' beatboxes. The "Rapture" re-mix, with its funk-up, throbbing 1989 bassline, could easily be re-released and sell even more copies than the 1981 original. Ditto for the re-mixes of "Backfired" and "Rush, Rush." Musical deja vu has never sounded this fresh. (Grade: A+)

Cookie Crew, "Born This Way." (PolyGram):

Cookie Crew, Britain's answer to Salt 'N' Pepa, scored two hip-hop hits the past few years with the feminist rap "Females (Get On Up)" and the U.K. house track "Rok Da House." On their U.S. debut, these two South London homegirls prove

that trenchant rap and hip-hop doesn't have to come from the boroughs of New York City. They may have to fake a Bronx accent to sound authentic, but unlike most rappers, they rely less on electronic sampling and scratching and more on rapping to produce a beat. And the Cookies steer clear of singing about the sexist stereotypes their male counterparts wallow in. On cuts like "From the South" and "Black is the Word," the Cookies come off sounding cheesy, cute and streetwise simultaneously. "Born This Way" is further proof that these days, more of the interesting black soul is coming from the U.K. instead of New York. (Grade: B)

Swing Out Sister, "Kaleidoscope World." (PolyGram):

Swing Out Sister, the fashion-posing British duo that hit the U.S. Top 10 in 1986 with "Breakout," is back with a second L.P. of inoffensive pop. Their sound is described in the press kit as "jazzy pop," but tracks like "Waiting Game" and "Forever Blue" sound more like postmodern Muzak. Fortunately, British colleagues like Everything But The Girl exist -- and that group does more for the power-Muzak genre than Swing Out Sister's bouncy, annoying pap could ever hope to. However, there's a bright side to "Kaleidoscope World" if one just looks at the jacket cover: fashion victim/vocalist Corrine Drewery wears enough eyeliner to make her resemble a cheerful, bubble-gum version of Siouxsie Sioux. (Grade: C-)

Swans, "The Burning World." (Uni):

New York's Swans, along with Coil, Sisters of Mercy and Sonic Youth, have created some of the decade's best dirges and art school pretensions. On "The Burning World," Swans' debut on Uni Records, Manhattan's inert leaders of the funeral have created another beautiful, wrist-slashing, hyper-poetic tribute to death, darkness and mysticism

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