

# Batman: The Ride highlights Great America's new look

By Steve Freeman  
BEACON-NEWS STAFF

What do music videos, Looney Tune cartoons and the Caped Crusader Batman have in common?

Six Flags Great America — brought to you this season by that corporate giant of entertainment, Time Warner. The largest amusement park in the Chicago area was purchased in 1991, along with the six other Six Flags parks across the nation.

Time Warner promises to diversify the amusement parks attractions. The possibilities include links between rides and attractions and Warner Brothers movies, major magazines, HBO cable network, major record labels, contracted artists, and even DC Comics.

That's DC Comics of Batman fame. And judging from waiting times in line, Time Warner has already succeeded in the business venture with the new *Batman: The Ride*. Its arrival at Great America in northwest suburban Gurnee this season coincides with the release of the sequel to the mega-hit movie *Batman*. The movie is due out in just weeks from Warner Bros. Pictures (catch that name.)

If planning to visit the park soon, run to that ride first or expect a 90-minute wait later because enthusiasm is high.

Designers modeled a total experience around a visit to the Batcave of comic book lore. Crime-fighting urgency launches the unique roller coaster ride.

Riders enter a Gotham City world in a way that shames the dehumanizing maze of lines outside other rides.

"I wanted riders to feel the mood," said designer George Ladyman.

To do that, designers used audio, lasers



The arrival of *Batman: The Ride* at Great America coincides with the release of the sequel to the mega-hit movie *Batman*.

and props of movie studio quality to set the mood.

First, thrill-seekers pass through the art deco gates of Gotham City where a municipal beautification project paints the picture of a city that works. But on down the line, city streets look to be in turmoil, as if in need of a superhero. Graffiti spells trouble and, nearby, water spews from a fire hydrant hit by a police car obviously disabled from hot pursuit of dastardly underworld fiends. The Joker, The Penguin and Catwoman come to mind.

Decent citizens must summon help.

And that mysterious figure, Batman, must be found — but not before journeying through cavernous stairways of corrugated metal. Through the smokey, sewer-like confines, they come to the Batcave.

Even the Batcave is ominous, as good must do battle with evil, but Batman is nowhere to be found. So Gotham City guests must become avengers themselves by climbing aboard a high-speed machine surely used often by Batman.

Passengers are strapped into a ski-lift

type seat. The floor drops out and off they go, feet dangling, on what is billed as the world's first suspended ride.

Above Gotham City, they fly up to 50 mph. The "Heartline Spin" puts riders in zero gravity and makes them feel like their bodies are being flung around the craft. But more thrilling yet is the outside loop. While roller coasters today typically carry cars on inside loops, this ride takes passengers outside, allowing riders to kick at the heavens for some sense of equilibrium.

If pretending to be a superhero isn't for

## Six Flags

- **Where:** Great America is located between Milwaukee and Chicago on I-94. Exit on Grand Avenue East.
- **Hours:** Open daily at 10 a.m. through Aug. 31 when a fall schedule begins.
- **Admission:** \$22.95 for guests between ages 11 and 59, \$19.95 for children 4 to 10 and \$12.95 for senior citizens. Children 3 and under are free. And for \$1, guests can return the next day.
- **Passes:** Season passes are \$59.95 or \$170 for a family of four and \$49.50 for each additional family member. An MTV VIP pass costing \$69.95 will give guests admission to three concerts this summer as well as free admission to the park throughout the season.
- **For advance tickets:** Call 1-800-6-Flags-6.

you, Great America under new management offers other new draws this season:

- **Bugs Bunny Land** — more than an acre of amusements for children with nearly two dozen rides that parents can ride too.
- **Chinese Acrobats** — a spectator event featuring feats of daring acrobatics and Oriental dancing and comedy.
- **"Tweety's Global Patrol"** — a song and dance show starring costumed Looney Tunes characters sending out a message of ecological concern.