



When Batman and Robin needed to sail the high seas they needed a vehicle that was fast, mobile and deadly. The Batboat was created for the 1966 Batman full length feature movie and was used in the TV series after it's movie appearance.



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When I started my research on the Batboat, I had read a few articles that suggested *George Barris* built the boat. I found this to be completely false ! The Batboat was the creation of *Glastron Industries*.

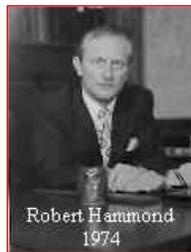
The masterminds behind this incredible boat were **Mel Whitley** and **Robert Hammond**. Both of these men provided history, photos and stories about the creation of the boat and I cant thank them enough for their help !!!

On to the Batboat History !!!

Lets turn the Batcomputer back to 1966 shall we?



We are in Austin Texas walking up to a huge factory, a hint of fiberglass scent is in the air. When we walk in we say hello to Robert Hammond, who is the president of Glastron. You decide that Glastron is no backyard operation, they have been in business for ten years and have been a leader in that new boat material, fiberglass.



[Click For Larger Photo !](#)

You glance in and notice that the company just purchased a new IBM punch card computer for it's accounting department so they sure are up to date ! We walk down the hall and get introduced to Mel Whitley, he is the man responsible for bringing the Batboat to life ! So with the introductions out of the way, let us look back on how the Batboat came to be.



The Batman show had decided to create a full length motion picture movie to be released between seasons, The producers wanted to include some new items in the movie and also knew they could use the larger film budget to get some more expensive Bat Toys to us on screen. The Batcycle, Batboat,

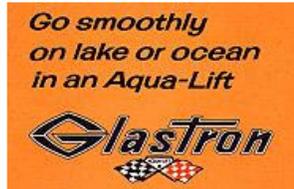
and the Batcopter were all three created for the 1966 Batman movie. For the boat, the studio contacted Glastron in the spring of 1966 to design a boat that met their design criteria for the fiberglass star. Mel Whitley went to 20th Century Fox to discuss the initial plans for the boat then came back and working from what they requested, designed the boat. As the basis for his design, he chose a Glastron V-174 to work from. Here are some photos from a original 1966 Glastron brochure of the V-174 complements of **Todd Kimball** . Todd has been really great in sending info, pictures, and suggestions on Glastron and the Batboat and I really appreciate it ! Check out his site for some really neat Glastron Boats other than the V-174.



This was the SuperSport Version but they also produced a standard V-174



Here is specs ect on The boat from the 1966 Brochure !



CRESTFLITE STERN DRIVE V-174 SUPER SPORT — If the boat of your dreams has everything... smart sport styling with an eager look of action, luxurious features, incomparable performance, beauty, and a soft, smooth ride...it's bound to be a Glastron. Chances are it's the Crestflite Super Sport all decked out in its Sunday best — with mechanical steering, plush interior, back-to-back and sleeper seats, twin stern bucket seats, lighting, open-out windshield, flip-over hatch, Aqua-Lift hull, and an 18-gallon fuel tank. A dream in deep jade and white, inside and out, it's the boat you'll drive with outright pride. Engine options range from 110 to 200 HP.

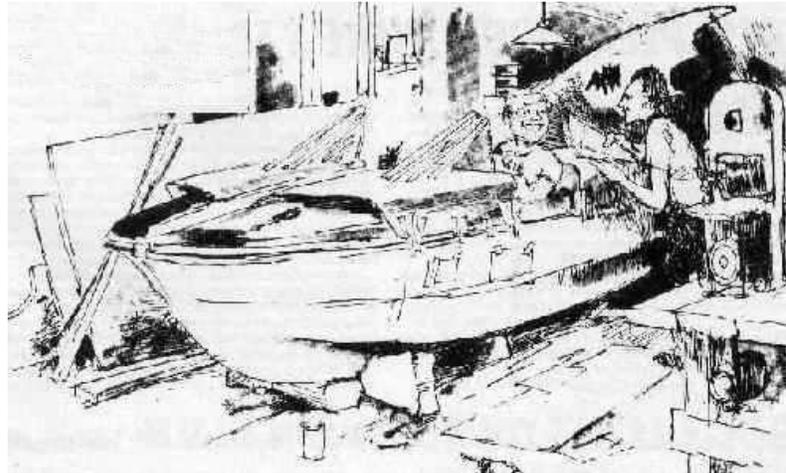
CRESTFLITE STERN DRIVE V-174 — Quietly elegant with superb styling, comfort and features — and a thrilling performer — this 17-foot stern drive is an exciting beauty in Glastron gold and white. Its tasteful appointments include a color harmonized, carpeted interior with plush back-to-back and sleeper seats, open-out windshield, aluminum toe board, steering, Inland Rules lighting and an 18-gallon fuel tank. For even greater comfort and utility, add a vinyl top, an extra fuel tank, and the accessories you desire. Power ranges are from 110 to 200 HP.

So we have the basis for the Batboat down what next ? Well the producers had some effects in mind that had to be incorporated in the design of the boat.

These Included:

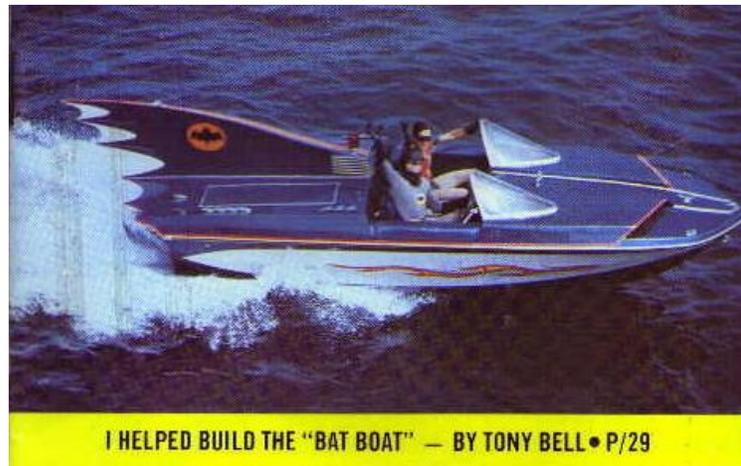
- Glowing Bat Eyes
- Seating for Batman and Robin
- A Red flashing Bat beacon 🚨
- Hatches for the Batzooka
- A glowing Batsignal in the tail fin
- It had to pass Coast Guard Inspection
- It had to be done in good taste

Well, this was a formidable task, to do the work on the boat, Mel got Tony Bell and Rob Robertson both contractors for Glastron to do the hands on work. They used a test hull, ten rolls of masking tape, and a hundred pounds of cardboard to do a mock up of the boat



Mel sent the rendering to the folks at 20th Century Fox for approval and they gave the go ahead to start the secret project.

So with the approval to build the boat, Tony Bell and Rob Robertson used a garage to start building. Tony and Rob worked double shifts to get the boat completed for the movie.



The interior had many prop gadgets and over the stern drive, they constructed a fake jet nozzle and water squinter to give the appearance of a nuclear boat motor. While this looked good on camera, the boat was actually powered by a Merc Cruiser Chevrolet V-6 and all the hardware was made by the Attwood Corporation. The boat had a top speed of about 45 miles per hour. They had added the bat eyes on the deck, twin wind screens, a center console, an aft to deck cover with a bat tail and the outdrive jet cover. While it is hard to see in the daytime, the eyes, beacon and tail bat emblems all glow at night. After the Boat was completed it was time for testing !

It was not unusual to have a few minor problems when testing a new prototype, The Batmobile blew a \$1000 Mickey Thompson racing tire the first time out and the Batcopter crashed (ok thats a lie,) but the new boat had a few minor problems to overcome also.

Due to the large Batfin on the rear, the boat was



too heavy in the back and it wouldn't plane down !

They adjusted the drive and added a new prop and that was solved. Now its running - and sinking. The boat's water pick up for the fake water squirter in the rear wasn't seated correctly so it was taking on water! With these problems corrected, The Batboat was finished !

Below is Mel Whitley testing the new Batboat ! Click to see a larger photo!



All this was finished in only 31 days, quite an accomplishment for The Glastron crew !! They shipped it off to Hollywood and after filming it was returned to Glastron in Austin Texas. As a tribute to the fine work (and quick I might add) of Mel and his crew, The producers decided to hold the movie premier in Austin with the Batboat proudly displayed at the Paramount Theatre.



Here is a video of the Dynamic Duo and the Batboat in Action !



[Click Here To See The Video ! \(434KB\)](#)



The Batboat Appeared In Many Magazines !



Now the Batboat was something of a celebrity after it's debut so they built a second boat. After the movie hoopla was over, the boats were sent out to Glastron Dealers to display for promotions. They toured for a few years and then the V-174 was no longer made and they were getting out of date as far as the new Glastron products and developments. Glastron sold one boat to a dealer of their's in Texas who was very active in The Shriners. The boat had an accident and was damaged in a structure fire but was rebuilt and wheels

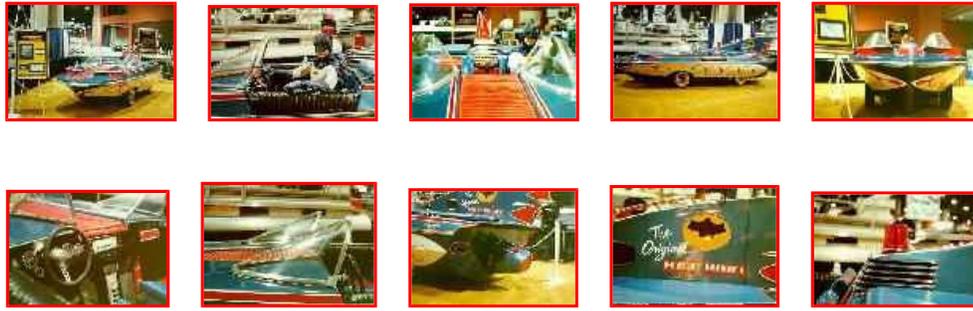


were added to be able to drive it in Shriner parade functions ! Last time I heard of it on display was in Gatlinburg Tennessee at the Car Stars museum. It has been moved since then and I was told it went back to Texas to the owner. If you hear about it or see it, let me know !

Well, ask and you shall receive ! A friend of mine, **Mark Puette** has come through with flying colors ! Here are some photos he sent me of the boat while it was in Gatlinburg a few years back. Now you may think the caped crime fighter in the photos is Adam West - think again ! That's Mark. His costume looks so real it is unbelievable. He constructed the cowl himself off of an original cowl and Mark himself makes personal appearances at Bat functions across the United States. We met here in Nashville when the #4 Batmobile was auctioned off and the auction house paid him to perform as Batman ! He always knows the answer to my obscure questions and I appreciate his help ! If you wish to contact him about making an appearance or have a Bat related question about his cowls or costumes, his email is : mpuette@hotmail.com .



Here are the photos he sent me from his personal collection !



Wow, Thanks Mark for sharing these awesome shots of the boat now !!

The disposition on the second boat is unclear however, I am checking on it and the general rumor is that it is somewhere in South America now.

There was a replica built somewhere in Michigan by a Glastron Dealer but it was built on a different model than the V-174.

Please let me know if you have any Batman related info to share !

Many thanks to the folks that helped with the Batboat article, I couldn't have done it without you ! Mel Whitley, Robert Hammond, Todd Kimball, Mark Puette, William at billztoyz@wa.freei.net, Griff Humphreys for a cool photo of the boat and Bob Kimbell for the very cool title artwork at the top of the page !

Thanks , David

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