

BATS & GOTHs: A KINDRED APPRECIATION FOR THE DARK

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Since the emergence of the Goth movement, many members have held a fascination and appreciation for bats.

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By Jordan Bowman



COMMON VAMPIRE BAT (DESMODUS ROTUNDUS) – CHARLES M. FRANCIS

Dressed in all black. Huddled together in the shade. Most active after sunset. A deep appreciation for the music of The Cure.

Wait, did you think we were talking about bats? Not quite: we're referring to their kindred spirits, the Goths. Since the emergence of the Goth movement, many members have held a fascination and appreciation for bats, from their intimidating-to-some (yet strangely cute) appearance to their importance in societal beliefs and mythologies. As such, we are taking a closer look at how bats have been integrated throughout Goth culture.

Important note: we are taking a broad look at Goth culture here and acknowledge that there are many subcultures within this (and all) social group(s).



GOthic BAT (LONCHORHINA AURITA) – MICHAEL & PATRICIA FOGDEN, MINDEN PICTURES

Bats from the Beginning

Gothic rock — later shortened to just “Goth” — began in earnest in the late 1970s/early 1980s as an offshoot of the punk music genre. Marked by decidedly darker sounds, synth, and lyrics drenched in melancholic themes, Goth music found inspiration not only from its punk forebears, but also from gothic literature such as Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*. Beyond this vampire classic, bats were used throughout gothic literature to symbolize mystery, danger, and darkness — the perfect symbol for the counterculture fostered by Goths. In short: Goths find beauty and liberation in the darkness, and what else best represents those feelings than bats?

To The Batcave

Many consider the seminal moment for Goth identity to be the opening of [the Batcave](#) nightclub in London in 1982. It was here that the movement caught real traction, providing a place for Goth music fans to gather, celebrate, and revel in the heightened emotions championed by the lyrics of bands like Specimen, The Cure, and Siouxsie and the Banshees. The Batcave became the mecca for Goth music and culture, and its acolytes showed their love of the club by adorning themselves with batwing coffin necklaces. To this day, the themes established at the Batcave are echoed throughout Goth culture, and the seasoned Goths who adhere to the styles of this time are referred to affectionately as “Batcavers.”

Not Just a Phase

To the uninitiated, the easiest way to identify a Goth might be their style. Draped in dark colors with facial features often accented with dark makeup, the phrase “creatures of the night” may jump to mind. Beyond the basics, one of the most common designs incorporated into these styles is our favorite nocturnal creature — from vampire bat t-shirts to leather-winged lapels, many Goths incorporate bats to help amplify their dark demeanor. Recent and familiar Goth-influenced films include the *Adams Family* and *Beetlejuice Beetlejuice* (or pretty much any film directed by Tim Burton). Famous actors such as Winona Ryder, Angelina Jolie, Christina Ricci, Helena Bonham Carter and, most recently, *Wednesday* star Jenna Ortega are representative of how Goth culture is still going strong.

Perhaps one of the biggest similarities held between Goths and bats is the way they have been perceived throughout history.



ILLUSTRATION BY KRISTEN BURROUGHS

Bats and Goths: Similarly Misunderstood, Similarly Appreciated

Perhaps one of the biggest similarities held between Goths and bats is the way they have been perceived throughout history. For centuries, bats have been equated with demons, disease, and dark magic, and as a result have been hunted and threatened by humans. Goths, in a similar way, have often been typecast as depressed, antisocial, or even dangerous. For both, these impressions might be based solely on outward appearances.

Reality tells a different story for both. Bats are an essential part of a thriving ecosystem, and their appearance and relationship to the (literal) dark help them thrive. For Goths, this love of the dark is often more metaphorical, understanding that even the darker aspects of our lives can be appreciated and celebrated. The world is richer for both, and the semi-symbiotic bond between bats and Goths highlights how new experiences and different points of view can help shine a light in the darkness — even when the dark is where we ultimately choose, or in most bat species cases need, to be.



LESSER FALSE VAMPIRE BAT (MEGADERMA SPASMA) – CH’TEN LEE, MINDEN PICTURES



WHERE DID GOTH MUSIC AND FASHION COME FROM?

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