

# Cluemaster

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The **Cluemaster** is a fictional supervillain appearing in American comic books published by DC Comics, commonly as an adversary of the superhero Batman. Cluemaster first appeared in *Detective Comics* #351 (May 1966) and was created by Gardner Fox and Carmine Infantino.

A failed game show host, the character became a criminal who leaves clues to his crimes, but unlike the Riddler's clues, they are not in the form of riddles.<sup>[1]</sup>

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## Publication history

Cluemaster first appeared in *Detective Comics* #351 (May 1966) and was created by Gardner Fox and Carmine Infantino.

## Fictional character biography

The Cluemaster starts his criminal campaign by a daring but unsuccessful attempt to learn the secret identity of the Batman, in order to gain a fighting edge.<sup>[1][2]</sup> He returns to Gotham for a rematch with Batman,<sup>[3]</sup> then appears in several supervillain crowd scenes over the years.<sup>[4]</sup>

With several other villains, Cluemaster becomes a member of the Injustice League, a team of out-of-luck supervillains who, when banding together, become even

less successful than they have been in their individual careers.<sup>[5]</sup> The Injustice League have been defeated time and again by the Justice League International, at least when they are not making laughingstocks of themselves.

### Cluemaster



*Detective Comics* #810, art by Jock

#### Publication information

<b>Publisher</b>	DC Comics
<b>First appearance</b>	<i>Detective Comics</i> #351 (May 1966)
<b>Created by</b>	Gardner Fox Carmine Infantino

#### In-story information

<b>Alter ego</b>	Arthur Brown
<b>Team affiliations</b>	Injustice League Justice League Secret Society of Supervillains Suicide Squad
<b>Notable aliases</b>	The Reformer, Aaron Black
<b>Abilities</b>	Has a number of plasti-glass pellets attached to the front of his costume that he can hurl as weapons (these pellets variously contain a blinding incendiary flare, smoke bombs, paralyzing gas and high explosives)

Trying to reform, the members later become the core of the equally laughable hero team Justice League Antarctica.<sup>[6]</sup> They help out the Justice League when JLI liaison Maxwell Lord lies in a coma,<sup>[7]</sup> but again later reform as the Injustice League as henchmen of Sonar.<sup>[8]</sup>

Cluemaster reappears in *Detective Comics* #647 by Chuck Dixon and Tom Lyle. In this three-issue story, Cluemaster has reformed and been released from Blackgate Prison. Cured of his compulsion to leave clues, Cluemaster originally joins a gang and plans their heists in exchange for 10 percent of their winnings. He later kills the leader by suffocating him with a strong polymer over his mouth and nose, and begins to plan a master heist.

During this time it is revealed **Arthur Brown** has a daughter named Stephanie, but rarely spends any time with her due to long periods of incarceration. Stephanie is furious when she discovers that he has returned to crime without his need to leave clues behind. Making a costume for herself, she calls herself The Spoiler, finds out her father's plans, and leaves clues so that the police and Batman can stop him. Robin spots Spoiler on the rooftops during a police bust of Cluemaster's apartment and unmasks her, though she incapacitates Robin by hitting him in the face with a brick. Robin tracks her down and Batman, Robin and Spoiler set a plan in motion to take down Cluemaster. Spoiler was forbidden from going to the bust because she was only motivated by revenge. Catching Cluemaster at his mall heist whilst he hauls a giant glass canister of money away by air, Stephanie is then held hostage by Cluemaster atop the canister, holding a vial of acid to her face as Batman tries to stop him. Batman tells Cluemaster to stop and Cluemaster, thinking Batman will only lecture him about how it is morally wrong to disfigure a child, is taken aback when Batman simply reveals Spoiler is his daughter. Spoiler uses the shock of the revelation to gain the upper hand and uses one of the chains attached to the Gunship lifting the canister to strangle Cluemaster, but Batman prevents this. Cluemaster is taken back to Blackgate.<sup>[1]</sup>

Each time the Cluemaster escapes or start some new plan, Stephanie dons her costume again in order to foil him. Eventually, she realizes she enjoys being a hero, and begins regular patrols as Spoiler. For a brief period of time she even replaces her boyfriend, Tim Drake, as Robin.



Cluemaster mourning the loss of his daughter. Art by Pete Woods.

## Apparent death

Cluemaster and his teammates in the Injustice League volunteer to join the second Suicide Squad, a group sanctioned by the US government, in return for a full pardon of his crimes. The Cluemaster also hopes to make Stephanie proud of him.<sup>[1]</sup> During the mission, which involves dealing with terrorists and a lovesick genetic experiment, Cluemaster sees his friends, Big Sir, Clock King and Multi-Man die (though Multi-Man has the power to be reborn again). In the resulting chaotic battle, Cluemaster seemingly saves Major Disaster's life twice, though the Major admits the situation was confusing. Cluemaster is seen shot many times through the chest. He survives this incident, with a year's recuperation in the hospital and many, many scars. He is encouraged by thoughts of his daughter.<sup>[9]</sup>

When he gets out and discovers that his daughter has been killed, he takes on the secret identity Aaron Black and creates the "Campaign for Culpability", blaming Batman for his involvement in Stephanie's death, saying that she was not the first child working with Batman to die, and that Batman should be brought to justice.

It is later revealed that Stephanie survived the incident that everyone believed had killed her, and spent some time recuperating overseas.<sup>[10]</sup>

*Robin* #177 as planned by Chuck Dixon intended to feature Cluemaster, but Dixon's abrupt exodus at DC meant the issue was scrapped.

Cluemaster finally reappears after Stephanie Brown has become the new Batgirl. He is revealed to be the man who has been funding the Reapers, a group of young supervillains who have been battling Batgirl.<sup>[11]</sup>

## The New 52

In The New 52, as part of the *Forever Evil* storyline, Cluemaster is among the villains that the Crime Syndicate of America recruited to join the Secret Society of Super Villains.<sup>[12]</sup> Cluemaster appears as a villain in the *Batman: Eternal* series, plotting with several other minor villains when interrupted by his daughter, Stephanie Brown, who overhears part of the plotting by her father and his associates. This is Cluemaster's first appearance in the New 52 continuity.<sup>[13]</sup> He is later revealed to be the final mastermind behind the systematic attack on Batman by various villains; inspired by an old theory he had when talking with other lower-grade villains that they could take action while Batman was occupied with the bigger criminals, he sent out invitations to other big-league foes to take action after the fall of Commissioner Gordon, and then all he had to do was slip a basic mind-control drug into Gordon's coffee to make him see a threat that wasn't there and let the other villains do what they wanted, guessing correctly that Batman would never think to look at a small-timer when so many bigger villains were playing a part in the scheme. Although Brown manages to capture and unmask Batman, Bruce is able to escape his bonds and fight back, but he has taken such a beating over the course of the storyline that Cluemaster manages to overpower him, only for Lincoln March to show up behind Cluemaster and slit his throat,<sup>[14]</sup> revealing that he funded Cluemaster's plans solely so that he could kill Batman at this point in secret.<sup>[15]</sup>

## Powers and abilities

Unlike most of Batman's villains, Cluemaster is completely sane, which gives him a unique relationship with Batman. Cluemaster has no metahuman powers or abilities. He has a number of plasti-glass pellets attached to the front of his uniform. The pellets contain various offensive weaponry including: blinding incendiary flares, smoke, incapacitating gas, and explosives.

## Other versions

### Flashpoint

In the alternate timeline of the *Flashpoint* event, Cluemaster is imprisoned in military Doom prison. He is subsequently killed by Eel O'Brian who hides inside Cluemaster's body killing him to break Heat Wave out.<sup>[16]</sup>

## In other media

### Television

- A considerably different version of the Cluemaster has appeared on the animated series *The Batman* voiced by Glenn Shadix as an adult and by Kath Soucie as a child. He first appears in the episode "Q & A", in which he is an insane, obese genius with a severe case of Peter Pan Syndrome who seeks revenge on the people he blames for rigging his last question on *Think Thank Thunk*, a game show on which he competed when he was a child; he was never a game show host in this version, but merely a child contestant. Losing after a twelve-week string of victories, Arthur's mother filed a lawsuit for what the host, Ross Darren and producer, Hebert Ziegler did to make Arthur lose, Arthur believing that they gave his opponent, Yelena Klimanov an easier



Cluemaster as seen on *The Batman*.

question to ensure her victory rather than accept that he lost. However, the host and producer had friends in high places who overturned it, and Arthur spent the next twenty years planning his revenge and eating his 'reward' of a lifetime supply of Kremelo chocolate bars, leaving him so fat that even a direct kick to the chest from Batman does nothing to him. In his debut episode, Cluemaster attempts to take his revenge on Bert Ziegler, Ross, and Yelena who had beaten him. After humiliating them in public, his midget henchmen kidnapped them one by one and Cluemaster places them on a patently unfair parody of *Think Thank Think* where a loss means death in a large tub of acid. Batman manages to save them by tracking down Cluemaster's lair and goading him into playing a bonus round of "all or nothing". He stumps the Cluemaster with the one question he does not know: the identity of the Batman. Throwing a temper tantrum, the Cluemaster attempts to unmask him but is defeated by Batman just as Cluemaster's mother arrives. Cluemaster later appears in the episode "Rumors", as a captive of the title character, a ruthless vigilante, along with the bulk of Gotham's master criminals. At the episode's end, Batman frees Cluemaster from his imprisonment by Rumor. He was accidentally frozen by Mr. Freeze.

- Cluemaster appears in the *Batman: The Brave and the Bold* episode "A Bat Divided." He is seen in a bar populated by D-list supervillains when Firestorm and the three Batmen show up.

## Video games

In *Batman: Arkham Knight*, there's a poster Arthur Brown's game show "Price Change" in the entrance of Panessa Film Studios. His villain alter ego is mentioned during a conversation amongst thugs where they compared him to Riddler.

## See also

- List of Batman Family adversaries

## References

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9. "Suicide Squad" Vol. 2 #1 (November 2001): "Almost a Good Idea"
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| Characters created by Carmine Infantino | Male characters in comics

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