

**The New York Times** Reprints

This copy is for your personal, noncommercial use only. You can order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers [here](#) or use the "Reprints" tool that appears next to any article. Visit [www.nytreprints.com](http://www.nytreprints.com) for samples and additional information. [Order a reprint of this article now.](#)



November 13, 2011

# Traffic to Stymie Even the Batmobile Shows the Two Sides of Movie Production

By **MATT FLEGENHEIMER**

The [Queensboro Bridge](#) was where Simon and Garfunkel felt groovy, where Woody Allen and Diane Keaton watched dawn break in “Manhattan,” where the city could be seen, as F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote, “in its first wild promise of all the mystery and the beauty in the world.”

Its latest foray into popular culture is in the next Batman movie, “The Dark Knight Rises.” But over the weekend, there was a cost to such fame: snarled traffic and befuddled drivers on both sides of the bridge.

For nearly the entire weekend, the top level of the [Ed Koch Queensboro Bridge](#) was closed in both directions to accommodate filming crews; it was not scheduled to reopen until late Sunday.

In a city accustomed to seeing itself on screen — and conditioned to tolerate the occasional street closings that result — the arrangement highlighted, on a grander scale than usual, the dual effects of efforts to attract film crews to New York’s neighborhoods. The presence of a big-budget movie infuses the city with dollars and jobs, proponents say, but it can also grind its thoroughfares to a virtual halt.

“It was horrendous,” Mattie Matthews, 67, said of the traffic as she pointed to a row of cars idling on East 58th Street. “On a Sunday, it would never look like this.”

Another peculiarity of the scene: a fleet of cars with “Gotham” license plates taking up parking spaces.

As orange cones and barricades lined entryways to the bridge on Sunday, many drivers trying to get to the top level approached traffic officers, ignoring green lights, to stop and

ask for alternate directions. Some made snap decisions as they veered away from the barricades, swerving into the lane for the lower level or turning onto Second Avenue to find another way.

Former Mayor Edward I. Koch, for whom the bridge was named last spring, was not aware of the closing Sunday — “the City Council did not require that I be informed,” he joked — but said he had championed the city’s promotion of film and entertainment since his time in office, when he pushed for the revitalization of the [Kaufman Astoria Studios](#) in Queens.

Other mayors have followed suit. In August, Mayor [Michael R. Bloomberg](#) cited growth in the city’s entertainment industry as “one of the reasons we create jobs at a faster clip than the rest of the nation.” The entertainment industry, according to the mayor’s office, contributes \$5 billion to the city’s economy each year and supports 100,000 jobs; behind-the-scenes tasks often fall to local businesses.

“Some people will be slightly inconvenienced,” the mayor said then. “And the city’s job is to find that balance.”

[Mitchell Moss](#), a professor of urban policy and planning at New York University, said the city stood to reap indirect benefits as well. “It reaches a global market,” Professor Moss said. “Every person who sees ‘Batman’ is going to say, ‘Boy I’d like to see New York.’”

Some residents near the bridge said the short-term nuisance was worth the trouble, noting that the [New York City Marathon](#) had been just as disruptive a weekend earlier. Ms. Matthews said she had only one complaint: the film’s star, [Christian Bale](#), had not shown his face on the city’s sidewalks, to her knowledge. “He should be walking around shaking hands,” Ms. Matthews said. “And kissing older women.”

Mr. Koch, meanwhile, may welcome the film’s stop in the city, but he did not care much for its predecessor, “The Dark Knight.” In recent years, the former mayor, who has reviewed films for The Huffington Post, has supplied video critiques on the Web site [www.mayorkoch.com](#).

Of “The Dark Knight,” he wrote, “the story is the same old, same old of Batman saving Gotham City” from a cast of villains. “Not to worry, no hero or anti-hero is killed off,” he continued. “They will be needed for the inevitable sequel.”

