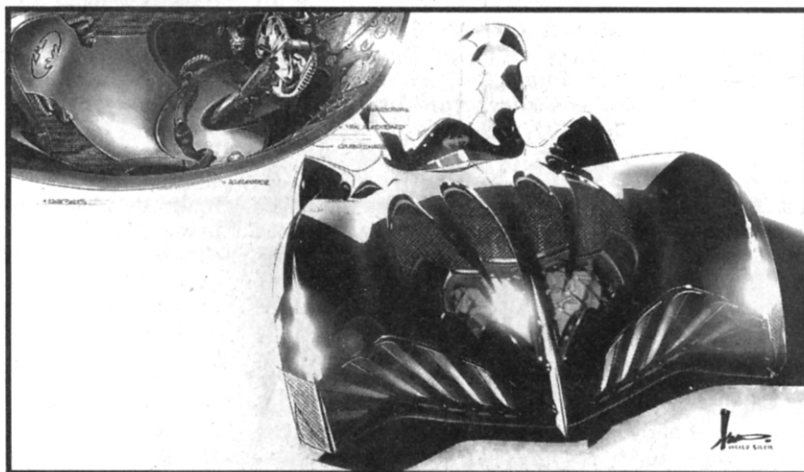


125 YEARS | WILDCATTERS

CARLOS CHAVEZ *Los Angeles Times*

SCIENCE MEETS FICTION

Futurist Harald Belker, 44, a former Porsche and Mercedes-Benz designer, has designed vehicles and spaceships for movies, including "Batman & Robin," "The Cat in the Hat" and "Minority Report."



HARALD BELKER

GOTHAM CITY CRUISER

Designs for Belker's Batmobile produced the ultra-cool roadster that appeared in 1997's "Batman & Robin."

design universe is still supplying juice, particularly in the automotive stylings of such futurists as Harald Belker.

Since 1994, Belker, a former Porsche and Mercedes-Benz design hot-shot, has been dreaming up cars, spaceships

and other vehicles for feature films. His work includes the Batmobile roadster used in 1997's "Batman & Robin," as well as the cartoonish "The Cat in the Hat" cars used in that 2003 release.

But his most famous, and a car that

epitomizes his dream for the future, was the curvy, magnetic-levitation "Minority Report" Lexus that won more raves than the 2002 film's star, Tom Cruise.

"In movie work, I can think 50 or 100 years ahead and change things to fit the script's demands," said Belker, 44, who devised an entire intelligent transportation system for the Spielberg movie.

Horsepower should take a back seat, he argues, to practical considerations such as making cars smaller so more can fit on the freeways, and more comfortable since we'll be spending so much time in them.

"They should have a lot of entertainment features," Belker said, "and safety features that keep you from being hit or from hitting other people."

As for style, Belker believes that while the mechanical, angular Gobot look has a place, the aerodynamic shapes that have influenced car designers since the dawn of the jet age will continue to hold sway.

"There will be room for cars like the Honda Element or Scion xB that are boxy and angular because we're always looking for something fresh and edgy," he said, "but sensuous curvature always carries through."