

The Art of Movie Collecting

Written by Ben Smith
Saturday, 29 May 2010 00:00



As the love of movies has become an ever-developing pastime of mine, I constantly try to remain on the edge of horror-film collecting and viewing. From an early age, my father taught me the magic that movies can possess—whether it be the biggest theatrical blockbuster or tiniest straight-to-VHS release. I can remember watching the more timid genre fare early on—GHOULIES, TROLL 2, THE WILLIES, LITTLE MONSTERS and the popular GREMLINS franchise—which offered only a gateway to the darker and crueller side the horror scene had to offer.

Attending the local video rental store nearly every week with my father, I never thought that this tiny little place would have such a huge impact on the rest of my life. Now, primarily concerned with horror, science fiction and cult movies, I constantly scour the net trying to find out-of-print oddities and rarities that I can add to my massive collection, which seems to grow daily. With the large number of video stores going out of business, I have been lucky enough to grab vintage first-release VHS “big boxes” of MOTEL HELL, DEATH RACE 2000, THE ENTITY and MS. 45 in their original cases, as well as pristine DVD copies (with inserts) of numerous out-of-print finds—MADMAN (for \$5) and the rare QUATERMASS AND THE PIT 1998 release. I also have collected Anchor Bay’s limited-edition DVD packages (individually numbered), Fright Pack boxed sets and the tins they released almost 10 years ago that are also numbered; obsessively enough, I own several copies of the same films in different editions.



Yet there’s a certain special aura you get when watching VHS tapes rather than the restored, hi-def discs. My library now contains nearly 100 rare titles, including the hard-to-find THE TOWN THAT DREADED SUNDOWN, HIGHWAY TO HELL, the unrated THE MUTILATOR and

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many others that have never seen the light of day on DVD. With those stores being phased out each and every day, I can feel only sorrow for the coming generations who won't experience the privilege of lurking in their local shops, seeking out the latest and greatest horror has to offer. Never getting a chance to hold a piece of history in their hands, the youth of tomorrow will be left with nothing but to stare at a vending machine and/or computer screen to merely look at a grainy reproduction of the cover art—if that even exists.

One personal campaign of mine has been to help the masses attain their own little piece of video rental history, and I have begun helping a local “mom and pop” video store phase out their several-decade horror/cult/sci-fi VHS collection to horror fans through Amazon.com and Ebay.com.



With a love for even the grittiest of grindhouse features, I've amassed a library that ranges from the extremes of LET ME DIE A WOMAN to the kids classic MAD MONSTER PARTY, from the hilarity of STUDENT BODIES to the terror of a Korean import of ERASERHEAD. It also boasts a handful of unique finds including a rare Japanese CD soundtrack of THE BURNING that I found while on a music tour in Tokyo, Japan, a GREMLINS movie magazine/book from the '80s that I've been collecting autographs on from various convention visits and a laserdisc copy of VISITING HOURS. My collection also boasts an original vinyl soundtrack for ROSEMARY'S BABY and a MASTERS OF HORROR series promo poster signed by all the participating directors. After fortifying a basement wall in my parents' home, my collection has now been condensed into an den/office in my apartment that holds over 2,000 DVDs and VHS, collectibles, posters and memorabilia—and after moving in a mere year ago, I am already running out of space!

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