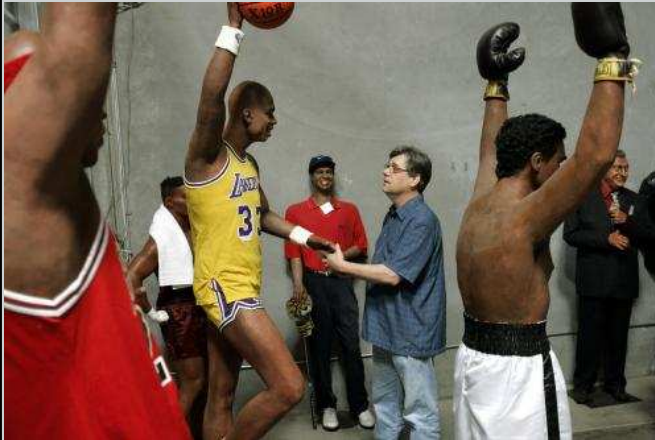




## WALL: Abdul-Jabbar is same, wax on, wax off

By Tom Hoffarth, Columnist

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Daily News columnist Tom Hoffarth shakes hands with the wax figure of Kareem Abdul-Jabbar on Wednesday in a storage warehouse in Newbury Park. Wax statues that used to belong to the Hollywood Wax Museum, the Guinness Book of World Records Museum and the Movieland Wax Museum are being auctioned Friday by Portraits in History, the Calabasas company that now owns the statues. (Michael Owen Baker/Staff Photographer)

Kareem Abdul-Jabbar stood stiff, somewhat aloof, but hardly out of character in the corner of the Newbury Park warehouse.

His distant stare, almost as cold as the concrete walls that surrounded him. He didn't even blink when someone came up to greet him. No words, in fact, came from his painted-on, half-smile.

If this wasn't a wax sculpture of the former Lakers center, then ...

Oh, wait. It was. Sorry.

After so many years of trying to squeeze a quote out of someone, you just start to assume ...

"Kareem is a very misunderstood person," said Joe Maddalena, the president and CEO of Calabasas-based Profiles in History.

His company ([www.profilesinhistory.com](http://www.profilesinhistory.com)) is handling the worldwide Internet and phone auction of nearly 200 strikingly life-like actors, athletes and musicians that, over the past few decades, were once the main attractions at the Hollywood Wax Museum and Hollywood Guinness World Records Museum. Now they have been phased out, replaced by those newer and presumably more customer-friendly. Less waxy, actually.

Within a couple of hours Friday, they'll all be sold off to the highest bidders looking for eclectic hat racks or realistic Halloween pranks. Bring credit cards with at least a couple grand limit. As if you were buying a Lakers courtside seat.

As he has dealt over the years with the search and sale of important American historical documents, Maddalena says he has had several hours of conversations with Abdul-Jabbar - a client of his, a noted history buff and author of several books on some of the most important periods in the United States.

"He's the exact opposite of what you may see of him after a basketball game - he's shy, and really unable to deal with the fame that found its

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way to him," Maddalena insisted. "Basketball was just something he was good at, and it became his job. His passions are things like the Buffalo Soldiers or the Civil War, jazz music. He's really an enigma."

And, as far as Maddalena was concerned, he's also a bargain. A conservative estimate in these economic times are a sale of between \$2,000 and \$3,000 for a one-of-a-kind conversation piece that likely cost as much as five times more than that to make back in the early 1980s by famed wax artist Logan Fleming.

The Abdul-Jabbar back at the storage center was in his full glory - about to launch a right-handed hook shot, his left foot anchored on a metal platform, his right knee slightly bent. Authentic jersey. No goggles.

But with those tight yellow and purple Laker shorts of yesteryear. And don't assume the statue is anatomically correct.

"I don't believe so," said Aileen Stein, the corporate communications director representing both the warehouse company and the Hollywood Wax Museum. "Maybe the female statues more than the males."

Abdul-Jabbar stood stoic among some of sports' all-time greats - Michael Jordan, Tiger Woods, Muhammad Ali and Mike Tyson. Stored away somewhere else, but ready to be bought, were Joe Montana and Mark McGwire. All of them as well preserved as Ted Williams' head.

Together, they're Nos. 133-139 in the Hollywood Memorabilia Auction catalogue, wedged in after Charlie Chaplin, Marilyn Monroe and Arsenio Hall, and before George Washington, Freddy Krueger and a recreation of the Last Supper.

(For those who wonder: Michael Jackson, in wax, looked hauntingly more real here than in person).

It's tough to shake the creepy feeling that when all the real people clear out of here, it's like "Night at the Museum." The wild party begins.

Still, Abdul-Jabbar doing anything but staying in his corner, catatonic to the whole mixing and matching of genres and oil-painted egos, seems unrealistic.

Maybe, if he were dressed as Roger Murdoch from the movie "Airplane!" he'd be more approachable.

Hey, you drag your tape recorder and notebook through the locker room after each game and try to pry a meaningful quote from Kareem. If only to get him to wax nostalgic for the good old days.

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