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## Bela Lugosi's dead — but you can wear his costumes for a price

**Auction continues Friday with collection of sci-fi completest Forrest J. Ackerman**

By Bob Strauss, Staff Writer

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These prosthetic teeth are from Lon Chaney Sr. makeup kit. They were probably used in the film "London After Midnight." Hollywood film props and memorabilia from the estate of Forrest J. Ackerman are being auctioned off at Profiles in History, a Calabasas auction house. Ackerman is well known to sci-fi buffs as the Editor, and major contributor, of Famous Monsters of Filmland Magazine. Calabasas, CA 4/30/2009. Photo by John McCoy/staff photographer

Want to dress in some of Bela Lugosi's actual

costumes? Or wear his Dracula ring from the movie "Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein"? How about taking aim with the two-triggered blaster Harrison Ford fired in "Blade Runner" the next time you play cops-and-replicants?

You're in luck — but only if you've got thousands of dollars at your disposal.

Profiles in History in Calabasas is in the middle of its first Hollywood memorabilia auction of the year. Thursday's lots were composed mostly of printed products: photo sets, scripts and one of only six one-sheet posters for 1931's "Frankenstein" known to still exist.

The Frankenstein poster, expected to be the biggest item offered Thursday, fetched \$212,400 from an unidentified bidder, auction officials said.

Friday's offerings will feature authenticated props, costumes and other tactile stuff used in movies, including 120 lots from the collection of the ultimate movie fan, Forrest J. Ackerman, who died in December at age 92.

"What's in this auction are the things that were the most sentimental to Forry, that he kept until the day he died," said Profiles in History President Joe Maddalena.

"What's in this auction are what I would call his most significant pieces, which there are not a lot of: his Dracula ring, the vampire cape, the robe from 'The Raven' worn by Bela Lugosi, the original artwork for Vampirella (which Forry created), the

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top hat from 'London After Midnight' worn by Lon Chaney Sr., the first edition of 'Dracula' inscribed by Bram Stoker, Bela Lugosi, John Carradine and others. ... These were his holy grails."

### Hard to come by

An avid collector who for many years opened his Los Feliz "Ackermansion" to any fan who wanted to see his stuff, Ackerman was a literary agent for Ray Bradbury, L. Ron Hubbard and other sci-fi writers. (He's credited with coining that shorthand label for science fiction, too.)

He's probably best known, though, for editing Famous Monsters of Filmland, the 1960s genre fan magazine that influenced everyone from Steven Spielberg to Stephen King.

"It united science fiction and horror movie fans for the first time," said noted fanzine editor James Van Hise, who worked with Ackerman on a later publication, Monsterland, in the 1980s. "Kids would pick up this magazine and say, 'Gee, there are other people who like this stuff.'"

As hard to come by as the Ackerman items are, however, they're just a fraction of the material up for bids in the current auction.

Hugh Jackman's Wolverine claws from the third X-Men movie, the Gill Man mask used in the 1954 "Creature from the Black Lagoon," fanboy dreamgirl costumes such as Anne Francis' 1956 "Forbidden Planet" dress and one of Kate Beckinsale's "Underworld" leather vampire get-ups — if it had anything to do with a genre movie, it's likely up for sale.

Maddalena started the movie auction business 23 years ago as a side gig to his main enterprise, dealing in historical documents.

### No get-rich scheme

Now, pop memorabilia makes up about half of the company's business, and Maddalena reckons the vast majority of that is horror, science fiction and fantasy- related.

"It's pretty much what you would've expected to see in Forry's house," he said. But Maddalena is quick to add that there are eager customers for pieces from significant works of cinema, too.

One thing available today that'll separate the men from the fanboys: The black satin gown Rita Hayworth so slinkily wore in 1946's "Gilda," listed in the catalog for \$30,000 to \$50,000.

But the most apparently coveted item up for bid today is that "Blade Runner" gun.

"I saw 'Blade Runner' as a kid, and I want that blaster really badly," says Jonathan Mankuta, an actor and producer who flies out from New York three to four times a year to attend Maddalena's Hollywood auctions.

"But when you're going for a famous, one-of-a-kind item like that from your childhood, you're not alone. On the other hand, should you get it, someone who's done well in life could approach you and say, 'You know, Jonathan, you bought that for \$250,000; I'll give you \$400,000 for it.'

"So I have to look at it as an investment also, but

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that's not the prime reason I'm collecting. The prime reason for collecting is because this is history. This is our history, this is pop culture.

"I mean, the Declaration of Independence is cool, but even if it was ever for sale it'd be out of my price range. And something like that doesn't get me the way that Luke Skywalker's light saber or the 'Blade Runner' gun does."

Maddalena said the recession has barely made a dent in his memorabilia business — and in some ways may be enhancing it. "People who've lost \$3 million in the stock market, the collectibles they've bought from me for \$1 million are still worth \$1 million," he said.

"This is not some get-rich scheme that's going to greatly appreciate," Maddalena cautioned. "But you can probably buy one of these things safely, keep it for five to seven years and get your money back.

"That's not a bad thing; you can own and love and enjoy them, and there aren't many vehicles you can do that with. But you have to love them, you have to have a passion — and the stuff is rare."

So rare that Van Hise laments that Ackerman's collection will probably be broken up forever today.

"It's a shame more of it wasn't able to make it into a museum," he said, "because Forry had so many unique, one-of-a-kind items."

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