

If Heritage's First VHS Horror Auction Doesn't Thrill You, You're Already Dead

Be afraid, be very afraid to miss this Oct. 31 event filled with scary rarities, including a Betamax Halloween, the first Carrie and a full-box Nightmare on Elm Street

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DALLAS, Texas (Oct. 10, 2022) – VHS is dead. Long live VHS. Especially when it reaches from the grave.

Heritage's [Oct. 31 VHS Horror Showcase Auction](#) will no doubt thrill and chill cinephiles and popcorn addicts still haunted by the first time they could watch their favorite scary movies under blankets in the dark. After all, watching [John Carpenter's *Halloween*](#), [George A. Romero's *Dawn of the Dead*](#), [Steven Spielberg's *Jaws*](#) or [Wes Craven's *A Nightmare on Elm Street*](#) in a theater was one thing. Strangers in the dark provide some measure of small communal comfort when zombies arrive at the front door or the slasher pops out of the closet. But in the late '70s and early '80s, there was nothing quite so terrifying as wondering if the call was coming from inside the house while the video player whirred into the pitch black.



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This Halloween auction, which features more than 100 lots that open for bidding on Oct. 10, provides the collector and nostalgist the perfect treats on a night meant for tricks: Here they will find some of the earliest and scariest home-video releases available, each one sealed, slabbed and graded. Among the offerings are some of the scarcest titles imaginable, among them [one of three known Betamax copies of *Halloween*](#), [an early copy of Sam Raimi's *The Evil Dead*](#) and [a rarely seen copy of the 1981 *Carrie* VHS](#) released on Magnetic Video, long before the major studios had any interest in home video.

Come for the cover art: “This auction is stacked with every horror title everyone could want, and their boxes transport you right back to this amazing moment in time,” says Heritage Auctions VHS and Home Entertainment Consignment Director Jay Carlson. And stay for the history lesson: “Remember,” says Carlson, “back then, studios were worried about what home video was doing to their audience. They were worried about their business being cannibalized by VHS.”

Halloween has a storied home-video history, as its journey from theaters to living rooms has been the subject of myriad YouTube videos, including [this year's *Films at Home extended flashback*](#). Compass International Pictures' Moustapha Akkad funded Carpenter's film with just \$300,000 – on the lowest end of low-budget, which is how a spray-painted \$1.98 Captain Kirk mask wound up becoming



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synonymously with Michael Myers. The film, a true indie, was distributed theatrically in October 1978 by Compass and Aquarius Releasing and saw its first home video release in 1979 courtesy filmmaker Charles Band's Media Home Entertainment, one of the earliest home-video pioneers.

This auction features two of those earliest Halloween releases, including the Beta edition bearing the 1978 copyright and a frighteningly rare 1981 VHS edition – both of which famously misspell Michael Myers' name on the back.

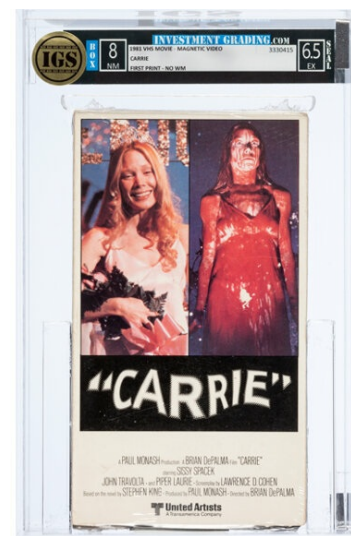
Here, too, are some more famous Media Home Entertainment horror releases, among them a rare full-box copy of 1984's *A Nightmare on Elm Street* that saw its first home-video release in 1985, which has never before been to auction; a 1981 Beta copy of John DeBello's spoofy cult classic (?) *Attack of the Killer Tomatoes*; and a rare full-box 1984 VHS copy of Tobe Hooper's 1974 classic *The Texas*

Chainsaw Massacre with gold Media watermarks.

Media Home Entertainment owned a significant chunk of the home-video market by the early 1980s, but it wasn't the first to bring the theatrical experience to the living room.

Magnetic Video Corporation, founded in the late 1960s by producer Andre Blay, began as nothing more than a duplication service for corporate clients. A decade later, he wanted to put the big screen on the small screen and pitched studios on putting their movies on videocassettes. He found just one taker: the struggling 20th Century Fox, which licensed 50 titles to the man *The New York Times* said “sparked an entertainment industry bonanza and a revolution in television viewing” upon his death in 2018.

Magnetic released several films in this auction, among them Brian DePalma's *Carrie* – “and this copy of *Carrie* is the only one I know of,” says Carlson. Here, too, is a scarce 1980 Beta UK copy of Ridley Scott's *Alien* featuring a two-toned Beta tape.



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“Rare” is a word often used to describe these tapes – no surprise, as they were meant to be opened and watched repeatedly, especially those early tapes, which were rented out of strip-mall mom-and-pop shops and cost upwards of \$100 to own. None of these were meant to last safe and watermark-sealed well into the 21st century, especially something like John Carpenter's *The Thing*, which was just the kind of graphic, gory fright-fest every kid wanted to show their fraidy-cat friends on a Friday night in 1982. Yet here it is, in this first-of-its-kind auction.

And here's a true one-of-a-kind offering featuring the second-greatest horror movie set in a shopping mall: a 1986 copy of *Chopping Mall* from the collection of the original VHS cover artist, Corey Wolfe, who signed this copy on the lower left corner of the red shopping bag. Killer stuff.

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