

HERITAGE AUCTIONS

## PRESS RELEASE

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## This Is the ‘Star Wars’ Auction You’re Looking For as Renowned Collector John Azarian Brings His Trophies to Heritage on July 29

*Historic event includes Stormtrooper helmet and blaster rifle, Luke’s X-wing and pistol, Carrie Fisher’s Snowspeeder and Phantom Menace’s trio of lightsabers*

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DALLAS, Texas (July 5, 2023) – John Azarian began collecting props and costumes from his favorite television series and movies for a straightforward, heartfelt reason: “To see something in person, to be able to touch something from a show or film you watched as a child, there is *nothing* like it,” he says. “Seeing it on TV or in a movie and then being able to say, ‘That’s *my piece*,’ that’s real. And there is nothing like it.”

The real estate developer began his journey in 1995, with Adam West’s Batman and Burt Ward’s Robin costumes bought at auction.

He likes to say that pulling them from their boxes made him feel like a kid on Christmas morning – Batman’s cowl, especially: “It made me speechless.”

This is how a single purchase evolved into an enviable assemblage brimming with many palpable keepsakes that evoke memories and magic. But Azarian’s decades-long tenure as the custodian of these enchanted reminders is winding down: [On July 29, he will offer through Heritage Auctions’ Entertainment & Music Memorabilia Signature® Auction a very select group of some of his most coveted trophies](#), including rare, one-of-a-kind *Star Wars* props long unseen and likely thought unattainable.

Among his historic offerings is [one of the few surviving Imperial Stormtrooper helmets from 1977’s \*Star Wars\*](#), which was among the treasured lot reused three years later in *The Empire Strikes Back*. Like every single thing in Azarian’s collection, the helmet, made of High Density Polyethylene, has extraordinary provenance: It hails from the collection of costume designer John Mollo, the military historian who writer-director George Lucas



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tasked with turning artist Ralph McQuarrie's conceptual renderings into something tangible and terrifying.

Mollo, who died at 86 in 2017, once told [Star Wars Helmets](#) that Lucas "liked the idea of the baddies having a fascist look about them, with the heroes reflecting the look of heroes of the American Wild West." For his enduring contributions, Mollo received the Academy Award for Best Costume Design – [while surrounded by Stormtroopers and Darth Vader, no less](#). "As you see," he told the amused audience, "the costumes from *Star Wars* are really not so much costumes as a bit of plumbing and general automobile engineering."



The helmet would be a trophy enough to satisfy most collectors. Still, for Azarian, it was but the start of a momentous assemblage: Here, too, is [Luke Skywalker's Stunt DL-44 Blaster from 1980's \*The Empire Strikes Back\*](#), the very hand-painted fiberglass prop held by Mark

Hamill modeled on the one used by Harrison Ford's Han Solo. Its provenance is equally blaster-proof: Mark Hamill surrendered this weapon [when the BBC children's show \*Jim'll Fix It\* visited Dagobah](#) during *Empire's* promotion.

Numerous instantly recognized weapons reside in Azarian's armory, including iconic blasters, such as [this Rebel Alliance DH-17 pistol from \*Star Wars\*](#), and other more elegant weapons meant for a more civilized age – lightsabers, in other words. Among them collectors will find the never-before-offered Holy Trinity of stunt lightsabers from *Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace* used in the infamous bridge fight scene with [Qui-Gon Jinn](#), [Obi-Wan Kenobi](#) and [Darth Maul](#) during which Qui Gon is killed and Obi-Wan uses his mentor's saber to slice Darth Maul in half.

[This Imperial Stormtrooper hero E-11 blaster](#), made by legendary screen weaponeers Bapty & Co. and used in the original *Star Wars*, came from the collection of the film's producer Gary Kurtz. In a letter accompanying the weapon, Kurtz says, "This gun is the original Sterling sub-machine gun used in *Star Wars*, and the additional dressing (sight, grips, cut down cartridge casing, etc.) are also all original film used pieces."

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[The original prop EC-17 hold-out blaster from 1983's \*Return of the Jedi\*](#) is no less extraordinary. The so-called "scout pistol" was wielded by an Imperial Scout Trooper on Endor, and in the Star Wars Universe, it was ostensibly manufactured by BlasTech Industries. But, of course, its maker was decidedly earthbound: art director James Schoppe, from whose armory this lightweight pistol comes.

Another *Empire* prop offered here will surely put collectors on Cloud Nine – or, at least, Cloud City. It's [the foot-long, almost-foot-wide miniature X-wing Rebel Alliance starfighter used in \*Empire\*](#) – good ol' Red Five herself. This dogfighter transported Luke from Hoth to Dagobah (for his training with Yoda) to Lando Calrissian's Cloud City, where Vader was turning Han Solo into a human-sized carbonite popsicle. Per Academy Award-winning visual effects artist Brian Johnson, the model was made at Industrial Light & Magic and "used on a number of multi-element motion control shots."

And this *Empire* miniature is larger than life, in large part because of its provenance: Here is [a screen-used Snowspeeder from the second \*Star Wars\* film that hails from Carrie Fisher's collection](#), which she sold to Azarian to help her mother, Debbie Reynolds, establish The Hollywood Motion Picture Museum of which Reynolds long dreamed. As Fisher noted in the certificate of authenticity – signed by Leia and her brother Luke – Lucas gifted her the model after filming. When Azarian acquired it, Fisher took a photo with the speeder – and signed it, "For John Azarian Hope you enjoy my Snowspeeder. Love Carrie Fisher."



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Azarian's *Star Wars* collection spans the franchise, from the first film to the last, and includes everything from [a battle-damaged droid](#)

[from \*Star Wars: Episode I - The Phantom Menace\*](#) to [a screen-used First Order Stormtrooper helmet from \*Star Wars: Episode VII - The Force Awakens\*](#) signed by [The \*Last Jedi\*'s director Rian Johnson and producer Kathleen Kennedy](#). There are even two [Ewok heads](#) from *Return of the Jedi*. Something for everyone who's ever felt The Force.

“When I started collecting, it was hard to get this material – it was *very rare* to acquire things from *Star Wars* early on,” Azarian says. “But I always enjoyed the original movies. Like most people of a certain age, I remember standing in line for hours to see them in theaters. I had a powerful attachment to the original trilogy, whereas my kids were more attached to the newer movies. I spread the collection over all of the movies. And I just liked the look of the new Stormtrooper helmet, so when I saw it come up, I had to get it. And I just really wanted a Kylo Ren helmet.”

Azarian didn't just keep these treasures hidden away; he proudly displayed them on TV shows, in museums, and newspaper and magazine stories. He also exhibited them throughout the house, usually in rotating displays outside his home theater. There, he liked to show off one of his favorite pieces: Arnold Schwarzenegger's ensemble worn when he came back for 1991's *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* – down to the last scuff mark and bullet hole in the T-800's leather jacket. And, again, the costume was only part of the attraction for Azarian: The most iconic piece of this ensemble came from the collection of Guns N' Roses drummer Matt Sorum, who says Schwarzenegger wore the jacket during the filming of the GNR video “You Could Be Mine” in which The Terminator shows up at one of the band's shows.

By the end of this auction, the last in a series of sales held in recent years, Azarian will have parted with most of his collection save for a few keepsakes. And for the real estate developer, it ends almost where it begins: This event also features among its centerpiece lots a stunt Batarang Adam West's Batman wielded on the ABC series in the late 1960s.

“I didn't collect to be a historian,” Azarian says. “I collected things I loved and enjoyed and, sometimes, things my children enjoyed. I enjoyed collecting; I have no regrets. That's the message: I have no regrets. I don't wish I still had these things. I enjoyed everything thoroughly. Now it's time to move on and let others enjoy them as much as I have.”

*Heritage Auctions is the largest fine art and collectibles auction house founded in the United States, and the world's largest collectibles auctioneer. Heritage maintains offices in New York, Dallas, Beverly Hills, Chicago, Palm Beach, London, Paris, Geneva, Amsterdam, Brussels and Hong Kong.*

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