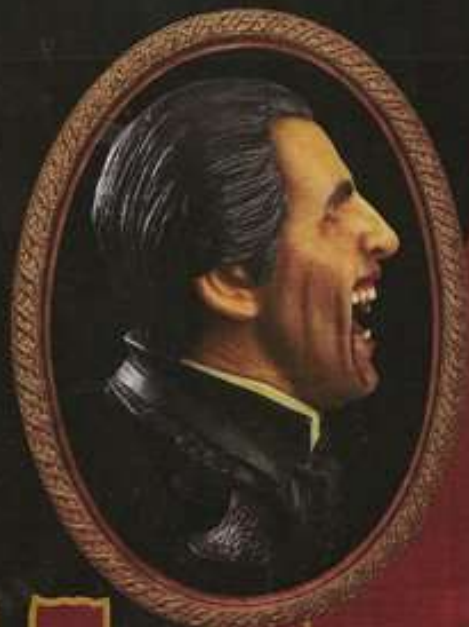


Black Heart Collectibles



BLACK HEART 360° SERIES

# DRACULA

Dracula sculpture by Joe Simon; buildup and profile layout by Steven Parke



# DRACULA PROFILE

Vampires are frequently associated with sexuality and sensuality. A lover's neck, an easily accessed erogenous zone, screams to be nibbled and nuzzled. But in *Nosferatu* (1921), there was little about the vampire to suggest sensuality and it is hard to imagine Count Orlock wooing a woman regardless of any hypnotic power he held over her.

Vampires of post-*Nosferatu* cinema are often charming seducers of the unsuspecting. Bela Lugosi's *Dracula* (1931) and John Carradine's portrayal of Dracula in *House of Frankenstein* (1944) and *House of Dracula* (1945) are, for many, the archetype of the vampire, aristocratic, well-dressed, with an hypnotic countenance. Consistent with cinematic mores of the day, they showed no fangs or on-screen blood-letting and their sensuality remained under-stated.

Christopher Lee's *Dracula* (1958 to 1972) on the other hand was the strong, silent type who kept blood flowing and women swooning in passion and terror. Sexuality in these films was unmistakable and his brooding power had women sneaking out at night, leaving husbands, killing fathers, even snatching babies from cribs. Lee was a vampire for true fans and despite the horror of *Dracula*, there was a stylishness, a sensuality and a clearly sexual aspect to Lee's portrayal.

The hippest, "fly-est" vampire of all time was William Marshall's portrayal of Prince Mamuwalde in *Blacula* (1972) with Voneta McGee and *Scream, Blacula, Scream* (1973) with Pam Grier. This was '70s Black cinema in its prime: an angry Black man (you would be, too, if you'd been cursed for eternity by a vampire bigot); a vampire brother sporting a nice 'fro, pork chop sideburns, dyn-D-mite duds right down to his cape; and romance with two of the finest sisters ever to appear in blaxploitation films. If this Black cat had bad luck, we should all be so unlucky.

Frank Langella's *Dracula* (1979) made female movie-goers all goose-pimply with his romantic portrayal. It lacked appeal to many male horror fans but his power over the gentler sex filled movie theaters with women who dreamed of having their necks nibbled. With that in mind, guys gladly paid to see the film with their sweethearts in the hope of a little necking afterward. And to be honest, the movie had considerably more bite than advertised.

In *The Hunger* (1983), Catherine Deneuve played a beautiful vampire who seduced victims (beautiful people like David Bowie and Susan Sarandon) into becoming her vampire lovers making them believe they will have eternal life. If the title isn't suggestive of sexuality, the film certainly leaves no doubt. *Fright Night* (1985) also advanced the seduction myths of vampire cinema. Chris Sarandon's vampire was cool but menacing, suave but ruthless, a vampire who liked feeding on beautiful women and Colin Farrell's portrayal is no less menacing in the 2011 version. Not a creature to mess with even if you are a "great vampire hunter".

Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1992) had all the classic vampire conventions (wolves, coffins, fangs, nocturnal activities, romance) and pushed the envelope on vampire sexuality with a number of memorable seduction sequences. *Interview With the Vampire* (1994), another big budget film, delved into vampires' eternal quest to satisfy their wants and needs. But in the last two decades or so, these two stand nearly alone as films replete with cinematic vampire tradition. Romance, sexuality, and a good story (not action and special effects) were at the center of these films.

In many of the films made post-sexual revolution, vampires are more carnivorous than carnal. Films like *Salem's Lot* (1979), *Near Dark* (1987), John Carpenter's *Vampires* (1998), *30 Days of Night* (2007), and others too numerous to list here, are less about lust than blood lust, and less about necking than throat-ripping.

In the *Blade* films (2002-2008), Wesley Snipes (another angry Black vampire) has no love interest (no wonder he's angry) and a significant chip on his shoulder (because he owes back taxes?). *Blade* hates vampires almost as much as Snipes hates the IRS; and, the closest *Blade* came to any kind of vampire smooching was in an off-screen snapshot. While there is sexuality in the *Blade* films, *Blade* himself and the films, too, are more about carnage than carnality.

Today, vampires in film and on TV are at their height in popularity. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003), *The Twilight* films (2008-), and *True Blood* (2008-) have appeal beyond gothic horror with much of their success rooted in their association with romance, sexuality and sensuality. Sex sells and this ensures the longevity of the subgenre.



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