American video posters for:

ZOMBIETHON (U.S., 1986), 24” x 37”

TOMBS OF THE BLIND DEAD (Spain/Portugal, 1971), 19” x 25”

ZOMBIE (Italy, 1979), 17” x 22”

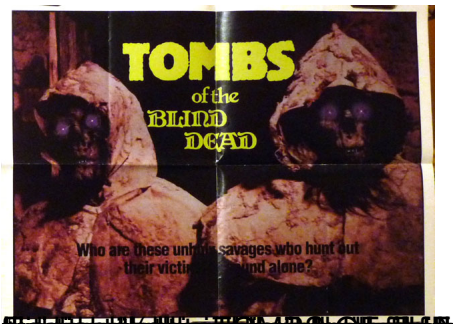
In the 1980s, I went from being 6 to 16. Though I had a fascination with sharks, snakes, dinosaurs and Dracula, I was painfully afraid of horror movies. Among my first encounters with the genre were bits I saw on TV. I watched DON’T BE AFRAID OF THE DARK and POLTERGEIST through cracks between my fingers. THE BERMUDA DEPTHS gave me nightmares. My dad and my cousin literally held me down so I wouldn’t chicken out during a telecast of Michael Jackson’s THRILLER (1983). I was a little softy who scared easily, and I still do.

The stylish and character-driven classic monsters I would gaze upon in library books and my uncle Henry’s stack of old horror mags in no way prepared me for the modern special FX and camera techniques that were able to bring grisly, blood-dripping beasts into my living room, alive and hungry. A random theatrical viewing of Carl Reiner’s comedy SUMMER SCHOOL presented horror appreciation in a brand new light; I immediately connected with the characters of Chainsaw and Dave, two teenage California punks who would wake up and go to sleep in a pile of monster masks, and spend their days pranking fellow students and petitioning their teacher for a classroom screening of THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE. When the movie was over, I floated to the mall magazine shop and picked up FANGORIA #63, the issue with EVIL DEAD II on the cover. At this point, the dam was fully busted, but the flood was only just beginning.

Others who share my vintage will definitely remember what it was like to be a horror fan in 1987. Although the picture quality of DVDs and accessibility offered by the Internet are great advantages, nothing will beat being there for the VHS boom. Certain rental shops had full rooms devoted to horror—not just sections, these were stylized dungeons, complete with rubber zombies, moody lighting and even sound effect tapes playing in the background. It's where I went to play when my mom was off renting something with Steve Guttenberg on the cover. It's where I would construct plans for all-night splatter marathons. It's where I got my real education. It's where I found *myself*.

So when people ask me about video posters, the redheaded stepchildren of the memorabilia industry, my only advice with respect to valuation is to ask themselves what they feel when they see them. What does the title mean to you? What does videotape itself represent in your experiences? Collecting video posters from the 1980s is a truly personal expression. They are often in poor shape, are nearly valueless and yet are so difficult to procure on a regular basis that the hunt becomes more of a chore. So why even bother?

One big reason is that video posters would often display alternate key art. For those looking to broaden their scope of the collections, these come in handy. Often, they would use images that differed from the art used to promote the film theatrically—that is, if there even was a theatrical release. For titles exclusively seen on home screens, the only poster that exists *is* the video poster. Take this beat-up and ragged video sheet for ZOMBIETHON, an undead-themed compilation tape released by Wizard and Lightning Video, for example. It's missing corners and looks as if it's been through a car wash. But just look at the incredible, hand-rendered graphic that miraculously survived through the paws of numerous collectors, only to find its way to me! How could I not give this orphan a home?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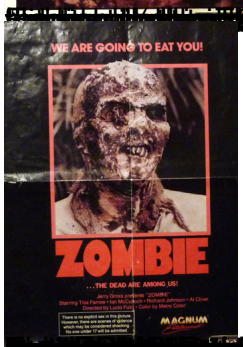
WE ARE GOING TO EAT YOU!
ZOMBIE
...THE DEAD ARE AMONG US!
MAGNUM