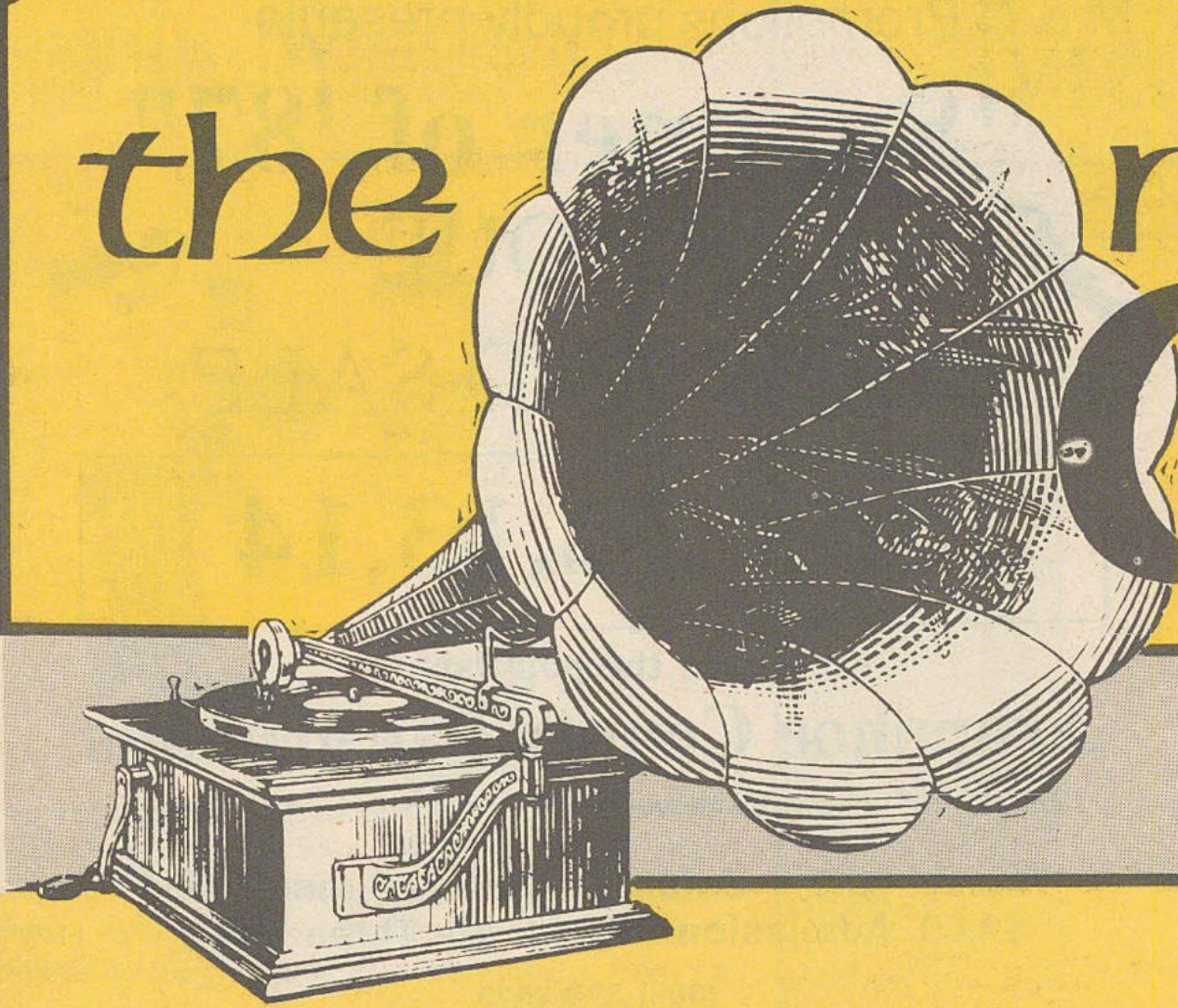


the

mountain states Collector

Volume 15, Number 5



Devoted to the collector,
the collectible, and collecting.

May 1987

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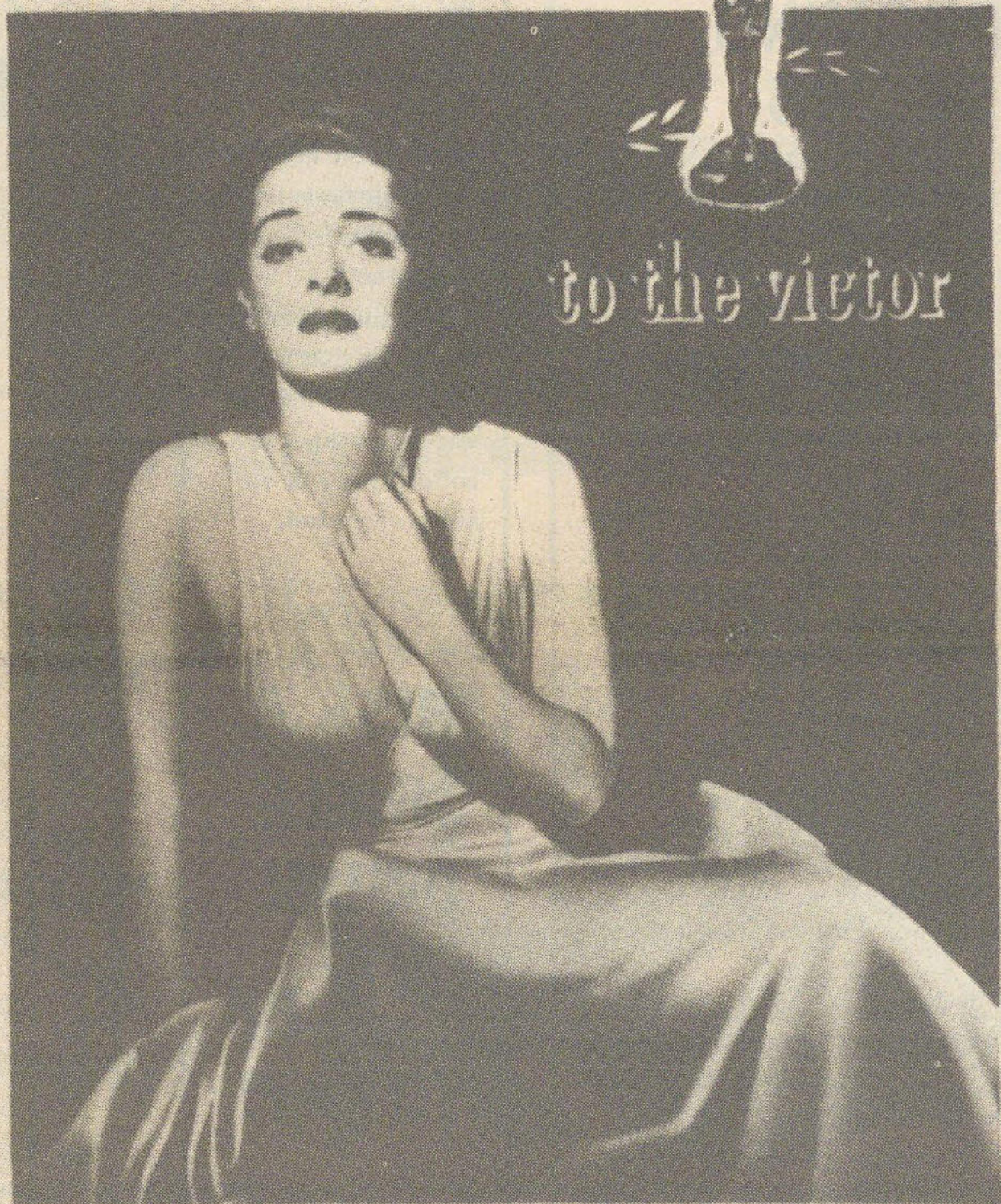
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Bette Davis in "Dark Victory"

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Ronald Reagan

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Henry Travers

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Movie Posters...pages 10 & 11

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By Bradford G. Boyle

Collecting movie posters and related memorabilia has been a hobby of many movie fans for a long time, but in the last decade it has become increasingly popular, pushing prices up at a dizzying rate. Those lucky enough to have purchased a poster from *The Wizard of Oz* in 1965 might have paid \$15 or so, while today the same poster would cost several thousand dollars, providing you could find one for sale. While some collectors actively speculate in posters, most buy as a hobby, collecting posters from their favorite movies for the love of it.

The market for the buying and selling of posters has become a well-organized, highly liquid market. Many stores have sprung up that deal exclusively in movie memorabilia. Before, most exchanges took place between collectors (many still do), but the existence of so many stores is proof of the growing demands (and profitability) of the marketplace. Poster stores usually charge higher prices than collectors, but it is much easier to find the item you are seeking. While a "price-guide" for movie posters exists, it is by no means a "bible," and the experienced collector knows that if he/she shops around, and has patience, a good deal of money can be saved.

A Short History

Movie posters have existed since the beginning of movies. The first posters were stock posters; the posters were a general design, with a blank area for the theatre owner to fill in the movie he was currently showing. With the advent of the "star system" in Hollywood, posters began to be produced for each movie, usually depicting the leading performer(s). From their beginning, the posters have been printed in brilliant colors, to hopefully attract the passing glance of potential customers as they walked by the theatre. Originally, posters came in a variety of sizes, but soon the "one-sheet" became standard, measuring 28 by 42 inches, which was later reduced to 27 by 41. The one-sheet is still the most common poster. Other conventional types include three-sheets, six-sheets, half-sheets, inserts, window cards, lobby cards, and stills, which are not posters, but photographs issued with the movie.

Types of Movie Posters

One-Sheets. As mentioned, one-sheets are the

Cover photo: Vintage posters from the golden days of Hollywood are in great demand. *Dark Victory* starred not only Bette Davis and Humphrey Bogart, but also a lesser-known actor who went on to play greater roles.



The one-sheet from John Huston's classic, *The Maltese Falcon*. The current value of this poster is about \$4,000.00.

Aurora

Waleen's Collectables

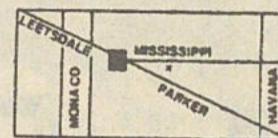
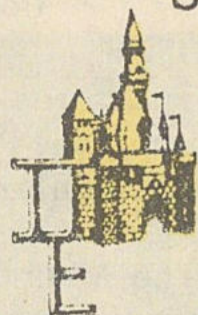
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Collecting Movie Posters

most common type of poster. They are traditionally seen in display cases outside the theater. Measuring 27 by 41 inches, they are printed on paper, and usually are folded.

Three-Sheets. As you might have deduced, three-sheets are the size of three one-sheets, or 41 by 81 inches. They are printed on paper, folded, and normally come in two pieces. Displayed, they fill a wall, and cost a bundle to frame. They are not as common as one-sheets, but are popular with collectors.

Six-Sheets. The formula works here as well—six-sheets are six times as large as one-sheets, measuring 81 by 81 inches. They are somewhat rarer than one or three sheets.

Half-Sheet. Also known as display posters. Half-sheets measure 22 by 28 inches, and unlike the other "sheet" posters, are printed on lightweight cardboard stock.

Inserts. Measuring 14 by 36 inches, inserts are vertical posters, also printed on lightweight cardboard.

Window Cards. 14 by 22 inches on cardboard. The term "window card" originates from the fact that they were given to theater owners to hang in other store's windows, usually in exchange for free movie passes. Often, window cards have hand-writing on them, telling where and when the movie was being shown.

Lobby Cards. Usually produced in sets of eights, lobby cards are small, measuring 11 by 14

inches. They normally are displayed in the lobby of the theater, thus their name. One card in the set is the "title card," and contains the film's title and some credits, while the other seven are "scene cards," which depict (you guessed it) scenes from the film.

Stills. Not posters, stills are 8 by 10 inch photographs from the movie. They can either be black and white or color, and are easily duplicated. Stills are usually photographed separately from the movie, which can sometimes result in scenes that get edited out of the final print.

Where to Buy Movie Posters

Once you've decided that you must own the one-sheet from **The Creature From The Black Lagoon**, how do you go about finding it? If you're willing to pay a premium price, a search of the dealers who specialize in movie posters will probably bring results. (See accompanying sidebar.) A cheaper route is to find a fellow collector who is selling it. An excellent source is the tabloid **Movie Collector's World**, published every other week. It is packed full of ads from both collectors and dealers, as well as articles on films. As you get deeper into the hobby, you will build more and more contacts, and may soon find yourself part of "fandom," which is a loose-knit organization of fans world-wide. Visiting science fiction film (or Star Trek) conventions can also be a good source, and has the added benefits of haggling about the price, as well as allowing you to view the poster firsthand. Most major cities have film conventions, and the dealer rooms are a sight to behold. Tables and tables of movie memorabilia fill the room, and even wandering through them is fun.

Another method which used to sometimes work in the past is to ask theater owners if they have any posters stored in the attic. Stories abound of collectors who were given priceless posters free of charge, just for asking. This method probably won't work anymore, since theater owners now are well-aware that old posters are valuable.

Storing and Displaying Posters

Okay, you've bought the one-sheet from **The Creature From The Black Lagoon**. Now what? You may want to get it framed, or simply store it. If you acquire many posters, you will soon find that there won't be enough wall space to display them all—unless, of course, you are rich and own a large mansion. The best course is to display your favorites and store the rest. Most collectors store their posters in specially manufactured mylar bags. Unlike plastic, mylar is uncontaminated by harmful chemicals that cause premature decay of posters. They are available in sizes to fit most types of posters. Keep posters away from direct sunlight, extreme temperature changes, and humidity.

If you do want your poster framed, be aware that it needs special treatment. All framing materials that will come into contact with it must be acid-free, or they will cause premature decay. Make sure the framer uses acid-free backing and mat board, as well as an acid-free adhesive if

you are getting it mounted. Having a poster mounted can add to its appearance, since many types come folded and mounting tends to make the poster lie flatter. However, it is not recommended if you ever plan to sell the poster, since mounting reduces its value. If you are not getting the poster mounted, make sure acid-free tape is used to prevent the poster from contacting the glass. It too will cause premature aging. Once framed, hang the poster away from direct sunlight.

Conclusion

Collecting movie posters is a fascinating and enjoyable hobby, but can get expensive. Poster prices have increased dramatically the last few years, and will probably continue to do so. So buying posters now may not only be a good hobby, but a sound investment.

Where To Go For Help

MOVIE COLLECTOR'S WORLD

P.O. Box 309
Fraser, MI 48026

A must for any collector, a year's subscription is \$26.

BILL COLE ENTERPRISES

P.O. Box 60
Wollaston, MA 02170

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By no means a complete list, the dealers listed are but a sample to help you get started.

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