

Dracula!

Halloween just passed by! What better time to sink your teeth into some great Dracula covers? Do you have any? No? They can only be found at night, you know. I was lucky even to find out about this one box [shown below], and that was only because Jim Benes, NJ, came to my rescue. It's somewhat surprising that such a literary institution isn't used much in advertising, although I suppose it's not a concept that many hotels, motels, or restaurants would want to associate themselves with! It's a great story, though...

Bram Stoker's 1897 novel wasn't the start of the myth, but it was certainly the beginning of the institution. Stoker based his story on hundreds of years of mythology about the dread count and his minions. From a Romanian historian, Stoker heard about Prince Vlad Tepes, who impaled thousands of invading Turks with sharp stakes in the 15th century. According to folklore, the warlord often dismembered, castrated, and otherwise maimed those who fell by his sword. The Romanians nicknamed him "Drac," meaning "devil." And, today, 101 years after the appearance of the famous novel, droves of tourists go to Romania every year in search of Dracula's origins.

Dracula and other vampires in movies have been around about as long as movies themselves since the birth of both basically coincide. The first big film, though was *Nosferatu* in 1922, a black & white, silent film starring Max Schreck. The term "nosferatu" was borrowed from Stoker's novel where it is used by Van Helsing. Stoker in turn borrowed it from Emily Gerard's article "Transylvanian Superstitions" (1885). It was Bela Lugosi who really created the role in a Broadway production in 1927 and then in the 1931 Universal film version (Interestingly, Lon Chaney was the studio's first choice, but he died before filming started). Since then, Hollywood has certainly run Dracula, or variation thereof, through the gamut...he's been played by everyone from Christopher Lee to Gary Oldman to Tom Cruise! There have been black vampires (i.e., William Marshall (1972) and Eddie Murphy (1995), bisexual vampires (Catherine Deneuve (1983), and funny vampires (Leslie Nielsen (1995).

Over the decades, Dracula, has been depicted as totally evil, totally misunderstood, and everything in between. In Francis Ford Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992), Dracula was portrayed as a sympathetic character, the result of a tragic love story.

...until necks time!

