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Rick Baker Collection: Michael’s (Michael Jackson) Werecat Teeth
Michael Jackson: Thriller

Michael’s (Michael Jackson) werecat teeth from John Landis’ music video for Michael Jackson’s Thriller. After warning his new girlfriend (Ola Ray) that he’s “not like other guys”, Michael transformed into the vicious werecat and attacked her – which was then revealed to be part of the horror film that Jackson and his girlfriend were watching in a theater.

Throughout the millennium-old human tradition of telling horror stories – whether told orally or written in books or shot on film – teeth have often served as the defining feature of any truly terrifying monster, playing on the ancient fears instinctual to all species that may have once found themselves prey to a carnivore stalking them from the shadows. For this reason, an incredible amount of care was put into designing and making the werecat’s prominent pointed teeth, which were cast using molds made of Michael Jackson’s own real teeth to ensure a precise fit. While multiple smaller sets of teeth were created for use throughout the transformation sequence, these are the only full-length final-form werecat teeth made for and used in the Thriller video.

Inspired by John Landis’ An American Werewolf in London, “King of Pop” Michael Jackson wanted to make a music video for his hit song Thriller in which he himself transformed into a monster. To do so, he sought out the American Werewolf director himself, John Landis, who brought in legendary special make-up effects creator, Rick Baker, whose groundbreaking work on An American Werewolf in London earned him the very first Academy Award® for Best Makeup to ever be awarded. Baker went on to win the Academy Award® for Best Makeup a total of seven times out of 11 nominations, setting the record for both wins and nominations in the category.

Landis and Baker were both hesitant to try to replicate the ten months of makeup work it took to achieve the American Werewolf transformation in the

five weeks of prep they had for Thriller, proposing the idea of zombies instead, but Jackson was insistent that he wanted his monster transformation. Therefore, it was decided that while the main music video would feature the zombies, Jackson would get his monster transformation in the form of a film within the film in the music video’s opening. Baker, not wanting to tread the same ground with another werewolf transformation so soon after An American Werewolf in London, came up with the idea to instead transform Jackson into a werecat, a feline therianthrope that presented different challenges in its more fantastical cat-like appearance.

The Thriller music video proved to be a massive success, doubling the sales of its namesake album, which became the best-selling album of all time. The music video was so popular that Making Michael Jackson’s Thriller, the making-of documentary that included many details about the music video’s makeup effects, sold over a million copies on VHS, more than any previous video release, and eventually went on to sell up to 10 million copies. Thriller was pivotal in the shift in public perception of music videos from a frivolous novelty to a truly innovative art form. In 2009, Michael Jackson’s Thriller became the first music video inducted into the US National Film Registry by the Library of Congress.

This lot originates from the collection of Rick Baker and is coming to public auction for the first time. It consists of two dental appliances, upper and lower jaws, featuring pointed teeth with enlarged canines which have been painted yellow and brown with dark pink gums. The appliances were cast using molds of Jackson’s teeth, visible on the back of each appliance. Also included is a yellow plastic carrying case for the teeth. The lot shows evidence of wear consistent with on-set use, handling, and age.

Dimensions: 2.5” x 1.75” x 1.75” (6.5 cm x 4.25 cm x 4.25 cm)

Estimate: \$20,000 – 40,000



Rick Baker applying Michael Jackson’s werecat makeup, with teeth installed, for the Thriller video