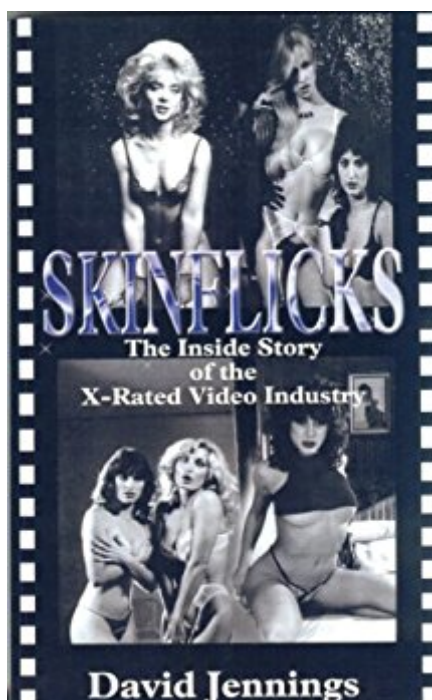


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SKINFLICKS The Inside Story Of The X-Rated Video Industry



Synopsis

"...the best and most realistic depiction of the modern world of pornography written in book form to date.." said Adult Video News publisher Paul Fishbein in 1999. UCLA Film School graduate David Jennings entered the porn business to research and write about it. When he began working for a large Mafia-connected pornography distributor in 1977, he planned 6 months in the porn industry, not 12 years. But after pioneering the first adult features shot DIRECTLY on videotape, his own company, Superior Video, Inc., weathered threats from his former bosses and helped lead a revolution in the 1980s that widened porn's audience from "raincoats" in sleazy theaters to couples in their bedrooms. Based on Jennings's true-life adventures as a writer, director, producer, manufacturer and researcher, SKINFLICKS explores an era of mobsters replaced by yuppie porn kings, cops raiding homes to seize videotapes, porn queens becoming corporations and AIDS panics closing movie sets. Going behind the scenes on over 100 porn shoots, Jennings answers the frequently-asked question, "What are these porn stars really like?" He contrasts the hippie-spawned female stars of the celluloid age, for whom porn acting was a sideline, with the starlets getting rich in the fast-fame world of video. Theirs is a marathon of ruthless competition, of sex coaches and "porno stage mothers," of multiple breast enlargements and sales of "unwashed" panties. Non-stop schedules produce burnouts, breakdowns and suicides. Jennings recounts dealing with tantrums, drug zombies and truculent boyfriends. He also describes his favorites, such as Adult Video News Hall of Fame inductees Nina Hartley and Shanna McCullough. Ironically, one of the most poised and mature-appearing actresses Jennings directed turned out to be that industry disaster, the secretly underage Traci Lords (he shot 3 Lords videos). A chapter on porn studs reveals the methods these men use to remain "reliable" during the multi-scene days of video shoots. In 1986, alarmed by adult tapes in shopping malls, the U.S. government launched a massive "War on Porn." Chapters covering this onslaught introduce thundering politicians, crusading vigilantes, porn-addicted preachers and an odd alliance of radical feminists and the Religious Right. These passages detail landmark court cases, obscenity laws, sociological studies, staggering prison sentences and bizarre clashes between prosecutors and First Amendment attorneys. Though some content in SKINFLICKS is necessarily graphic, this is a book about pornography, not a pornographic book. 432 pages with 31 photographs.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book would make an excellent reference if one were writing a paper on the transition pornography (and law enforcement's approach to dealing with it) made from quick 8mm loops and bachelor party smut into home video production with sophisticated filming techniques. In the mid to late 1970s, porn did what it does best. It led the way for Hollywood. This is not a lightly-made claim and most students of film are quite aware that while Hollywood may purchase the bus, porn has always been the driver. Just to cite one example among many, despite the fact that betamax was a higher quality product with better picture quality and sound, pornographers found it quicker and easier to duplicate VHS so it became the winner of the first video wars. Additionally, by adhering to the law of supply & demand, porn set the early price points for home video rental product. While such decisions made hundred of millions of dollars for the porn industry, Hollywood started measuring profits in tens of billions. However, the events covered in "Skinflicks" largely took place 30-35 years ago. It was a time of mob involvement, seedy red-light districts zoned by the cities and packed with strip clubs, adult toy stores, peep shows, and aged theaters running a constant stream of whatever could press the borders of obscenity laws without quite crossing the line. Women were exploited, used up, drugged up, and then tossed aside as looks faded and fickle audiences

demanded an endless parade of the young and beautiful. If you are picking this title up to learn what the industry is like today, you're wasting your money. There are numerous other books that are more up to date and relevant that can provide what you seek. Ron Jeremy has written an excellent autobiography, just to cite one example. On the other hand, if you are looking for information about the control organized crime once had over the business and how it got that way in the first place, you will find "Skinflicks" to be very informative, if not very engrossing. Apart from the age of the book itself, the biggest problem is that the author doesn't seem to ever decide whether he wanted to write an investigative expose' ala "All The President's Men" or "60 Minutes" or write tale of titillation and exploitation. As a result, the reader gets neither. Large sections of the book cover trials and legal cases - both famous and all but unknown - and the impact they had on the industry itself. Then others focus on the changes made by the film makers in reaction to or anticipation of the ever shifting laws. Much of it would be utterly absurd if it weren't true. Editor's would peruse film frame by frame trying to decide when something crossed the line. Without getting too specific in a public forum I'm literally talking about things like "how many knuckles constitute this term" and how many toes will cross the line of decency and dip into the pool of "obscene." For most folks such things are of mild interest at best. Still, if you purchase this and read it thinking of it as something of a snapshot of the early days or a time capsule of the birth of what is now an industry where women not only get paid well, but sometimes start their own media mini-empires, it's well worth the cost. Just know what you're buying before you begin. Hopefully I've managed to help you in that process.

This is a revealing analysis of porn by someone who has been involved in the adult industry for years as a film maker. The author challenges some of the myths about porn such the perception that women are regularly forced to perform in porn movies by their agents or managers. He wonders why directors should recruit the unwilling when there are so many women who are eager to go into porn. He states that before the video revolution, the most beautiful photo models shunned hardcore pictures. They only stripped for Playboy or Penthouse, publications respectable enough to use as stepping stones to promote their stage, screen and modeling careers. But by the late 1980s this changed. He attributes this change to the money that could be made by adult performers in video. In the film era, stars were lucky to land a dozen porn roles annually. However, the huge volume of video shoots gave actresses a chance to work steadily, and the speed of bringing videos from set to market make new women stars within months. It is well researched and illustrated with photographs.

The author covers change in porn from cheap 16mm loops to CD's. Unfortunately the book was written before the internet changed everything again in a radical way. His reporting of the Traci Lords dÃ©bÃ¢fÃ©cle was very interesting and sheds a new light on her and her calculating ways instead of the popular consensus of her being exploited. The same is reported about Linda Lovelace whose religious conversion prompted her to make many false accusations and claims, though I can understand her reasons for doing it. The best part of the book was in the last third when he details the hypocritical and in my mind unconstitutional methods the government pursued in their attempt to eliminate porn. I always thought Edward Meese was a moron, this book adds to my conviction. Some types of porn deserve to be illegal and laws outlawing them are justified, but the majority of porn and the decision to watch it should be left to the individual. Whenever the government starts to dictate what its citizens can and cannot read, the road to fascism becomes shorter.

From the sweet to the seedy, tragic through triumphant, this book has seen it all. Shades of current dramas such as Wonderland & Boogie Nights can all find roots here. This is also a compelling study of personal and social rights & responsibilities, and thoughts for the future as erotica streams into more available venues such as chain-retailers and on-line stores and data bases. Truly a compelling read, and you start you can't find a stopping point.

I love reading the history of Hollywood, no matter the genre. Mr Jennings gives a...."penetrating" look at the early days of porn. Being an actual participant in the development of the industry gives the real look that I crave when I read the histories. A wry sense of humour prevades this novel and the self depravation that Mr Jennings reserves for himself is refreshing. I looked at other titles but decided on this one and i was not disappointed, I read it straight through in one day (I read fast, I usually read a book a day, being retired gives you the time to do that). Recommend this book to anyone curious about the early days of porn and Mr Jennings dispells some myths that persist about the industry and people who work in it. Thanx !

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