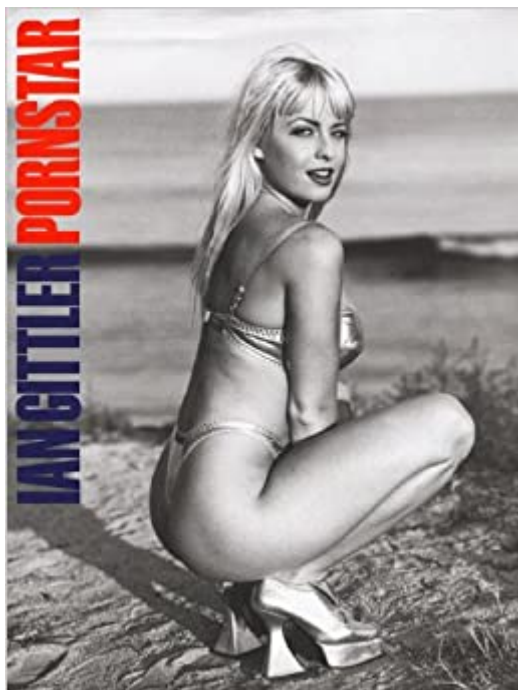


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# Pornstar



## Synopsis

Pornstar is a mesmerizing, definitive examination of life at the epicenter of America's multibillion-dollar sex entertainment industry. When Ian Gittler began photographing porn stars, his intent -- however suspect -- was to glamorize and legitimize their lives and work in the same way top photographers generally portray the porn stars' mainstream Hollywood counterparts. Girder envisioned a celebrity coffee-table book with gorgeous, enticing photography that would provoke a reevaluation of fame in our culture. But as the author journeyed into the surprisingly accessible "underground" world of porn, his glossy, conceptual approach gave way to one of grim resolve. Gittler couldn't ignore the rapidly accumulating evidence of abuse and emotional disconnect. By the time Savannah -- the most famous XXX film star of her generation -- committed suicide, he felt compelled to address the heartbreak and fragile humanity he was learning firsthand are at the core of this subculture. Gittler forged relationships with his subjects that irrevocably changed him, and discovered that the world of porn is not only a product of mainstream society, but a parallel universe where all the challenges of emotional intimacy facing humans at the end of the twentieth century exist. Pornstar is all extraordinary marriage of memoir, photography, and investigative journalism; its narrative -- in running text and more than one hundred stunning photographs -- spans more than five years. Pornstar is violent, funny, tragic, and uncompromising: a totally unprecedented portrait of the men and women -- the stars -- who populate the terrain of America's porn industry.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In 1991, Gittler, a photographer whose work has appeared in such magazines as *Vogue* and *Vanity Fair*, set out to produce a cheery coffee-table book chronicling the lives of members of the adult-film business. "Instead of beloved icons, I would glorify reviled (or at least only secretly admired) ones," Gittler writes of his initial intentions. Five years later, however, after meeting many of America's most-prominent Triple-X stars and hearing about their often sordid and depressing personal lives, Gittler changed his tune: his "one-man crusade to vindicate American sexuality" left him brimming with pity and moralizing disdain. Many of the stories Gittler has amassed in this episodic account of the lives, politics and everyday preoccupations of porn professionals are indeed depressing. Savannah, a porn actress, is injured in a car accident and then commits suicide. Director John Stagliano learns that he is HIV-positive. The photographs Gittler takes in studios, apartments, hotel rooms and on the sets of porn shoots are often highly sexually explicit, although most depict porn stars merely hamming for the camera. Still, one feels that Gittler is a little quick to infer that all sex workers are tragic, lost souls. Though this book purports to be a journalistic portrait of the porn demimonde, there is little rigor or emotional depth to it. Gittler in the end comes off as being both leering and judgmental, blurring the line he attempts to draw between pornography and journalism about pornography. (Sept.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

In addition to writing and taking photographs, Ian Gittler also makes music, drawings, and films. He lives where he was born and raised, New York City.

Anyone who has seen the movie *Boogie Nights* knows the simple truth...IT'S NOT FUN BEING A PORNSTAR. Ian Gittler makes that point painfully clear in the very early passages of his coffee-table book *Pornstar*. Unfortunately once we have gained this knowledge there is not much more we can learn from our brief touches with the lives of the stars. The Good - Gittler does a nice job of interviewing a wide range of stars and starlets. Everyone from Nina Hartley to Sharon Mitchell to Joey Silvera to Jon Dough to Tom Byron to many many more. His pictures are fine...some even haunting. My mind always comes back to a photo of one starlet who is on set and desperately looking through the lights to meet her boyfriends' eyes...even when she still has "business at hand" with an unknown partner. The Bad - Gittler is still an outsider and just doesn't have enough skill to ask the tough questions or to find the motivation in the lives of the stars. A lot of time was also devoted to Savannah (who the author is obviously enamoured with). I myself was more curious about the pictures of several stars who received no mention in the actual text...people like Victoria Paris, Asia Carrera, or Lisa Lipps who have nice photos but beyond that we learn nothing of their

lives both in-and-out of the world of adult cinema. And there are numerous big-name adult stars who don't get so much as a reference. There is a large percentage of people who are both interested and fascinated by the world of adult movies. *Raw Talent* by Jerry Butler does a better job of providing some perspective into this field (albeit from one person's point of view). Hopefully in the near future we'll get a book that allows us entry into the lives of the stars...and digs a little deeper than what we can merely see with our eyes.

I can't add much to the other positive reviews here. The photography is real and sober, it takes the hype and other worldly qualities we usually associate with the porn product away. Gittler makes those who work in this industry real people like anyone, If you cut them do they not bleed, if you smite their face do they not shed a tear. Gittler as well stepped back and allowed his subject to speak for itself. I found this one of the most informative books on the industry, and it is rather difficult to step back, and see porn from the inside. Everyone is quick to denounce it, yet the entire advertisement entertainment industry behemoth couldn't exist without peddling their stuff through the female body. There seem to be untold layers surrounding porn, well protection. And it shares itself with other industries, where a few make the most, and most fall from it without much \$\$\$\$\$. And there never is a shortage of deaths as Savannah, (The Book's Cover), and double dealings. There are probably more people who enjoy porn than you think.

*\_Pornstar\_* is a wonderful, saddening excursion into the behind-the-scenes world of American pornography. Although centered in southern California and New York, American pornography affects all Americans, drives the economy, and pushes technology (would CD-ROM's and videotape be as popular without the initial pioneers that pornography creates?). Gittler involved himself in ways that question his journalistic integrity, yes, but he is honest, almost too much so. The heartbreak I felt as I read the final chapters of this book carried over from the pain in the lives of the pornstars Gittler documents. Gittler is up-close and personal with notable porn actors, actresses, and directors: Jon Dough, Savannah, and John Stagliano, to name a few. This is not a book that promotes pornography; Gittler even refused to give permission to use one of his images of Nina Hartley for mouse pads, although he probably would have profitted nicely from the sales. Gittler, as much as readers may be disappointed with him for what he does in his documentary research, is a person searching for truth, not a cheap thrill or a quick buck. Gittler is an accomplished photographer. His portraits seek to reveal the true, often hidden character of the subject. He uses black and white images, "Hollywood lighting," available light, and shallow depth of field to a wonderful advantage; I

never thought that Ron Jeremy looked more sinister than in Gittler's shot of him and a devil's trident or that Nina Hartley could be a female nude, not a naked woman. Great technique and imagination make Gittler one of my favorite photographers and someone I would like to work with some day. Aside from a few explicit photographs of intercourse on the set, this is a book suitable for classroom discussion or your home coffee table. The portraits are of nudes, yes, but tastefully done and REAL, gritty. Pornstar is a must read for anyone who wants to understand the highs and pitfalls of this industry.

I'm a bit surprised by the negative reviews of this book. When it was published in the late 90s, the raw black and white shots were groundbreaking; his subjects were normally seen in full airbrushed fleshtone. The blurry, sweaty (oily?) pictures of Debi Diamond--an ur-gonzo porn warrior who would push her scenes to the limit, and not always in sexy ways--come to mind. Now, 10 years later, porn seems more degrading and less dangerous rock n' roll chic than it did when Stagliano, Savannah, Diamond, et al were the big names. Gittler's Porn Star is a document of the skin flick high renaissance/early baroque. Great writing and photos about a subject Gittler took very personally.

Ian Gittler delves into the world of XXX like few have before him. He humanizes the pornographic film business while, for the most part, remaining an outsider. The photos add greatly to the drama which unfolds in Gittler's vignettes. The scene in which star Debi Diamond demands to be slammed into a wall is memorable; her revelation that her grandmother's pearls were destroyed in the process is haunting. The book could have used much more written text. For a guy who spent nearly a decade writing and researching this book, it should have been longer. But what is on the pages is unforgettable.

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