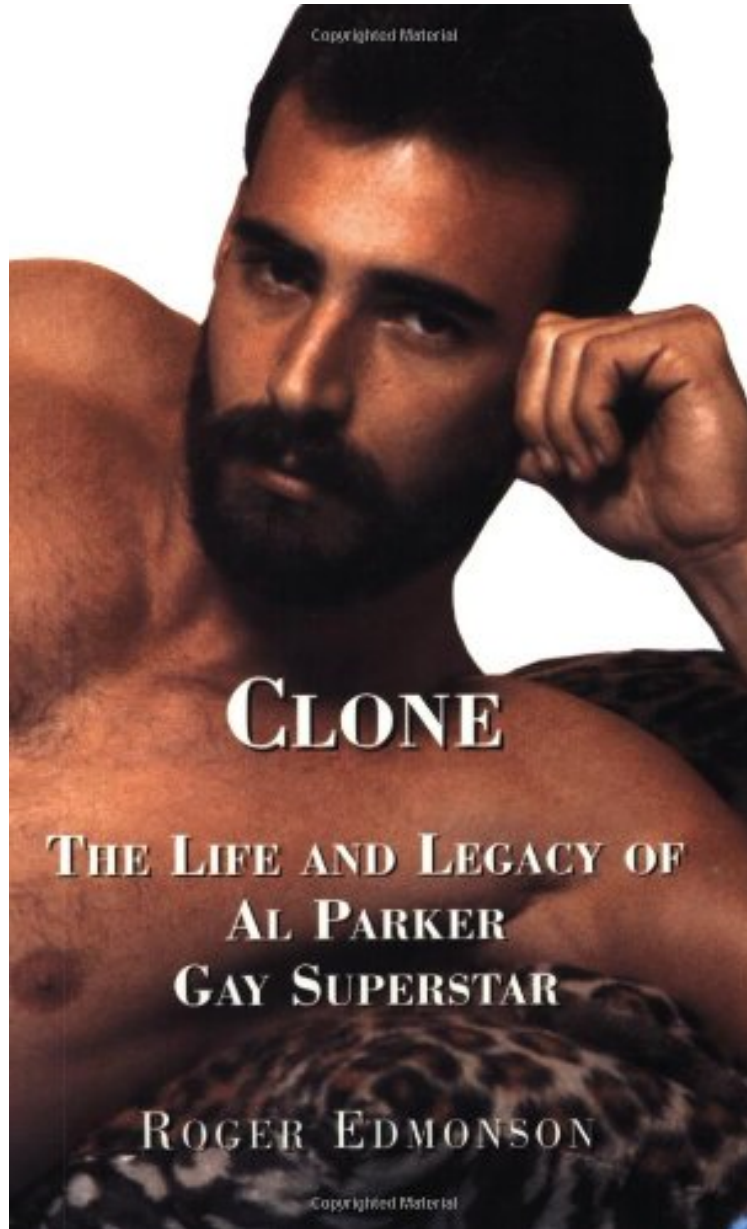


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Clone: The Life and Legacy of Al Parker, Gay Superstar

Roger Edmonson

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Roger Edmonson : Clone: The Life and Legacy of Al Parker, Gay Superstar before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Clone: The Life and Legacy of Al Parker, Gay Superstar:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Very mediocre and bland book. In one sentence: This book needed

to be written by a BIOGRAPHER, not a fanboy! By NYSailorScout The title of this book should have been: Al Parker: A Glowing Tribute with Synopsis of his Porn Films. If you are looking for an actual biography, keep looking. Practically 80% of this book is just a written synopsis of his various porn films that he starred in or directed. If you have seen Al Parker's films, there is no reason to buy this book. And if you haven't seen Al Parker's films, a written and condensed synopsis is no substitute for actually seeing his films and there is still no reason to buy this book. SPOILER ALERT: Al Parker was raped at knifepoint at age 15. The author then surmises that this event "had no long-lasting emotional effects on Al". WHAT?! It gets worse. Al Parker was also raging sex addict as an adult! Why was this not explored? Not all porn stars are sex addicts. Rather, the author just kissed the ass of his subject kept framing this behavior in ridiculously pure and holy terms. Addiction is addiction. Al Parker was also a drug addict as well. So what does this author do? He spends his time telling us how straight-edge Al was because he always went to the gym and never drank. Al Parker died of AIDS... His sex and drug addiction played into that in a big way, so it is insanity to not address it. Why was virtually none of the book devoted to Al Parker having HIV? How did he get it? When did he get it? Who did he get it from? What were the repercussions in his daily life? It is like the author did not want to judge (which is a good thing) but went WAY overboard in going the opposite direction and this book went from a potentially hateful and judgmental hit piece to a ridiculous and whitewashing 200-page PR blurb. This book committed the ultimate sin for a biography. It fell in love with its subject and could not maintain objectivity, which leaves you with a dull love letter, long on praise but short on facts or reasonable analysis. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Thomas Veregge Sensible and sensitive writing. 21 of 23 people found the following review helpful. Surprisingly dull By klavierspiel The 1970s were a time of sexual freedom and optimism for the gay male community in the United States. Having broken out and found a sense of identity and pride in the wake of Stonewall, gay men celebrated their sexuality, many to excess, in a brief explosion of gleeful hedonism before the scourge of AIDS swept all before it. Roger Edmonson, having profiled an icon of this lost era, Casey Donovan, with fair success, attempts the same with another star of gay male pornography from the same period, Drew Okun, or Al Parker. This book is not up to the standard of that earlier effort, partly because, when it comes right down to it, Drew Okun led a remarkably humdrum life for a porn star. Unlike Donovan, who traveled a lot, acted on stage, and knew famous people, Okun seems to have been basically a homebody, quite content to live with his longtime companion Richard Cole (who also acted in porn films with Okun under the name Steve Taylor, a fact which Edmonson oddly forgets to note) on the California coast and run his production company, Surge Studios. Edmonson does not help his cause by superficial writing and research. Interesting facts about Okun/Parker's life are mentioned almost in passing and never explored in depth, or even mentioned again. One would like to know more, for example, about Okun's estrangements from his elder sister and from Steve Scott, who directed some of his best films, but revelations are not forthcoming in this rather slim volume, which spends a lot of time describing Parker's films which are, for the most part, readily available and better seen for oneself anyway. Even the photographs included are disappointing. In short, this volume succeeds neither as serious biography nor as guilty pleasure.

Al Parker's story, as uncovered by Edmonson, reveals a young man out of place in his world who would find his home in front of and behind the camera as the star of 21 adult films and the founder of Surge Studios, celebrating the rough and raw sexuality he came to symbolize. And like so many young men of his day, he would be cut down early in life by AIDS-but not before making an even more lasting impact as a crusader who was willing to put his career on the line to make a statement about safer-sex practices, a statement that would immortalize him finally as the personification of a more responsible gay sexuality. Roger Edmonson is the author of *Boy in the Sand: Casey Donovan, All-American Sex Star and Silverwolf* He lives in Seattle.

About the Author Roger Edmonson is the author of *Boy in the Sand: Casey Donovan, All-American Sex Star and Silverwolf* along with two other full-length novels and several acclaimed anthologies of short fiction. He also writes for several newspapers and magazines. He lives in Seattle. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Drew Okun was born on June 25, 1952 in Natick, Massachusetts, a town of 20,000 situated on the banks of the Charles River, 18 miles southwest of Boston. His family was solidly middle-class and upwardly mobile. Both parents grew up in Brooklyn, where they were best friends with another couple whose daughter, Janie Schramm, went on to become Drew's lifelong pal. "Both sets of parents were pretty hip," she told me. "Then Drew's folks married, moved to Natick and became very middle class." Seymour, Drew's father, worked as a salesman for a chemical company. Drew's mother, Shirley, began work welding transistors to boards on an assembly line at a firm that manufactured computer components, and within six years had become its Vice President. Drew and Janie were very close as children. "I met him when I was just a baby. Whenever I knew they were coming, I remember I'd get so excited. His folks would come to visit my folks in Queens and we'd make the pilgrimage out to Natick. Drew did some research once and discovered we were really distant blood relations. We decided to call each other cousins to make it easier to explain our relationship. "Drew had a rather difficult childhood. He was always a little reserved because his folks were so strict, especially his mom. I remember Drew as being really well-behaved. I was into everything and his mom would

sometimes get mad at me when we were together." Drew and Janie egged each other on, naturally enough, stirring up all kinds of mischief. "Once we finger-painted the side of my house and got into a whole lot of trouble. Another time we bought some of those explosive caps that go into cigarettes and booby-trapped our parents' packs. They always sat around the table after dinner, arguing about politics and smoking. Drew and I watched and waited while our parents talked. Finally, my mom picked up her pack of cigarettes and took one out. She lit up, and BOOM!, it went off. We bolted out the back door and ran like hell." When they weren't getting into trouble, they were out playing. "Natick was an old town. There was Revolutionary War stuff all over the place--you know, statues and plaques. Drew was fascinated by graveyards, the older the better. I remember there was also open country around their house so we were able to run and play in the fields. When Drew came to visit me in the city, we'd play something we called 'Dizzyland.' We'd draw circles and spirals on the street and walk around and around until we were dizzy. He also had a little reel-to-reel tape recorder that we'd use to create Ed Sullivan type variety shows. We'd imitate singers and comics. He was a great mimic." The one thing Janie would never have figured Drew to become when he grew up was a porn legend. "He was so, well, mousy as a youngster. He was really into radio. He had a short-wave set and listened to broadcasts from around the world. I remember him as being into all the typical boy stuff like making scale models. As he got older, he was really into cars. His dad was into it also, so it was something they shared. The Okuns bought a new car every year, which struck me as really amazing. Drew loved cars all his life." Seymour Okun said, "Of all the hobbies Drew had, automobiles were the best. He could identify any car when he was young. He had a '64 Mercury convertible in high school. One time something went wrong with the car and Drew and his pals took it out into the back yard and rebuilt the engine. "He was an exuberant kid with plenty of friends, male and female. He went to YMCA camp in the summers. Drew was a good amateur athlete. He played baseball, he swam, he went boating. He did all the things kids his age did. He was always very industrious. He had little jobs when he was in school. I remember he delivered for a pharmacy. When he was growing up there was never any indication he was gay. If he knew, there was no way he let on to us." He had one older sister, Meg, five years his senior. Janie remembers Meg as "achievement oriented. She was an excellent pianist, then she became a doctor. Meg was brilliant." Drew was not her equal academically, and he was always in her shadow. Drew admired his sister, although they were never close. In later years, they were totally estranged. In this achievement-oriented family, Drew was something of an odd-man-out. Nothing in his early years at school marked him for fame and fortune. "If I went back to a high school reunion, I'd be one of those people nobody would remember," he once quipped to a friend. He wasn't the tallest guy in his class, or the handsomest, or the strongest. In fact, at 5'8"--about an inch less, according to some sources--and 140 pounds, he was on the scrawny side and tended toward a nerdy invisibility in the halls and classrooms of Natick High School. In spite of this, those in the know recognized early on that there was something special about young Drew. There was one place where he was not only visible, he was a standout. This was first brought to his attention when a seventh grade classmate took a look at him in the showers after gym class, then proceeded to expound on the size of Drew's penis to all and sundry. "I had never really thought about the size of my cock," Drew recalled, "until I was saddled with the nickname 'Pony Boy.'"