

Contra Zoom Pod

Where we go back and forth about film.

Reviews: Raw! Uncut! Video! for Vancouver Queer Film Festival 2021

by Dakota Arsenault | Posted on August 19, 2021



Warning this film contains graphic sexual content.

In the mid-80's two enterprising gay men, Jack Fritcher and Mark Hemry started a homemade porn video company catering mostly to men interested in fetishes and kinks. Along the way they became some of the most celebrated adult industry icons not just for producing content mostly ignored by other porn studios, but for creating work that was both artful and safe, something that was rare during the AIDS crisis sweeping America.

We get introduced to present day Fritcher and Henry, a married couple that had been together for decades. They tend to their large plot of land, take their dog on long walks and maintain the archives for their legendary hardcore gay porn studio, Palm Drive Video. The two met at, what is called a gay fairytale, a Harvey Milk birthday party and soon began dating. Milk was the first openly gay person elected to government in the United States, who unfortunately was assassinated in 1978. At the time Jack Fritcher was the editor in chief of Drummer Magazine, a leather enthusiasts publication that reached new highs under his leadership. He wanted to branch out and make Drummer videos, but it wasn't in the cards and didn't quite fully align with the magazine's business plan.

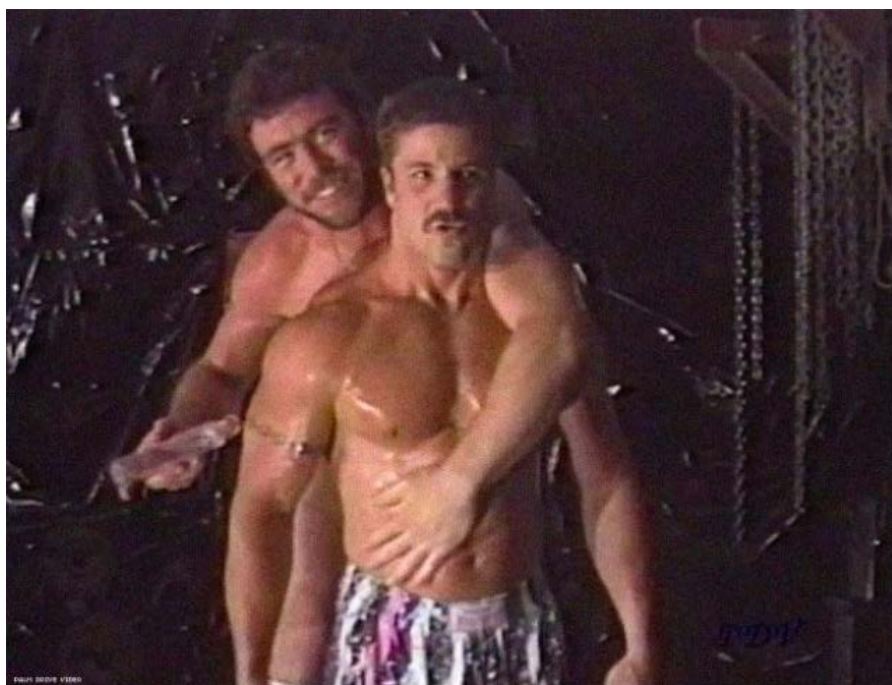


Jack decided to create his own company and work with Mark to balance out his skills. Jack would cast non-professional actors, mostly men they met at gay bars, pride parades, fetish clubs or just through word of mouth. He would find out the performers own unique interests in sex and craft videos along those lines. Because they were a company that predominantly focuses on kinks, they would often have videos that pushed the boundaries of what is considered taboo by the mainstream. Things like, BDSM, role play, using whips,

chains, slapping, ropes, nipple clamps, cigars, urine and even vomit were all in fair game. Jack would work one-on-one with the performers to create mostly solo films. He would angle his camera to make them point of view perspective, so that while there was only one person on screen, the viewer would feel like they were right there having sex with the performer.

During the days Jack would shoot films with the models at the home he shared with Mark, and when Mark came home from his “straight” job he would spend all evening editing the pictures. Between the two of them they did everything from shooting, editing, composing, setting up advertisements in magazines, sending out mailers, producing VHS tapes, distribution, finding new models and more.

Along the way, the AIDS crisis hit the queer community incredibly hard with hundreds of thousands of people, mostly men, died. This caused the community to be overrun by fear that any new partner you have might be a potential death sentence. Palm Drive Video offered an escape, not only providing outlets for people at home who were afraid of having new sexual partners, but also showcasing ways to be “intimate” that don’t include penetration.



The film works because it is about celebrating an art form that is often not celebrated. Pornography became legal for public consumption in the United States in 1969 and while it is easy to chalk most of it up to cheap smut, there are anthropologic values to perserving and highlighting it as a medium. In the film we get plenty of interviews from former stars of the Palm Drive Videos describing how safe and freeing it was to work with Jack and Mark, we also hear from fans and even porn historians. One of the interviewees was a man who was one of the company's most popular models. He would flex his muscles, get all sweaty and talk dirty to the camera, the only thing was he was also straight. He never had sex on camera, just did solo masturbation scenes. The crew tracks him down as he talks about his feelings of being a gay icon while his mother sits next to him beaming about his place in history.

With Raw! Uncut! Video!, directed by Ryan A. White and Alex Clausen, we get the inside look at an often misunderstood genre of filmmaking. We also get a picture into the life of a couple who, on the surface you think would be a very out there one, but instead is so absolutely tender your heart melts every time they give each other a little peck on the lips, or when Mark scolds Jack about running to grab a camera worrying that he might trip. If you can stomach the hardcore porn, with some very, very graphic kink fetishes shown (that I don't even want to type out) this movie is a fascinating look at two people and their influence in a world many people likely don't even know about.

Raw! Uncut! Video! was seen during the 2021 Vancouver Queer Film Festival. Thank you to the festival for the screener. Raw! Uncut! Video! does not have a North American release date at this time.

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About the author

Dakota Arsenault is the creator, host, producer and editor of Contra Zoom Pod. His favourite movies include The Life Aquatic, 12 Angry Men, Rafiki and The Social Network. He first started the podcast back in April of 2015.

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