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The Porn Identity

Former Gonzo filth writer Robert Rosen tells *Bizarre* why he came in from the cold

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“**T**hese days, many people talk openly about how they masturbate to online porn,” says veteran smut writer Robert Rosen. “Twenty years ago, it was unheard of. You bought a magazine, you locked yourself in a room, you jerked off, and you kept it to yourself. Now the illicit thrill has gone.”

For 16 years, Robert lived an illicit *life*, braving chicks with exploding tits and studs with skanky cocks to pen porn stories for the world’s shy wankers. Whatever twisted butt-plug, vibrator, or five-way fantasy you might’ve had, you can bet that Robert once brought it to life in print. Working on scores of titles, including *Swank*, *Stag*, *Stacked*, *Plump & Pink*, *Lesbian Lust* and *Blondes in Heat*, Robert loitered on the sidelines *and* jumped in front of the camera, and he’s documented his experience in his latest book *Beaver Street: A History of Modern Pornography*.



Having nun of it

Robert's professional introduction to porn came in the mid 1970s, when he was a 21-year-old senior at City College in New York. The school paper, *Observation Post*, asked Robert to review the bestiality film *Animal Lover*, and its editors were so impressed by his glowing critique that they gave him an editorial position. Robert promptly ran a cartoon of a nun masturbating with a crucifix. It caused such an outrage that Senator James Buckley fumed about the sketch in Congress, calling it "incredibly offensive".

But despite his controversial reputation, Robert went on to write speeches for the US Air Force Secretary explaining why America needed more nuclear warheads, before unemployment drove him to take an editorial job at *High Society* magazine in 1983.

From then until 1999—writing under the nom de porn Bobby Paradise—Robert churned out reams of copy about "lesbian sphincter frenzies", "hardcore spermsucks", and biker chicks who had tattoos of their boyfriends' names on their clits. He also organized fetish photoshoots, procured models in Britain, appeared as a porno extra, smoked vast amounts of weed and took mescaline in S&M clubs.

"A model's fake tits exploded, with blood and silicone everywhere."

Out of all Robert's adventures, his worst job was editing *Buf* magazine. "It catered to people who are turned on by morbidly obese women—women who are 35, 45, even 50 stone," Rosen remembers. "The readers were men who got a sexual thrill from feeding women and watching them grow fatter. I had to tell my writers things like, 'Give me 1,000 words on a guy who fucks a 45-stone woman in her rolls of fat while she's devouring a devil's food cake.' That kind of material is the antithesis of what turns me on and the only way I was able to judge the quality of the pictures was by how nauseated they made me feel. It was like: 'Wow! That one almost made me puke. She's going on the cover!'"



Dirty Jobs

A career in pornography might sound like a dream job, but Rosen has witnessed some horrendous sights. “A pair of silicone boobs exploded in the middle of a tit-fucking scene,” he says. “Apparently the model, after her fifth breast-enhancement operation, returned to work with a pair of 88 DDDD tits that hadn’t properly healed. They tore apart at the seams, and there was blood and silicone everywhere...”

So is it a myth that people who work in porn get more sex off-camera than most of us? And do they even want it after being immersed in it all day? “Does anybody really want to fuck Ron Jeremy if they’re not being paid to, even if he has got a reputation for being a great pussy-eater?” asks Robert. “It’s true that most photographers get a lot of sex, though. Too much, perhaps.”

With hundreds of pages to fill across numerous titles, the boundaries between work and play soon began to blur and Robert commissioned a porn shoot for an article entitled ‘The \$5 Blowjob’, and he had his dick sucked. “I did that as an experiment in participatory journalism—or the so-called ‘new journalism’—where the writer becomes the focus of the story,” he explains. “I wanted to take journalism to a place it had never been before. No real writer had ever got in front of a camera and reported on what it was like to be a porn star—not Hunter S. Thompson, nor Norman Mailer, or Martin Amis when he wrote an article about the porn industry, and certainly not Joan Didion. So I did it, and it left me with a profound appreciation of how difficult it was to be a porn stud in the days before Viagra.”

Despite working with people whose typical day might include watching veteran Annie Sprinkle shoving 12 billiard balls up a male co-performer’s arsehole—as she did in her 1983 film *Oriental Techniques In Pain & Pleasure*—Robert was dismayed by his colleagues’ reactions at his attempt to empathise with those he wrote about. “The writers I worked with were shocked, outraged, and disgusted,” Robert recalls. “They couldn’t understand why a highly educated, gainfully employed editor would pose in a sleazy sex mag. They thought I’d lost my mind. But I finally realized that everybody was upset because I’d destroyed the illusion that the people in the magazines were a different species from the people who produced them. I’d become the porn star in their midst, and that was unforgivable. Twenty-five years later, people still throw it in my face.”



Death by sex

Not content with posing in the magazines, Robert also embarked upon a relationship with a nymphomaniac colleague, which nearly ruined him. “In *Beaver Street*, I describe my relationship with a character I call Georgina Kelly, who I met on the set of a porn movie,” he says. “She was a topless dancer, freelance dildo critic, an associate editor at *Screw*, and I also hired her to produce orgy shoots for *Stag*. I started going out with her and discovered she was a nymphomaniac in the clinical sense of the word. She couldn’t go more than a couple of hours without having an orgasm. She was always fucking herself with a plug-in vibrator the size of a baseball bat. I thought I’d found my dream woman, but after a couple of months I realized she was going to be the death of me. I mean that *literally*. She would have fucked me to death.”

“My girlfriend couldn’t go more than two hours without an orgasm.”

By 1999, Robert had “burned out on smut and the very idea of having to look at it”. Sales of the titles he worked on were sliding as the internet boom exploded, so his boss, publisher Lou Perretta, sacked him in favor of a younger, hungrier editor. “I walked away from 16 years of pornography with a pocketful of severance and no regrets,” he says. “The fun, to say the least, had gone.”

The timing was good. Robert had just clinched a publishing deal for a biography of John Lennon that he'd written, called *Nowhere Man*—which became a best-seller—and he made a smooth transition from smut scribe to respected writer. But although Robert's left his illustrious career behind, he has fond memories of some of the major skin stars of the modern era. "I want to give credit to two of the great survivors," he says. "Firstly, Ron Jeremy, because he's 58 years old and still doing it—he refuses to take Viagra and, as far as I know, he's the only porn star who can suck his own cock. Secondly, Christy Canyon because I think she's one of the hottest porn stars ever; her vibrator work is unsurpassed, and she's not a bad writer, either."•