Hit Bottom

Wonder Bread and Ecstasy undresses porn legend Joey Stefano

February 1, 1997 By David Thomas

He did it for the sex. That's author Charles Isherwood's take on why an aggressively beautiful, deeply troubled young Nick Iacona would walk onto the set of a ChiChi LaRue porn shoot in mid-1989 and ask to be cast. Nick walked out with a new career and a new identity: Joey Stefano. Six years later, the HIV positive superstar would overdose in an LA motel from a fatal combination of cocaine, morphine, heroin and Special K.

Isherwood's romp through Stefano's life -- from drug-addled street hustler to drug-addicted porn sensation to drug-devastated Baby Jane -- pulls no punches. The result, *Wonder Bread and Ecstasy: The Life and Death of Joey Stefano* (Alyson/Los Angeles), dissects the gay porn industry almost as meticulously (and lovingly) as its subject. It whacks all our voyeuristic fantasies about what life in porn must be like, and then reminds us to be careful what we wish for.

No one would call Stefano a genius, bright or even keen. His only talent was sex, but at sex he was brilliant. His porn career marks a series of firsts: First proudly gay porn actor to become a superstar, first bottom whose name became a gay-household word, first porn star to crack open the HIV-closet door, first porn star to attend ACT UP meetings and lend his name to fundraisers. Isherwood has a tendency to repeat himself, but he knows how to punctuate a narrative with just the right quote.

No, Joey wasn't a genius, but his story of sexual compulsion, addiction and passive aggression will grab you, seduce you and leave you wanting more.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/Hit-Bottom-1076-6797