



# **Bigger Than Life: The History of Gay Porn Cinema from Beefcake to Hardcore**

*Jeffrey Escoffier*

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Hardcore porn—both the straight and gay varieties—entered mainstream American culture in the 1970s as the sexual revolution swept away many of the cultural inhibitions and legal restraints on explicit sexual expression. The first porn movie ever to be reviewed by *Variety*, the entertainment industry’s leading trade journal, was Wakefield Poole’s *Boys in the Sand* (1971), a sexually-explicit gay movie shot on Fire Island with a budget of \$4000. Moviegoers, celebrities and critics—both gay and straight—flocked to see *Boys in the Sand* when it opened in mainstream movie theaters in New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco. Within a year, *Deep Throat*, a heterosexual hardcore feature opened to rave reviews and a huge box office—exceeding that of many mainstream Hollywood features.

Almost all of those involved in making “commercial” gay pornographic movies began as amateurs in a field that had virtually never existed before, either as art or commerce. Many of their “underground” predecessors had repeatedly suffered arrest and other forms of legal harassment. There was no developed gay market and any films made commercially were shown in adult x-rated theaters. After the Stonewall riots and the emergence of the gay liberation movement in 1969, a number of entrepreneurs began to make gay adult movies for the new mail order market. The gay porn film industry grew dramatically during the next thirty years and transformed the way men—gay men in particular—conceived of masculinity and their sexuality. *Bigger Than Life* tells that story.

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