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Jim French Diaries: The Creator Of Colt Studio



Synopsis

One thing is certain: The world of gay porn would not be what it is today without Jim French, the founder of the legendary COLT Studio. The multi-faced styles of his movies and photo works influenced many directors and photographers. Jim French Diaries illuminates the many faces of COLT Studio not only with a wide range of photos but also with a lot of informative interviews revealing the exciting history behind the label.

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Customer Reviews

This book has been a long time in the making, and obsessive Colt Studio fans have been waiting for it for years. Was it worth the wait? Absolutely! Do I wish there were more. Of course! First up, the photographs, which is what many will be wanting. The book is packed with many of Jim French's most iconic and beautiful photographs. The majority of photos are from the late 1980s through the 1990s, but there are some photos from Colt's earliest days and through the 1970s. There are also a good number of reproductions of French's illustrations as Kurt LÃ ger (LÃ ger Studios, Colt's predecessor) and a smaller number his Rip Colt illustrations for Colt. What I'm loving from the book is the text. Colt fans know that Jim French has always been an enigmatic figure. We never heard from him in the press, we didn't hear stories about his models, and finally that is changed here. Guided by editor Robert Mainardi (one half of the couple who owns San Francisco's beloved store, The Magazine) in interviews, French takes us on a tour of his and Colt's history, detailing how he got into illustration and then photography, how LÃ ger came to be formed and quickly fell apart,

how Colt Studio started and continued. And there are the memories about the models. The title of the book is *The Jim French Diaries*, and in the interviews, French frequently consults his diaries to give stories about iconic Colt men like Bruno, Dakota, Carl Hardwick, and on and on. There's even the text of a delightful reunion between French and the model known as Ledermeister in 2002, when they hadn't seen each other for decades. The interviews appear to have taken place years ago (early to mid-2000s), so you aren't going to get much contemporary information, but that's fine with me.

One aspect of the growing importance of the publishing house of Bruno Gmünder Verlag is the direction that this book *JIM FRENCH DIARIES: THE CREATOR OF COLT STUDIOS* demonstrates. Though widely regarded as the pinnacle of male art and photography books, we are now seeing the appearance of novels and books about the history of the development of gay art. *JIM FRENCH DIARIES* is richly endowed with photographs and drawings as one would expect, but to have 352 page book measuring 10 1/2" by 11 1/2" equally filled with historic data and interviews between the featured artist and his model and others is makes this a book to savor. Editor Robert Mainardi keeps the flow rolling as we discover the beginnings of Jim French, his transition through illustrative drawings form the figure (wisely, the book supplies not only French's drawings but in many are photographs in black and white of the models he used in position), his movement into photography of the male nude and his founding of the famous Colt Studio, possible the most avant garde male adult film industry company internationally. One thing is for sure: The world of gay porn wouldn't be what it is today without Jim French, the founder of legendary Colt Studio. The multi-faced styles of his movies and photo works influenced many directors and photographers. His models have always been a perfect example of hunky maleness; Jim French's pictures of them are always stunning, no matter whether he shoots them in beefy porn style or in the classic vintage look of the 50s. *Jim French Diaries* illuminates the many faces of Colt Studio not only with countless photos but also with a lot of informative text revealing the exciting history behind the label.

JIM FRENCH DIARIES is a stunning book, and a welcome addition to the library of anyone who not only enjoys male nude photography, but -- perhaps more important -- wants to understand its genesis and evolution. Although the work in this book is uniquely Jim French's, much of the credit for this handsome volume must go to Robert Mainardi, who labored over this project for many years before it finally came to fruition. Like Mainardi's other contributions to our photographic and cultural heritage (*STRONGMAN* and *THE NAKED HEARTLAND* come immediately to mind), *JIM FRENCH*

DIARIES was a true labor of love for Mainardi, and it shows in every respect -- the care with which the images were selected; the truly illuminating text; the beautiful packaging and production; and the sheer size and heft of this book. All those attributes are combined in an attempt to do justice to one of the most important photographers of our time. We're fortunate Jim French is still alive (and willing) to share his reminiscences with us, because who better is there to tell us his story? No amount of research and after-the-fact digging is ever as valuable as an artist's firsthand account of his own development. Seldom has a photographer (and I do not qualify this statement with "of the male nude") been able to capture both the humanity and sheer erotic frisson of his subjects. The evolution of Colt from its early beginnings in New York in the 1960s through its legendary years in California is laid out here in color and black and white, magnificently reproduced.

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