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-ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY

Wadd

THE LIFE & TIMES OF
JOHN C. HOLMES

THE SAGER GROUP PRESENTS A CASSEL PRODUCTION A FILM BY CASSI PALEY
"WADD: THE LIFE & TIMES OF JOHN C. HOLMES" JOHN C. HOLMES, MISTY DANN, BOB CHINN, KITTEN BATHODAD, AMIE SAGER, RON JEREMY, LARRY FOUNT, PEI ANDERSON
PRODUCTION DESIGNER WILLIE BOUDREAU, EDITOR JOHN REESE, ORIGINAL MUSIC BRAD RAPPLUS DANIEL & TAD DEERY EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS RUSSELL KRAMERSON, CO-PRODUCED & EDITED BY CHRISTOPHER BOWLAND
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Wadd

THE LIFE & TIMES OF
JOHN C. HOLMES

Winner - Best Documentary Feature - SXSW Film Festival

a film by
CASS PALEY

United States | 1998 | English Language | Documentary
1.55:1 | 103 minutes

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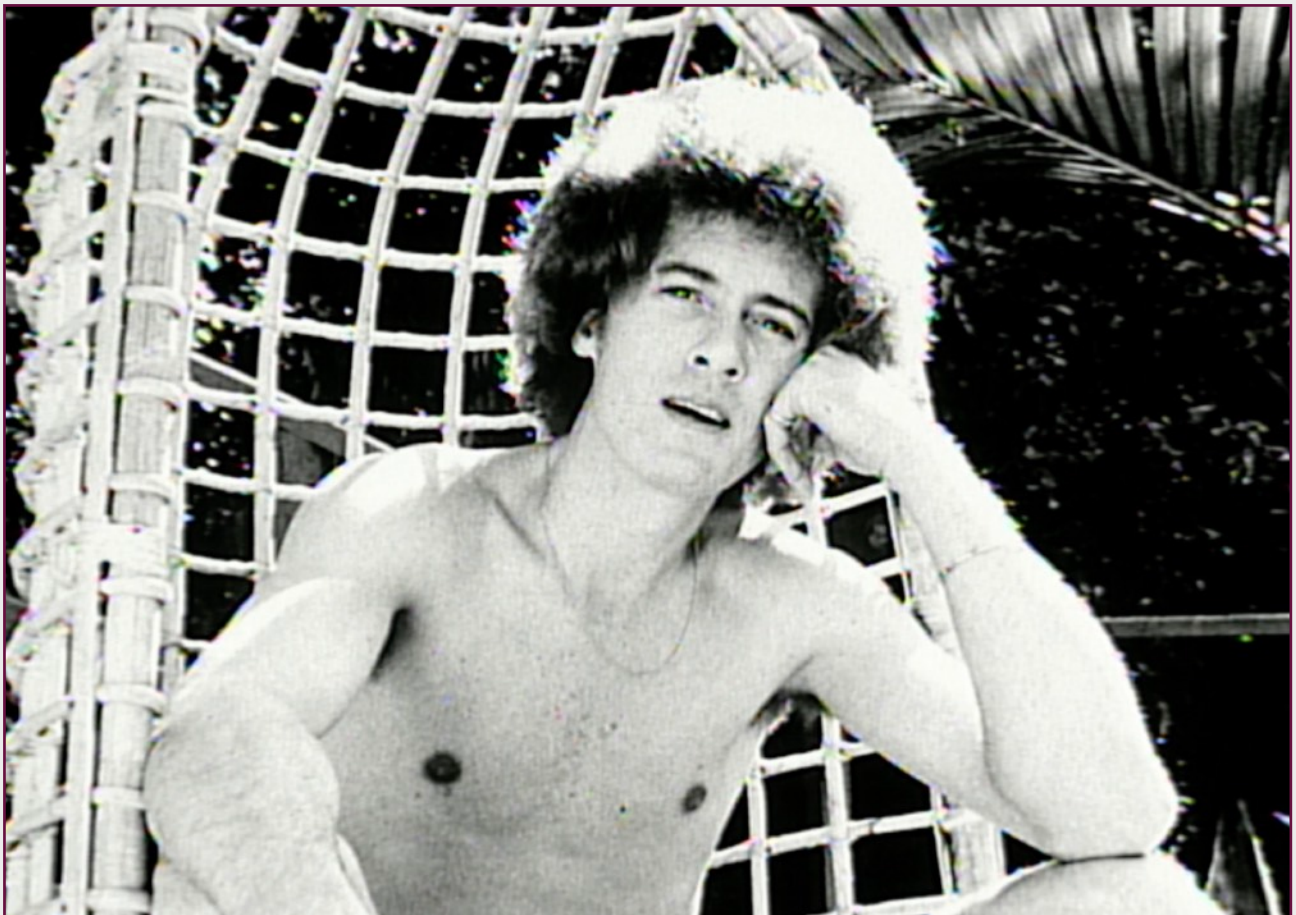
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SYNOPSIS

Before Dirk Diggler, there was John C. Holmes, the legendary adult actor who turned “Johnny Wadd” into a franchise and himself into a myth. *WADD: The Life & Times of John C. Holmes* plunges into the heady 1970s and 1980s LA porn scene, exploring the intersection of sex, celebrity and crime - the nonstop sex, the coke-fueled nights, and the fatal orbit of club kingpin Eddie Nash that culminated in the Wonderland murders.

Narrated by Mike Sager, whose Rolling Stone investigation inspired the movies *BOOGIE NIGHTS* and *WONDERLAND*, the documentary pairs rare film clips, never-before-aired crime-scene footage, with candid testimony from the people who knew him best. Featuring rare interviews with his wives, Sharon Holmes, and porn actress, Misty Dawn, his underage mistress Dawn Schiller, adult industry titans Larry Flynt and Ron Jeremy, and filmmaker Paul Thomas Anderson, amongst many others, *WADD* is essential viewing for audiences captivated by rise and fall of one of porn's most legendary figures to this day.



ABOUT JOHN C. HOLMES

John Curtis Holmes had the longest, most prolific career in the history of pornography. He had sex on-screen with two generations of leading ladies, from Seka and Marilyn Chambers to Traci Lords, Ginger Lynn, and Italian Member of Parliament Ciccolina. The first man to win the X-Rated Critics Organization Best Actor Award, Holmes was an idol and an icon, the most visible male porn star of his time.

Holmes started in the business around 1968. He began with nude dancing and photo layouts, went on to “loops.” Loops were the first porn movies to be made available to large numbers of viewers – short, black-and-white films that were viewed in adult bookstores. There was a booth, a curtain. Quarters were pumped into a slot. The screen was not much larger than an iPhone’s. By some accounts, Holmes made more than a thousand of these eight-millimeter loops, and also a great number of longer “stag” films. Stags had no plot. The women were not goddesses. They had a lot of hair down there. The men were not very god-like, either. Often they kept their black socks on while performing. To watch a stag you needed to rent a film projector. Most commonly, you’d see one at a frat house, a bachelor party, or VWF hall.

When Holmes entered the field, the sexual revolution was changing the cultural landscape. The sixties, the pill, “free love,” communes, wife swapping, the perverse creativity of mixed-media artists who were pushing the limit, trying to shock – all of these things created an atmosphere in which porn could blossom. The pivotal event in porn history was the public release of *Deep Throat*, starring Linda Lovelace and Harry Reems, in 1972. Though the movie, when it began to appear at theaters around the country, was branded as obscene and was closed down almost everywhere it played, its producers contested the charges in the courts and eventually won. In the end, *Deep Throat* was massively consumed by an enthusiastic public. With the release the same year of *The Devil in Miss Jones* and *Behind the Green Door*, porn became part of popular culture. Suddenly, Johnny Carson was telling *Deep Throat* jokes on *The Tonight Show*. (The name was further iconized when journalism’s famous investigative team, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, chose *Deep Throat* as the code name for their source of insider information on the Watergate break-in.)

One day in 1970, Holmes met Hawaiian producer Bob Chinn. He showed Chinn his portfolio of stills, then stripped. Inspired, Chinn sat down that evening and wrote a three-page screenplay. A partnership was born. This would lead, in the mid-seventies, to Holmes’ most successful role, as Johnny Wadd, hard-boiled detective. It was porn’s parody of Sam Spade, who’d been portrayed most notably by the film actor Humphrey Bogart.

Holmes's Johnny Wadd, wrote porn gadfly and historian Al Goldstein in *Screw* magazine, was "a thin, bony, trench-coated shamus, outrageously horny, bedding down with client and quarry alike." In Goldstein's opinion, "it was a goofy, crudely made series," but it was wildly successful. In a way, Holmes was every man's gigolo, a polyester smoothy with a sparse mustache, a flying collar and lots of buttons undone. He wasn't threatening. He chewed gum and overacted. He took a lounge singer's approach to sex, deliberately gentle, ostentatiously artful, a homely guy with a pinkie ring and a big dick who was convinced he was every woman's dream. "That was one thing to be said of Holmes," Goldstein continued. "He was never the picture of the swaggering, violent male chauvinist. Quite the opposite: He was quiet, gentle, almost artful when he fucked. He let his size do the posturing for him."

Holmes went on to make more than two thousand movies, titles such as *Teenage Cowgirls*, *Liquid Lips*, *China Cat*, and *Tapestry of Passion*. *Eruption* (a porn remake of *Double Indemnity*) and *Dickman and Throbbin* (a lampoon of Batman and Robin). *Hard Candy* was a thriller shot in 3-D. *The Autobiography of a Flea*, a porn version of the famous book, was shot by the well-known Mitchell brothers, who reigned over a porn empire based in San Francisco. An X-rated but journalistically sound documentary of Holmes's life, made in 1981, was called *Exhausted*. It was fitting. John Holmes was everywhere.

In time, Holmes became known in porn circles as the King. Often he was likened to Errol Flynn, the great cinema swordsman of yesteryear. And like the leading men of yesteryear whose images were manufactured by the studios in order to give the public its thrills, most of what was known about Holmes was myth.

After descending into a world of drugs and crime, Holmes became the central figure in one of the most publicized mass murders in LA history, the 1981 Wonderland killings in Laurel Canyon, in which four people were brutally killed. Holmes was tried and acquitted of the crimes in 1982. Immediately after the acquittal, Holmes was subpoenaed to appear before the LA County Grand Jury to answer questions regarding the trial. Fearing for his life, Holmes refused and was jailed for contempt of court. While behind bars, prayer groups were formed and petitions were gathered in protest. After 110 days, a record time for a contempt sentence in LA, Holmes finally told the grand jury everything they wanted to know about the murders. His testimony remains sealed to this day.

Holmes died from complications of AIDS on March 13, 1988.

(Excerpted from *The Devil and John Holmes*, by Mike Sager)



ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

CASS PALEY was president of Cassel Productions, an independent production company that produced documentaries for American television and international broadcast including *The Saga of Western Man* series for ABC television and the Emmy Award winning National Geographic special, *Journey to the Outer Limits*. He produced and directed a film on satiric artist Charles Bragg (*Charles Bragg: One of a Kind*) as well as a trio of multi-part documentaries (*Guns of the Old West*, *Guns of the Civil War* and *World War II: Breadlines to Boomtimes*) with writer and co-producer Rodger Jacobs. A graduate of Emerson College, Paley began his professional career as a film traffic coordinator and production assistant at ABC TV. He was also the long-time archivist for the Roy Orbison Estate.

CREDITS

Produced & Directed by
Executive Producer
Co-Produced & Edited by
Director of Photography
Sound
Original Music

Cass Paley
Russ Hampshire
Christopher Rowland
Willie Boudevin
John Reese
Brad Raylus, Daniel & Tad Dery

