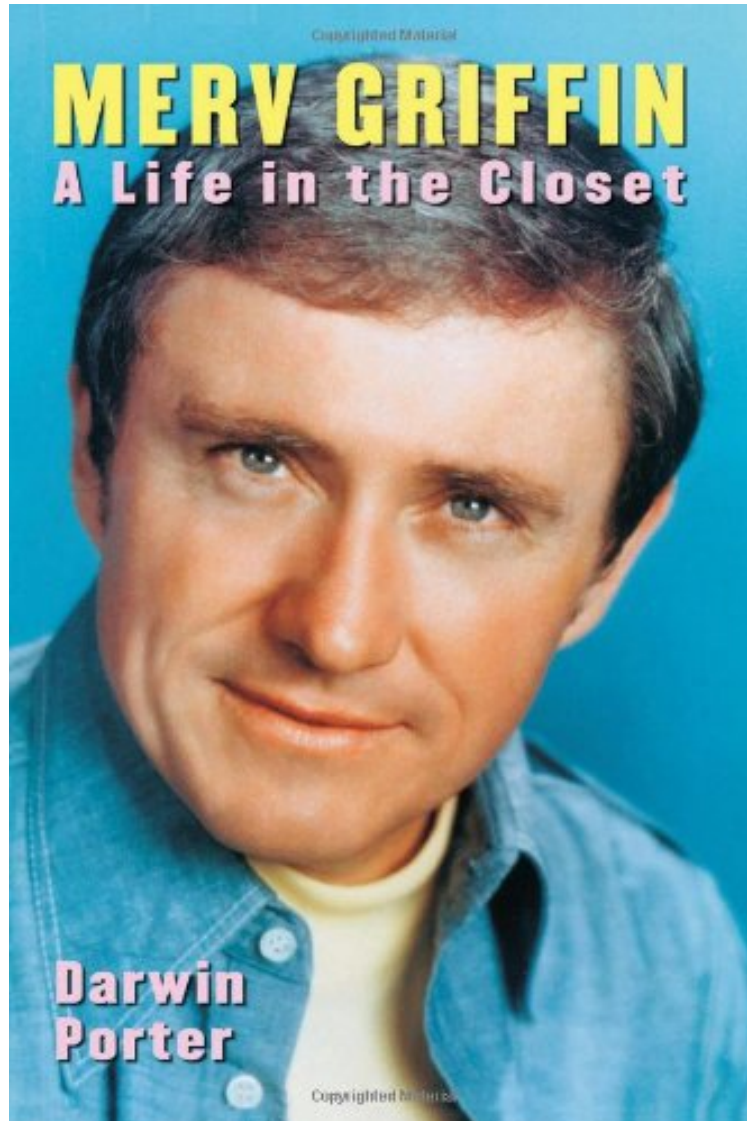


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Merv Griffin: A Life in the Closet

Darwin Porter

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Darwin Porter : Merv Griffin: A Life in the Closet before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Merv Griffin: A Life in the Closet:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Wealth Can Never Buy HappinessBy MEAs wealthy as he was, did Merv Griffin ever feel like being who he was? He was scared that if people found out about his preferences, he would be ostracized and his struggles to become famous would have been for nothing. Different world back then and I'm glad things have changed.8 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Hysterical fantasies and 2nd hand

informationBy Nor Cal SteveThis is complete trash and impossible to put down. The sources are Merv's old friends and Roddy McDowell. I have no doubt Merv told these stories and I have no doubt he exaggerated everything. What's interesting is hearing what are probably all the rumors about the great stars. I'm sure there was a lot of swinging and "pay for play" but I really doubt people were really that into a young, bland Merv Griffin. He's just not that interesting or talented or good looking. He does seem to have tenacity.It's also a sad but important look back at a time when being gay meant being in the closet and "sex" seemed to be limited to oral sex men only when they could find no women. Merv seems like a punching bag and a consolation prize. If this is true, it had to screw him up in the head.But really, by the time you get to the part about John Wayne using Merv's pad for a tryst and finding Gail Russell the next morning coming out of their room and then Gail finding her husband's clothes in Merv's room because it turns out that Merv was with her husband the night before, you start to laugh. I think he desperately wanted to matter to these celebrities and he just made up stories.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. HE DID IT HIS WAYBy Roberto FontFascinating account of a man who had to be closeted and pretend.

This is the first post-mortem, unauthorized insight into Merv Griffin, a failed singer and unsuccessful actor who unexpectedly rewrote the rules of America's broadcasting industry. He became the richest man in TV, befriended everyone in media who mattered, bought a casino, and maintained a secret life as America's most famously closeted homosexual. From a controversial writer whose previous work has virtually re-defined the art of the celebrity biography, **HERE'S MERV**.

"Darwin Porter tears the door off Merv Griffin's closet with gusto in this sizzling, superlatively researched biography. Porter's insightful assessment of Merv's career arc--from brash boy who staged backyard entertainment, to struggling big band crooner, to king (or queen) of daytime talk shows, to made-by-TV mogul brims with insider gossip that's about Hollywood legends, writ large, smart, and with great style." --Richard LaBonte, BookmarksDarwin Porter tears the door off Merv Griffin's closet in this sizzling, superlatively researched biography...writ large, smart, and with great style. --Richard LaBonte, Book Marks, April, 2009 This is the only serious book ever written about Merv Griffin, whose very name became a metaphor for the TV industry as a whole. No show-biz biography has ever been published post-millennium with as many scoops as this one. It's well written, shocking, and gutsy--unexpected show biz history that's a guilty pleasure to read. Porter handles Merv's penchant for successful schmoozing, both in and out of the boudoir, with tact, while delivering off-camera anecdotes with a punch. It's especially useful as an illumination of what was going on behind network TV sets. Porter persuaded major figures in the entertainment industry, both in New York and Hollywood, to tell him a lot more than they should have. The result is a well-researched and informative shocker that everyone in Hollywood will read and dissect. Beware of overheated blogsites, and try to stay calm. Staunch believers in the traditional canons of TV programming risk apoplexy.From the PublisherBland, jolly, and innocuous, Merv Griffin was a diplomatic schmoozer whose broadcasted image appeared as a regular guest in our living rooms, kitchens, and bedrooms, oozing affability and setting a standard for the way we wanted to be. Even during Vietnam, the Sexual Revolution, and the impeachment of Richard Nixon, Merv rarely, if ever, veered from the network's concept of daytime TV as detached escapist fun for the whole family. At least some of those presuppositions have been shredded thanks to the release of Darwin Porter's newest overview of the famously famous and spectacularly wealthy. Porter provides a rich feast of guilty pleasures: Show-biz history, in the words of an earlier reviewer, that's "writ large, smart, and with great style." It addresses more than "Merely Merv," a subject which in the hands of a lesser writer could have been as dull and prosaic as some of Merv's telecasts. Merv is merely the departure point for an overview of show-biz in the '50s, the raw ambition, the hush-a-by scandals, and the behind-the-scenes maneuvering that, 'till now, were either too controversial or too libelous to actually make it into print. The author first met his subject in 1959 when Darwin (then the 21-year-old head of the Student Press at the University of Miami) hired Merv (then a 34-year-old boy singer with a Big Band) to provide the entertainment for his graduating class's senior prom for a fee of \$500. Based on the friendship that evolved from that event, Porter began the relentless compilation of data which made its way into this book. And what a book it is. No one ever defined Merv as celibate, but even by the standards of TV Land, Merv was more promiscuous and more eccentric than anyone outside the entertainment industry could have imagined at the time. En route, he virtually rewrote the rules of television broadcasting, invented the game show as we know it today, ratched up the razzmatazz quotient of casinos around the world, and befriended everyone who mattered in politics and entertainment. Born in San Mateo, California in 1925 to bankrupted Irish-American parents, he died a self-made billionaire in 2007 surrounded by friends, family and a public legacy that was one of the most immediately recognizable in America. Oh, and in case you didn't know it already, Merv was gay. Promiscuously gay and (offscreen) flamboyantly gay, with a sexual history that included most of the "pretty boys" of super-agent Henry Willson's stable (i.e, Rock, Tab, Guy Madison, and Rory), virtually any male associated with either Liberace or George Cukor, and an uninterrupted string of bronzed actors, models, entertainment-industry wannabes, and porn stars, including gay porno mega-star Cal Culver (aka Casey Donovan. As startling as these revelations are (how the studios managed to pull the wool over our eyes back then!), the news, as revealed in Porter's biography, isn't

the rather pedestrian fact that Merv liked guys. Described in well-documented detail are young Merv's involvements with an archbishop, scores of A-list actors and actresses, various captains of industry, and politicians who included Eisenhower, JFK, Nixon, The Fords, and the Reagans. Of special interest is Merv's involvement in the Alzheimer-derived incapacity of former president Ronald Reagan, as supervised by former pinup girl and starlet, First Lady Nancy (Davis) Reagan. Porter handles Merv's penchant for successful schmoozing, both in and out of the boudoir, with tact, respect, and a gift for delivering punchy, well-researched anecdotes about show-biz. Author and social critic Larry Post described Merv's predicament like this: "The real irony [of the Herculean efforts Merv took to conceal his gender preference] involves the enduring power of the Hollywood closet that held even a billionaire locked in its embrace, paying homage to the presumed prejudices of the public." Although the behavior laid out within Porter's texts might be raunchier and more lurid than what we might have expected from congenial Uncle Merv, it's undoubtedly the kind of book which, after everybody in Hollywood reads it, blogs it, dissects it, and in some cases, becomes apoplectic over it, will be defined as an indispensable guide to the evolution of a uniquely American art form: Merv Griffin.