

SIN-A-RAMA

Sleaze Sex Paperbacks of the Sixties





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Following Spread:

New York City detective examines books during raid, January 1960.
Photographer: Tom Baffer, *New York Daily News*.

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THE SMUT PEDDLERS

Softcore sleaze was, throughout the '60s, a jeopardous enterprise. Pseudonyms and fake addresses were the going concern on title and copyright pages. Though sex acts were described in winking euphemisms, sleaze publishers were often tried in court for transgressing Cold War-era suppression and paranoia. Some, like Greenleaf's Earl Kemp, and his boss William Hamling, went to prison.

Despite their comparative innocence as far as pornography goes, and vanguard court battles opening up freedoms we take for granted today, softcore (and hardcore) sleaze paperbacks are the forgotten black sheep of the publishing industry. The genre remains uncollected and unreferenced by the Library of Congress or any other known public or academic library. The "Sleaze Catalogue" appearing as an appendix at the end of this book is the first printed attempt to sort through the bewildering maze of smut publishers and fly-by-night operators. If it weren't for a small cadre of book collectors, sleaze of the '60s would be entirely forgotten.¹

Erotic paperbacks sold in surprisingly large quantity² to white, male, middle-class patrons through mail-order catalogues, and in downtown "adult" stores, back-issue magazine parlors, and newsstand kiosks stocked by secondary magazine distributors (who also peddled nudist, girlie and men's adventure magazines).

The U.S. Government moved on sleaze with venom. Wearing an Aunt Bea hat in photo opportunities, congresswoman Kathryn Granahan ushered in the passage of the Granahan bill of 1958, which reinforced the Post Office's role as judge of moral righteousness, to "seize and detail the mail of anyone suspected of trafficking in obscenity."

In *The Smut Peddlers*, a 1960 paperback marketed as being "the most graphic account of the obscenity rackets," author James J. Kilpatrick³ quotes Charles Keating—later convicted of bilking thousands in a savings and loan scandal—why sleaze must be put down:

The [books] are not just amoral. They are openly and avowedly anti-Christian. It is not a question of depicting sin as virtue... Instead of the Christian concept of love and marriage, the magazines advocate a pagan, libertine life.

Author Kilpatrick phrases it this way:

What is the narcotic in which these traders deal? It is raw sex, stripped of all beauty and poetry. Their purpose is to treat the sexual act as no more than the gratification of animal passions; their object is to stimulate a prurient desire for the sex without love that is lust. The marriage relationship, when it is treated at all, is a relationship to be violated; infidelity is fun, and adultery no more than a harmless pastime.

It is a big business, a cynical business, a dirty business. And though pornography often is marketed in the form of "art nudes" or "pamphlets of medical instruction," or "realistic contemporary writing," the sordid intention of the distributors gives their ugly game away. Behind a flimsy mask of culture lies the leer of the sensualist.

The leer of '60s sleaze reveals the evolution of the decade. Sordid suburban alcoholism and "he man" gender types give way to the strawberry fields of sexual and ideological revolution. Even if horny readers failed to understand the confusing new scene, sleaze paperbacks offered them the opportunity to swap with psychedelic swingers and sin with hippie harlots.

Sin-A-Rama salutes the editors, authors and illustrators who refined their craft working sleaze, whether or not they publicly admit to doing so. (A list of authors and their pseudonyms appears as an Appendix.) We particularly wish to honor the artists and writers whose otherwise neglected careers glowed brightest in sleaze paperbacks. The compelling art of Robert Bonfils and Gene ("ENEG") Bilbrew are given consideration here, as well as the editing expertise of Earl Kemp, Don Gilmore and Brian Kirby, and the writing skills of Linda DuBreuil, William Knoles, and Jerry Murray. Within certain strictures, sleaze publishing allowed artistic freedom, albeit the writing and art would be largely ignored, and if not ignored, ridiculed.

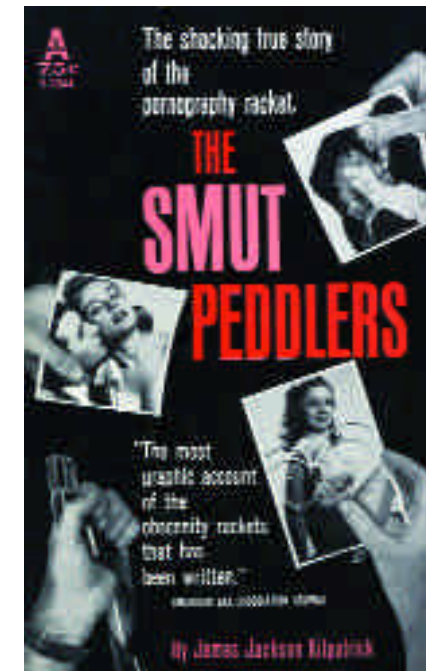
No longer do pornographers evade recognition. Proudly they campaign for public office. The memoirs of porn actors are stacked on the front tables of family-sanctioned book chains. *Sin-A-Rama* explores the fascinating products of a transitional and revolutionary time, before erotica was reduced to the gynecological revelations of hardcore.

notes

1. Jay A. Gertzman, who in this book details the travails of East Coast and Midwest sleaze merchants, uncovers the fascinating career of Samuel Roth, whose court cases preceded and influenced the trials and tribulations of '60s sleaze erotica, in *Bookleggers and Smuthounds: The Trade in Erotica 1920-1940* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999). Gay and lesbian sleaze from the '60s have had several worthy book-length investigations, including *Queer Pulp: Perverted Passions from the Golden Age of the Paperback* by Susan Stryker (Chronicle Books, 2001), *Pulp Friction: Uncovering the Golden Age of Gay Male Pulps* by Michael Bronski (St. Martin's, 2003) and *Strange Sisters: The Art of Lesbian Pulp Fiction 1949-1969* by Jaye Zimet (Studio Books, 1999).

2. According to the notorious 1970 "Illustrated" Greenleaf Press edition of *The Presidential Report of the Commission On Obscenity and Pornography*, "the Commission estimates that 25 to 30 million 'adults only' paperback books were sold in 1969 [alone]."

3. Kilpatrick became the right-wing blowhard on *60 Minutes'* Point/Counterpoint segment in the mid- to late '70s.



THE SMUT PEDDLERS (1960)
By James Jackson Kilpatrick
Avon Books