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# Archives in Blue: Visual Registers for the Police Siege and Surveillance of Jaguar Productions in the 1970s

## ABSTRACT

The largest non-filmic archives of the Los Angeles–based gay pornography studio Jaguar Productions are records of the company’s policing under anti-gay legal regimes outlawing sodomy and obscenity. Given that such archives hold the bulk of extant records on Jaguar, state abuse not only affected the history of Jaguar but now also affects the historiographic process for making sense of what happened to the company. Archives of policing incriminate law enforcement in the production of anti-gay visual records. These law enforcement records were ultimately forged out of bigoted aims to destroy gay solidarity and community infrastructures.

On August 8, 1974, Los Angeles–based producer-distributor Monroe Beehler was on his way to a meeting with his lawyer David Brown, a partner of the legendary firm that specialized in First Amendment matters, Fleishman, McDaniel, Brown, and Weston. Beehler looked in his rearview mirror and noticed a car following him. The driver was David Lovstedt, a twenty-nine-year-old Hollywood vice officer who wore his pants tight and his hair long

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Finley Freibert, “Archives in Blue: Visual Registers for the Police Siege and Surveillance of Jaguar Productions in the 1970s,” *JCMS* 62, no. 5 (2022–2023): 168–191.

over his ears, a look typical of plainclothes police working in Hollywood.<sup>1</sup> Beehler recognized Lovestedt as the officer who had been instrumental to the recent police seizures of gay pornographic films produced and distributed by Beehler. As Beehler parked and got out of the car, Lovestedt approached him, bellowing, “You still have to be afraid every time you look out your rear view mirror.”<sup>2</sup> Notable in Lovestedt’s threat is the emphasis on visual recognition; it was not an overt homophobic statement (although Lovestedt was maliciously anti-gay), nor was it a hopeful assertion that Beehler would lose his case. Rather, the threat hinged on law enforcement’s visible yet passive presence. The mere existence of police in gay Hollywood was a visible symbol of the ongoing mission to purge Hollywood of gay life. Lovestedt embodied such a symbol, forged more broadly throughout the long reign of Los Angeles police chiefs who molded their department into an anti-gay public image, specifically William H. Parker and his notorious protégé Edward M. Davis.<sup>3</sup>

In the 1970s, Beehler’s gay pornography company, Jaguar Productions, was a main fixture in this battle over public visibility between police and gay Hollywood. Public visibility was a crucial tactic engaged by both gay liberation activists and gay cultural producers.<sup>4</sup> Gay activist-filmmaker Pat Rocco—who would later direct hardcore films for Beehler under the pseudonym Brad Kingston—operated in both the arenas of activism and show business, directing early softcore films that permeated a gay liberation ethos by “replacing mythologized topographies with newly visible social realities.”<sup>5</sup> Advertisers and exhibitors of gay pornography monetized public visibility in tandem with the emergence of independent gay cinemas in the late 1960s, promoting gay adult theater policies with keywords including *male* and *homosexual*. Both gay liberationists and filmmakers engaged visual registers—inscriptions of gay individuals, identities, and sensibilities in distinctly perceivable form—to disseminate gay culture in the post-Stonewall moment.

1 This description of Lovestedt is interpreted from his photograph in “Harassed Vice Cop Cries Treason,” *The Advocate*, May 22, 1974, 10.

2 David M. Brown, “Interoffice Memorandum: Harassing Conduct by Officer David Lovesteadt [sic],” August 8, 1974, box 580, folder Beehler, Monroe, et al. adv. Peo. L.A.S.C. no. A-304195, Stanley Fleishman Papers (Collection 1538), Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles. This collection is referred to hereafter as Fleishman Papers.

3 For historical accounts of anti-gay policing in Hollywood and Los Angeles broadly, see Lillian Faderman and Stuart Timmons, *Gay L.A.: A History of Sexual Outlaws, Power Politics, and Lipstick Lesbians* (New York: Basic Books, 2006); Moira Rachel Kenney, *Mapping Gay L.A.: The Intersection of Place and Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001); Whitney Strub, “The Clearly Obscene and the Queerly Obscene: Heteronormativity and Obscenity in Cold War Los Angeles,” *American Quarterly* 60, no. 2 (2008): 373–398, <https://doi.org/10.1353/aq.0.0009>; and C. Todd White, *Pre-Gay L.A.: A Social History of the Movement for Homosexual Rights* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009).

4 For a thorough consideration of gay visibility as a gay media activist tactic, see Matt Connolly, “Liberating the Screen: Gay and Lesbian Protests of LGBT Cinematic Representation, 1969–1974,” *Cinema Journal* 57, no. 2 (2018): 66–88, <https://doi.org/10.1353/cj.2018.0003>. On the adaption of gay visibility tactics to film, see Whitney Strub, “Mondo Rocco: Mapping Gay Los Angeles Sexual Geography in the Late-1960s Films of Pat Rocco,” *Radical History Review* 2012, no. 113 (Spring 2012): 13–34, <https://doi.org/10.1215/01636545-1504876>.

5 Strub, “Mondo Rocco,” 25.

Police seized upon these visual registers to collect evidence in an attempt to stymie the spread of gay culture. To capture portions of gay visual culture, law enforcement officers employed an array of methods that optically registered gay peoples and institutions in their archives: snapping surveillance photographs, taking copious notes on film content at gay theaters, and using informants to match faces with names.

At the same time, some gay activists and pornographers employed alternative tactics of refusing visual or identificatory recognition—a practice aligned with what Nicholas de Villiers calls tactics of “opacity”—to frustrate police attempts at punishing gay public life.<sup>6</sup> The use of pseudonyms exemplifies such refusal. For example, gay liberation activist Jim Kepner employed the penname Lyn Pedersen (among numerous others) so that police could not easily track his record of publication. In a similar vein, most of Jaguar’s directors did not use their legal names in film credits (see Table 1 for a listing of deceased Jaguar directors and their screen pseudonyms).

Rather than a negative strategy akin to closeting, the use of alternative names was a key enabling maneuver that allowed for the possibility of these filmmakers entering and developing the gay hardcore field. In addition, this tactic worked as a positive force of opacity, inciting police to waste energy on false leads rather than allowing police to directly find, punish, and thereby negate the efforts of gay cultural production. In its disabling of police identification, the use of aliases gestured toward the utopic prospect of a world in which gay filmmakers were not subject to police harassment or censure. While tactics of visibility and its refusal were key to both gay pornography and gay liberation, gay pornographies and gay politics were not always aligned or conflicting and instead existed in an ambivalent relationship.

As we will see, gay pornography and gay liberation remained in complex tension throughout the 1970s. Gay cultural producers engaged tactics of visibility and refusal to talk back to the police and in doing so articulated a gay liberation politics. For example, in *Meat Market Arrest* (Pat Rocco, 1970)—a document of police harassment and arrest of a Black male nude dancer at a gay bar—Pat Rocco employed a tactic of opacity by refusing to acknowledge the sexual appeal of the nude dance and thereby countering the police framing of the act in terms of so-called prurience. As Richard Meyer has documented, gay cultural producers have responded to anti-gay law enforcement by producing forms of “outlaw representation,” creations that “restaged the criminal status to which they have been assigned so as to mark a visible difference and distance from it.”<sup>7</sup> Akin to Meyer’s methodology, this article engages law enforcement materials including police reports and FBI files to parse how Jaguar Productions countered the police siege on gay Hollywood. Jaguar exemplified strategies of police contestation discussed by Meyer, seamlessly integrating sex sequences into the films’ narratives—a tactic that eschewed obscenity restrictions—and sometimes included overt criticisms of

6 Nicholas de Villiers, *Opacity and the Closet: Queer Tactics in Foucault, Barthes, and Warhol* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 1–35.

7 Richard Meyer, *Outlaw Representation: Censorship and Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century American Art* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002), 12.

Table 1. Deceased Jaguar director names, pseudonyms, and vital dates

Name (alternate names)	Name in Jaguar credits	Birth date	Death date
David Lynn Allen*	David Allen	October 2, 1942	November 5, 1987
Monroe Christian Beehler**	Mark Aaron	October 3, 1933	May 15, 2018
Geuseppe Salvatore Caruso* (Joe Caruso, Joseph Caruso)	Gorton Hall	January 21, 1932	May 9, 1985
Brian John King**	Barry Knight, Jason Michaels	September 27, 1945	June 16, 2005
Raymond Vincent Proca** (Ray Proca)	Roger Marks	September 25, 1939	December 20, 2015
Pasquale Vincent Serrapica** (Pat Rocco)	Brad Kingston	February 9, 1934	November 8, 2018
William Louis Sheffler** (Bill Sheffler)	Warren Stephens	May 8, 1934	July 20, 2020
Dimitri Alexis Svigelj** (Dimitri Alexis, Spartacus)	Dick Clark, Dick Martin	May 8, 1910	September 3, 1981
Joseph William Tiffenbach Jr.** (Joe Tiffenbach)	Lou Alton	December 31, 1923	January 27, 1992

\* Identity determined via newspapers and genealogy documents.  
\*\* Identity determined via industry sources and genealogy documents.

police within the films themselves, as we will see in the case of *The Light from the Second Story Window* (David Allen, 1973).

Jaguar was the first feature film production-distribution company with national reach that was exclusively gay, yet it is minimally chronicled in gay media history.<sup>8</sup> Almost from the get-go the company was involved in battles with local police, which can be understood as conflicts over visibility, over what could be depicted in independent gay cinema, and over how gay cinemas could exist in public. A massive police investigation and intimidation operation led to a decline in Jaguar's production output in 1974, just three years after it was founded. Despite its important place in gay media history,

8 Before Jaguar, Signature Films–Continental Theatres pioneered national gay film distribution, but the company did not exclusively produce or distribute gay product. Evincing the minimal amount of scholarship on Jaguar, the only two discussions of Jaguar of more than a passing reference are Jeffrey Escoffier, *Bigger than Life: The History of Gay Porn Cinema from Beefcake to Hardcore* (Philadelphia: Running Press, 2009), 80–85; and Lucas Hilderbrand, "Historical Fantasies: 1970s Gay Male Pornography in the Archives," in *Porno Chic and the Sex Wars: American Sexual Representation in the 1970s*, ed. Carolyn Bronstein and Whitney Strub (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2016), 336–337.

the bulk of information about the company's operations has come from a single interview in the gay adult magazine *Manshots*.<sup>9</sup>

Importantly, upon the death of Monroe Beehler in 2018, the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) acquired much of his film holdings.<sup>10</sup> However, to date the records and ephemera of Jaguar Productions, particularly records pertaining to state abuse, do not appear to have been systematically acquired from Beehler or others involved in Jaguar. Although not collected in a centralized archive, many of the records of Jaguar's policing can be obtained from legal and federal archives. Nearly two decades ago, Eric Schaefer made an incisive call for archives to collect adult media *and* their associated records.<sup>11</sup> More recently, Peter Alilunas asserted the need to look beyond traditional archives toward the collectors' community, and Desirae Embree has proposed inventive interpretive methods for making-do with pornographies that have been subject to archival neglect and disavowal.<sup>12</sup> In order to flesh out a fuller picture of Jaguar Productions' initial operations, I propose turning to the archives of the oppressors, in this case local and federal law enforcement entities, a method inspired by the recent historiographic innovations from historians of colonial sexual regulation.<sup>13</sup> The restrictions on access to the archives of Jaguar's policing structurally mirror the history of law enforcement's obstructions of gay media makers' access to public space.<sup>14</sup> Despite such restrictions, much of the Los Angeles Police Department's (LAPD) Jaguar archive was contained within Jaguar case files in UCLA's Stanley Fleishman Papers. This article draws from both those legal records and from heavily redacted FBI files.

Archival media studies, gay history, and visual studies scholarship, including the study of pornography, intersect at the key concept of access. In archive studies, access has been a key analytic category—alongside collection and preservation—in that it represents both the everyday user's feasibility

9 The interview did not involve Beehler, so much of the history is told secondhand from Jaguar employees Barry Knight and Russell Moore. See Jerry Douglas, "Gay Film Heritage: Jaguar Productions Part 1," *Manshots* 8, no. 6 (June 1996): 10–15; and Jerry Douglas, "Gay Film Heritage: Jaguar Productions Part 2," *Manshots* 8, no. 7 (July 1996): 10–15, 72. This interview is cited as the main source in nearly all instances of brief or passing reference to Jaguar; see Escoffier, *Bigger than Life*, 87; Hilderbrand, "Historical Fantasies," 348; and Bryan Wuest, "Defining Homosexual Love Stories: Pat Rocco, Categorization, and the Legitimation of Gay Narrative Film," *Film History* 29, no. 4 (2017): 87, <https://doi.org/10.2979/filmhistory.29.4.03>.

10 Todd Wiener, "Huge thanks to Jonathan Fahn and Outfest's Brendan Lucas for helping me rescue the Monroe Beehler (aka: Mark Aaron) / Jaguar Films Collection yesterday. [. . .]" Facebook, June 15, 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/toddflicks/posts/10156283730374774>.

11 Eric Schaefer, "Dirty Little Secrets: Scholars, Archivists, and Dirty Movies," *The Moving Image* 5, no. 2 (2005): 79–105.

12 Peter Alilunas, "Ginger's Private Party Flyer (circa 1985)," *Film History: An International Journal* 26, no. 3 (2014): 144–155, <https://doi.org/10.2979/filmhistory.26.3.144>; and Desirae Embree, "Archive Trouble: Searching for Lesbian Adult Media," *Feminist Media Histories* 5, no. 2 (2019): 240–254, <https://doi.org/10.1525/fmh.2019.5.2.240>.

13 Anjali Arondekar, *For the Record: On Sexuality and the Colonial Archive in India* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009); and Zeb Tortorici, *Sins against Nature: Sex and Archives in Colonial New Spain* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018).

14 I attempted to directly obtain the LAPD's files on Jaguar. However, even after I located the arrest booking numbers, my requests to the LAPD were met with the reply "there are no responsive records available"; Farah (LAPD Analyst N5890), "Request Closed," October 19, 2018, Request #18-2862.

of approaching an archival object and the broader conditions of possibility that the information stored in archives might reach a public. For sex media archives in particular, conditions of access have become a key focus of recent debates precisely because of the cultural and legal implications of public access to sex media.<sup>15</sup> Within gay history, access has been central to collectivity formations, whether it be through access to infrastructures of capital, methods of clandestine homosexual communication, or modes of cultural production.<sup>16</sup> In visual studies, the concept of access has a broad range of applications, such as the interrogation of law enforcement ideologies that suggest visual technologies can provide access to criminal essence, the analysis of the visual as a mode of representing spatial access constraints, and investigations of visual media's ability to convey access to history.<sup>17</sup>

A key observation from a historical account of public sex by Laud Humphreys demonstrates how conditions of access intersect with gay visual history. In the 1960s, Humphreys reviewed the legal sanctions against “sexually deviant acts” and concluded that a key provision differentiating sex in private from public sex is the condition of “social visibility,” by which he effectively meant access.<sup>18</sup> As Humphreys explains, social visibility is more broad than physical visibility in that it approximates public access. In other words, surreptitious public sex is made socially visible when there is a possibility that a member of the general public might intrude upon the sex act.

15 For recent contributions to the lively debates around sex media archives, see Peter Alilunas and Dan Erdman, “The Adult Film History Project,” *JCMS: Journal of Cinema and Media Studies* 58, no. 1 (2018): 152–157, <https://doi.org/10.1353/cj.2018.0076>; Embree, “Archive Trouble,” 240–254; Elizabeth Groeneveld, “Remediating Pornography: The *On Our Backs* Digitization Debate,” *Continuum* 32, no. 1 (2018): 73–83, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2018.1404677>; Whitney Strub, “Sex Wishes and Virgin Dreams: Zebedy Colt’s Reactionary Queer Heterosmut and the Elusive Porn Archive,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 23, no. 3 (2017): 359–390, <https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-3818453>; and GVGK Tang, “Sex in the Archives: The Politics of Processing and Preserving Pornography in the Digital Age,” *American Archivist* 80, no. 2 (2017): 439–452, <https://doi.org/10.17723/0360-9081-80.2.439>.

16 John D’Emilio, “Capitalism and Gay Identity,” in *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, ed. Ann Barr Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983), 100–113; Martin Meeker, *Contacts Desired: Gay and Lesbian Communications and Community, 1940s–1970s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006); and Thomas Waugh, *Hard to Imagine: Gay Male Eroticism in Photography and Film from Their Beginnings to Stonewall* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

17 For an early visual study of criminal imaging ideology, see Allan Sekula, “The Body and the Archive,” *October* 39 (1986): 3–64, <https://doi.org/10.2307/778312>. On space and access, see Stephen Spencer and Andrew Cox, “Into the Divide: Community Identities and the Visualisation of Place,” *Visual Studies* 32, no. 2 (2017): 97–110, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1472586x.2017.1324251>. On visual media’s ability to convey history, see Leah Dickerman, “The Fact and the Photograph,” *October*, no. 118 (2006): 132–152, <https://doi.org/10.1162/octo.2006.118.1.132>; and W. J. T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), xiv–xv.

18 Laud Humphreys, “The Tearoom Trade: Impersonal Sex in Public Places” (PhD diss., Washington University in St. Louis, 1968), 28–31. This restriction against both physical visibility and the broader notion of accessibility was also embedded in contemporaneous LAPD department policies as evinced in the following quote from a 1965 document on police tactics against homosexuals: “The right of privacy does not exist when acts are committed in ‘plain sight’ or are ‘readily visible and accessible.”” Max K. Hurlbut, Hollywood Vice Report on the Homosexual, January 1965, 8, Coll2012.001, Subject Files: Los Angeles Police Department, ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, CA.

In conversation with Humphreys, Phillip Brian Harper argues that venues of public sex might more accurately be described as private alcoves carved out of public spaces—what he calls “pornographic venues”—wherein the access to those alcoves is governed by counterpublic codes that effectively make them socially invisible.<sup>19</sup> Harper concludes that it is the existential brutality wrought by the presence of law enforcement that transforms the space from socially invisible to visible, and, simultaneously, it is the police presence that creates both the illicitness and physical visibility of sexual acts.<sup>20</sup> In sum, the presence of law enforcement has crucial implications for the access to and visibility of sex in public, a manifest violence that resonates with the above analysis of Lovstedt’s threat to Beehler.

It is precisely these police intrusions on gay counterpublic access, and the documentation of those intrusions via visually descriptive records, that have built the primary non-filmic Jaguar archives. This is not all that surprising as historically the most incriminated—the sexually marginalized, the queers, the so-called deviants—are those most likely to be present in law enforcement and juridical archives. Focusing further on the presence of the cop as the incriminating factor (following Harper’s observation), the archives of Jaguar’s policing—in their focus on documenting Jaguar’s transgressions against anti-gay legal regimes—effectively incriminate law enforcement as culpable in persecuting the company as part of a larger attempt to purge Los Angeles of gay public life.<sup>21</sup> To support this claim, I will trace the visual archives of Jaguar’s policing as documents of *visual allegation* and *visual incrimination*. Records of visual allegation consist of textual records of the sexual acts that police or police informants ostensibly saw.<sup>22</sup> In turn, documents of visual incrimination include the primary sources that law enforcement produced or sought to acquire, including identity records, surveillance dossiers, films, and photographs of individuals for the purposes of identification. Such records were used to corroborate law enforcement claims to having observed homosexual sex acts. While police employed these visual documents in attempts to incriminate Jaguar, I argue that the documents simultaneously situate visual allegation and incrimination in reverse, framing police as the intruders into counterpublic places sanctioned for gay cultural production and circulation. This article proceeds with a contextualized history, triangulating primary source research with insights from the *Manshots* interview. It then presents a detailed investigation of law enforcement’s visual

19 Phillip Brian Harper, “Playing in the Dark: Privacy, Public Sex, and the Erotics of the Cinema Venue,” *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies* 10, no. 3 (30) (1992): 105–106, [https://doi.org/10.1215/02705346-10-3\\_30-92](https://doi.org/10.1215/02705346-10-3_30-92).

20 Harper, 105–107.

21 This historiographic position on law enforcement culpability is inspired by Maayan Amir’s concept of “state-incriminating, coproduced archives,” archives of state abuse that incriminated bureaucratic complicity with Nazi ideology and practices. Maayan Amir, “The Visual Side of Privacy: State-Incriminating, Coproduced Archives,” *Public Culture* 32, no. 1 (2020): 185–213, <https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-7816353>.

22 In this context, hearsay and informant testimony were given disproportionate weight when they reflected negatively on gay men—even to the extent that hearsay allegations make up a significant amount of the Jaguar archive—a structural similarity echoing other practices of archiving hearsay allegations; for example, in the Indian colonial archive, see Arondekar, *For the Record*, 10–15.

archival practices and concludes with a consideration of how law enforcement's existence exacerbated a rift in the gay community over the subject of pornographic film.

## THE ORIGINS OF JAGUAR PRODUCTIONS IN GAY PUBLIC VISIBILITY

Jaguar emerged out of an independent gay film industry that, by the late 1960s, had adapted the tactic of public visibility forged in gay liberation politics.<sup>23</sup> Key to this tactic was the promotion of gay films in newspaper advertisements, on theater marquees, and through event releases of films by popular directors such as gay activist-filmmaker Pat Rocco. Initially working in theater operations, showman Monroe Beehler became instrumental to the pre-Jaguar explosion of Los Angeles's gay visual culture in 1968 when he collaborated with Shan Sayles and Ed Kazen in shifting Continental Theatres' Park Theatre to its legendary gay film policy.<sup>24</sup> Beehler's industrial focus on visual display derived from a longer experience in film production, exhibition, and advertising wherein visual appeals to patrons' "hungry eyes" were centralized as a key commercial element.<sup>25</sup> As one colleague recalled, Beehler was excited by the prospect of forging a self-contained gay filmmaking community to serve the rising demand from an emergent gay audience.<sup>26</sup> Beehler's goal was accomplished through three methods: screening past gay underground films (such as those of Kenneth Anger and Jack Smith); soliciting product from established gay mail-order filmmakers (such as Bob Mizer, Dick Fontaine, and Pat Rocco); and incorporating amateur film festivals to stimulate a grassroots gay independent film community. One filmmaker who rose to prominence through Kazen's amateur gay film competitions was veteran sexploitation film actress and pinup model Cathy Crowfoot.<sup>27</sup>

23 For accounts of the intersections of visibility and gay politics, see Larry Gross, *Up from Invisibility: Lesbians, Gay Men, and the Media in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); Kenney, *Mapping Gay L.A.*; and Strub, "Mondo Rocco," 13–34.

24 Beehler was a Texas-born entrepreneur who attended college in North Carolina and traveled to Los Angeles in the early 1960s. By the mid-1960s, he was employed by the Academy Theatre on Hollywood Boulevard that ran on a so-called art house policy, specializing in foreign films with advertising suggestive of sexual content. Soon after, Beehler was hired by a competing theater chain, Continental Theatres, a company run by Shan Sayles and Alex Cooperman. Beehler swiftly ascended to a managerial position at Continental, leading the production arm Signature Films as well as the circuit's advertising division. See Paul Alcuin Siebenand, "The Beginnings of Gay Cinema in Los Angeles: The Industry and the Audience" (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 1975), 28, 106, 189; and "Beehler Exits Circuit," *Daily Variety*, June 18, 1970, 8.

25 The "hungry eyes" concept of visual appeal via advertising and film content derives from the title of a sexploitation film, *The Girl with the Hungry Eyes* (William Rotzler, 1966), that starred one of Beehler's close associates, Cathy Crowfoot. Such visual appeals were a break from older exploitation tactics of foregrounding educational imperative, sensational narrative, and age-restricted policies. For a discussion of how the "hungry eyes" concept became diffused within exploitation narratives, see Elena Gorfinkel, *Lewd Looks: American Sexploitation Cinema in the 1960s* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 23–24, 174–178.

26 Douglas, "Gay Film Heritage: Jaguar Productions Part 1," 11.

27 Kazen's first competition was held on November 17, 1968, and featured two of Crowfoot's films, *Brutal Seduction* (Cathy Crowfoot, 1968) and *The Stripper* (Cathy Crowfoot, 1968), alongside nine other amateur films and three by established gay filmmakers. Crowfoot's *The Stripper*, which featured a drag performer in a burlesque strip scenario, won the festival's first prize of \$300. See Jay Ross, "Park's



In addition to work for the gay male-focused Park Theatre, Beehler and Crowfoot produced numerous heterosexual-oriented films for Continental Theatres, which were largely silent softcore shorts.<sup>28</sup> Because of their overt commercial orientation (produced cheaply for fast turnover to patrons hungry for new product) and visual focus (shot and presented without sync sound), Beehler and Crowfoot's early films concentrated mainly on visual allure to patron's "hungry eyes," unlike the narrative sync sound features of competing chains like the Pussycat. In 1969, Beehler and Crowfoot partnered to produce and shoot gay films for the Park using a mode of production—16mm silent shorts compiled into a film program—similar to their heterosexual-oriented films.<sup>29</sup> By March 1970, the pair had begun shifting toward narrative feature productions with the completion of *The Boy with the Hungry Eyes* (Monroe Beehler, 1970) and *Time It Was* (Monroe Beehler, 1971). According to the notes of gay liberation activist Jim Kepner, these films were produced as a "non-commercial venture."<sup>30</sup> Although Jaguar later released *The Boy with the Hungry Eyes* on a for-profit basis, the initial non-commercial intent of its production was reflected by the fact that in 1970 the film was only exhibited privately, including screenings for Rocco's gay creative collective, the Society of Pat Rocco Enlightened Enthusiasts (SPREE).

Following his exit from Continental in June 1970, Beehler signed on as one of three corporate directors of Woody's Adult Bookstore, which was in operation since 1969 and founded by Woodrow Daniels, reportedly a relative of Beehler's.<sup>31</sup> Similar to local adult film establishments, Woody's strategically engaged public visibility, including both advertising tactics and its placement in Hollywood geography. Initially located at the busy intersection of Hollywood and Western (1702 North Western), in mid-1971 Woody's moved a block away to 5659 Hollywood Boulevard, visible and accessible directly off the traffic-ridden Hollywood Freeway.

At the same time, police were developing sophisticated methods of crimi-

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Amateur Flicks from 'Great' to 'Dull,'" *Los Angeles Advocate*, December 1968, 14–15, 34.

28 Beehler reportedly produced over a thousand heterosexual-oriented sex films for the chain, and Crowfoot participated in their production as well; see Jim Kepner, "Photography, Music, Moreno Highlight 'Hungry Eyes,'" *The Advocate*, September 30, 1970, 14.

29 Inferential evidence suggests this partnership was under the studio name Torso Films. Films under the Torso banner included *Baskets and Buns* (unknown director, 1969), a sequel to Crowfoot's *The Stripper* titled *Stripper's Wedding Night* (Cathy Crowfoot, 1969), *Cock of the Walk* (unknown director, 1969) a film starring Mark Aaron (one of Beehler's pseudonyms), and the military-themed *Spree de Corps* (unknown director, 1970). Perhaps referring to the production of *Baskets and Buns*, *Spree de Corps*, or another film, Brian King recalled a comical miscommunication between Beehler and Crowfoot around the term *basket*, gay slang for male genitalia. King also recalled that Crowfoot and Beehler were a romantic couple. Yet, later in the interview, Russell Moore stated that Beehler was gay. See Douglas, "Gay Film Heritage: Jaguar Productions Part 1," 11–12, 14.

30 Jim Kepner, "The Boy with the Hungry Eyes," 1970, 3, box 27, folder 4, Jim Kepner Papers Coll2011.002, ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, CA.

31 "Beehler Exits Circuit," 8. Sources conflict on the reasons for Beehler's departure. Bob Mizer recalled that he felt Beehler was being exploited and overworked by Continental; see Siebenand, "Beginnings of Gay Cinema," 49. Tom DeSimone alleged that Beehler was embezzling money from Continental; see Siebenand, "Beginnings of Gay Cinema," 106.

nalizing public visibility. Specifically, visual display of sexual content could be prosecuted as obscenity “pandering”—the knowing commercial exploitation of obscenity—following the Supreme Court decision *Ginzburg v. United States* (1966).<sup>32</sup> Because of its popularity, public visibility, and association with male-male cruising, police targeted Woody’s and employed methods of visual allegation and visual incrimination that would later be used against Jaguar. A representative example of this tactic was the arrest of Woody’s cashier, Gerald Strickland. During the incident, an undercover officer brought a book to the counter—as if to buy it—then opened the book and showed a sexually explicit pictorial to Strickland. Strickland refused to look, stating, “I’m not supposed to know what’s in the books. I can go to jail if I look at the pictures you show me.”<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, officers took the exchange as evidence that Strickland had *knowledge* (pandering’s *scienter* requirement) of the book’s allegedly obscene content. The visual allegation in this case was the officer’s report that he observed Strickland seeing the pictorial, and the visual incrimination was the book in the officer’s possession.

While managing Woody’s, Beehler began considering the possibility of returning to the film production realm. In October 1971, Beehler co-founded Jaguar Productions as a subsidiary of his Columbia Advertising Company. Jaguar was initially a collaboration between Beehler and fellow SPREE members Brian King and Strickland, Woody’s clerk. Strickland specialized in stage acting, and King was a photographer-filmmaker who had recently moved to Los Angeles from New York. According to the FBI, Strickland acted as a “second in command” for Jaguar, working as an office manager for Columbia Advertising, answering the phone, and delivering prints of films and accessories.<sup>34</sup> King worked as a principal crew member for Jaguar, often performing multiple roles such as sound technician, cinematographer, director, and editor under the name Barry Knight.

Under contemporaneous California obscenity law, sexual content needed to be justified by an alibi of “redeeming social importance.”<sup>35</sup> Thus, Jaguar’s movies were conceptualized as “story films,” sex films that contained a narrative premise to legitimate their sexual content as socially redeeming.<sup>36</sup> Despite the focus on narrative alibi, cinematographer King developed a signature technique of explicit visual display (echoing Beehler and Crowfoot’s previous appeals to adult cinema patron’s “hungry eyes”) independent of narrative, what pornographer William Higgins called Jaguar’s “dick shot,”

32 *Ginzburg v. United States*, 383 U.S. 463 (1966), 467.

33 C. M. Sosa, “Los Angeles Police Department Complaint Application,” March 9, 1972, box 497, folder Strickland, Lawrence G., adv. Peo. L.A.M.C. no. 413155 (Pacific), Fleishman Papers.

34 David M. Hardy to Finley Freibert, Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) release, July 23, 2019, FOIPA request nos. 1383225-000 (King, Brian John), 1418698-000 (Beehler, Monroe Christian), FBI Record/Information Dissemination Section, Information Management Division, Washington, DC, 96.

35 The California statute governing obscenity derived from language in the Supreme Court decision *Roth v. United States*, 354 U.S. 476 (1957), 484. For the full text of the California obscenity statute, see “Chapter 2147,” in *Statutes of California 1960 and 1961* (California State Assembly, 1961), 4427, [https://clerk.assembly.ca.gov/archive-list?archive\\_type=statutes](https://clerk.assembly.ca.gov/archive-list?archive_type=statutes).

36 The “story film” alibi and premise is further discussed in Douglas, “Gay Film Heritage: Jaguar Productions Part 1,” 14.

close-ups of penetration and ejaculation captured with a special wide-angle lens.<sup>37</sup> To direct Jaguar's earliest films, Beehler drew from a pool of contacts he knew from his Continental days who had previously directed films shown at the Park. These directors included Rocco, Joe Tiffenbach, and Dimitri Alexis (see Table 1 for these directors' screen pseudonyms).

Jaguar's earliest films premiered in late 1971 at the Park-Miller in New York and then subsequently showed at the Las Palmas in Los Angeles.<sup>38</sup> Soon after, Jaguar began to distribute (and sometimes finance) individual projects by local directors such as David Allen, Crowfoot, Lucian Reitano (a.k.a. Richard Morgan), and Bill Sheffler.<sup>39</sup> In addition to producing and distributing Jaguar's own product, Beehler also acquired films for Jaguar to release, including early films of J. Brian, the famed San Francisco-based physique photographer turned filmmaker.<sup>40</sup> By November 1973, the Jaguar operation had vertically integrated, entering the exhibition realm with the founding of King Theatres.<sup>41</sup> King Theatres' first acquisition was the Century Theatre, previously a cinema in the Loews circuit. Renamed the Hollywood Century, the theater's gay pornographic policy began on November 21, 1973, with the Jaguar-distributed film *Nights in Black Leather* (Ignatio Rutkowski, a.k.a. Richard Abel, 1973). The inception of the Hollywood Century represented a critical move toward the legitimization of gay pornography. Beehler had acquired a highly visible theater that previously showed mainstream Hollywood product. With six hundred seats and a nineteen-by-thirty-eight-foot screen, the Hollywood Century was exceptionally large compared to competing gay theaters in the area.<sup>42</sup> It was arguably this increased visibility, market presence, and legitimization imperative that prompted a massive backlash from both local and federal law enforcement.

## THE VISUAL ARCHIVES OF POLICING JAGUAR

The earliest police investigations of Jaguar in Los Angeles began with films exhibited at the Las Palmas. From February to April 1972, the LAPD cracked down on 8mm and 16mm adult theaters, including the Las Palmas, in a four-

37 "A Peek at Porn's Past with Jaguar Studios," *Skinflicks*, July 1997, 63.

38 Jaguar's *Come of Age* (Brad Kingston, 1971) premiered at the Park-Miller on December 8, 1971, and subsequently had a West Coast premiere at the Las Palmas on March 15, 1972.

39 Douglas, "Gay Film Heritage: Jaguar Productions Part 1," 11; and Douglas, "Gay Film Heritage: Jaguar Productions Part 2," 10. For the identity of Reitano as Richard Morgan, see *Morgan v. Euteneuer* (2013), Superior Court of California, County of San Francisco, Case File CGC-13-535523.

40 Finley Freibert, "Distribution Struggle: Assembling a Media History of J. Brian's Enterprises with Court Proceedings and Public Records," *Spectator* 41, no. 2 (Fall 2021): 40–52, [https://cinemadev.cntv.usc.edu/spectator/41.2/04\\_Freibert.pdf](https://cinemadev.cntv.usc.edu/spectator/41.2/04_Freibert.pdf).

41 Corporate paperwork for King Theatres listed Beehler as CEO, Daniels as CFO, King as president, and John Winslow as vice president. Monroe Beehler and Woodrow Daniel, "Statement by Domestic Corporation: King Theatres, Inc.," May 31, 1978, business entity no. 0703296, California Secretary of State, Sacramento, CA; and Brian King and John Winslow, "Statement by Domestic Stock Corporation: King Theatres, Inc.," November 23, 1973, business entity no. 0703296, California Secretary of State, Sacramento, CA.

42 The Hollywood Century was located a few blocks down Hollywood Boulevard from Woody's at the corner of Hollywood and Normandie. On the theater's size, see Douglas, "Gay Film Heritage: Jaguar Productions Part 2," 12.

mile area south of Hollywood Boulevard approximately spanning La Brea Avenue to Western Avenue. In the raids on the Las Palmas, law enforcement employed the two-step process of visual allegation and visual incrimination, a tactic echoed in the later siege on Jaguar. In preparation for a raid, a plain-clothes LAPD officer would enter the theater, view the film(s), and, after exiting the theater, enter a nearby car where a judge was waiting to write a so-called curbside warrant to seize the film(s).<sup>43</sup> During the blanket raids that were executed in this manner, the Las Palmas was raided twice. On March 28, in its final day of a two-week run, officers seized three reels of Jaguar's *Come of Age* (Brad Kingston, 1971) as well as the theater's projector.<sup>44</sup> A police photograph of the Las Palmas (see Figure 1) seems to present a rare glimpse of the methods of advertising and public display employed during the theater's short-lived gay policy. Yet the prominent police car in the foreground primarily renders the photograph as an indexical record of material devastation—like a footprint on a sand sculpture—demonstrating police expropriation of an area of counterpublic formation.

Since the search warrants were supported non-textually through verbal affidavits, their textual remainders in court records are sparse, consisting of information identifying the targeted institution and films. Notably, the institutional description was based in visual perception of the theater's outer facade, rather than via an address, occupancy record, or legal description (as in a property deed).<sup>45</sup> Such descriptions of a theater's public face were supplemented by police surveillance photographs (see Table 1.) for at least two reasons. First, the photographs served as visually corroborating evidence that officers could be placed at the theaters during the time the search and seizure was completed. Second, the photographs functioned as visual incrimination ("documentary evidence" in the terminology of the penal code section on search warrants) that the warrant accurately described the place that

43 The officer would describe to the judge the contents of the film(s) being screened, which constituted a verbal affidavit. Given the verbal affidavit, the judge then signed a warrant and the officer would swiftly proceed with re-entering the theater to confiscate both film reels and projectors.

44 On April 20, LAPD officers repeated this process during the premiere week of Jaguar's *Whatever Mama Wants* (Roger Marks, 1972), once again seizing the theater's projector and the film's two reels. See David M. Brown, "Amended and Supplemental Complaint for Injunctive Relief. In the Municipal Court of Los Angeles Judicial District, County of Los Angeles, State of California," May 9, 1972, 6-7, box 334, folder Bell, etc. et al. v. Davis, etc. et al. L.A.S.C. no. C-29025 file no. 2, Fleishman Papers. The names of the Jaguar films confiscated during the raids were obtained from the showtime schedules in the *Los Angeles Times*.

45 In the case of the Las Palmas, the search warrant description was as follows: "The premises is a single story stucco building on the east side of Las Palmas Avenue. There is a white marquee facing northwest and southwest. In blue lettering on the marquee are the words, 'Show Changes Every Week.' On the top of the marquee is a light brown sign with the words, 'Las Palmas' in raised white letters. The entrance to the building is recessed and is approximately 20' wide by 12' deep. North and south of the entrance are two showcase windows, approximately 3' x 5'." See George W. Trammell, III, "Search Warrant: In the Municipal Court of Los Angeles Judicial District, County of Los Angeles, State of California," April 20, 1972, box 334, folder Bell, etc. et al. v. Davis, etc. et al. L.A.S.C. no. C-29025 file no. 2, Fleishman Papers.

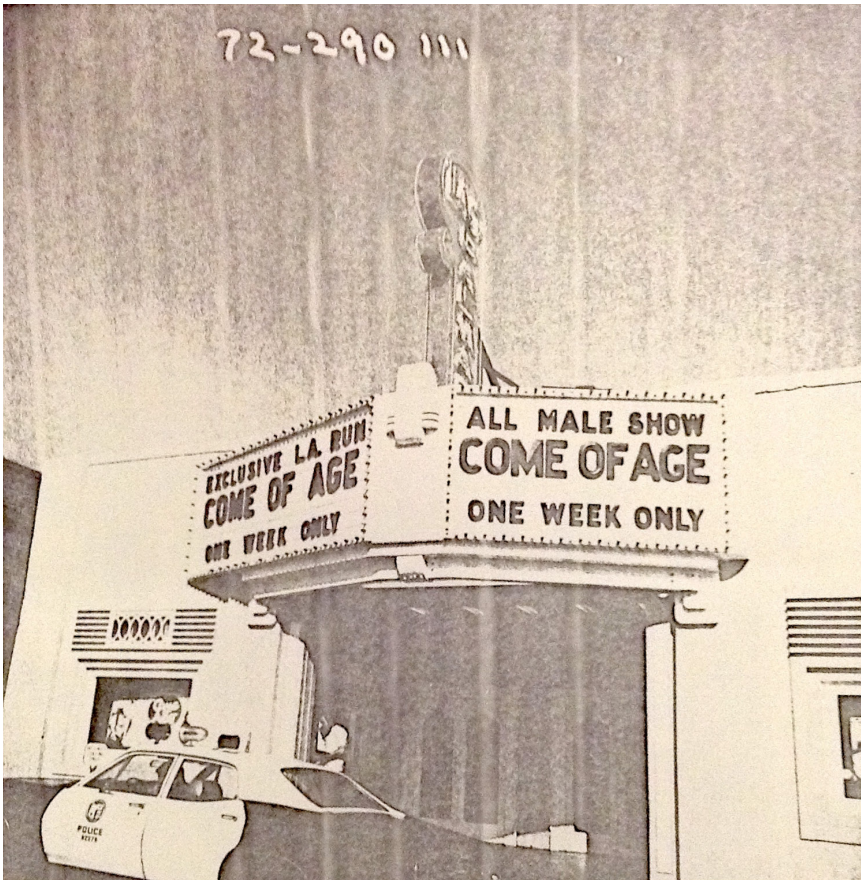


Figure 1. Photocopy of police photograph of Las Palmas facade featuring Jaguar Productions' *Come of Age* (1971) (box 334, folder Bell, etc. et al. v. Davis, etc. et al. L.A.S.C. No. C-29025 #2, Stanley Fleishman Papers [Collection 1538], Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles).

was searched, as required by the penal code in order to establish probable cause for the purposes of the warrant.<sup>46</sup>

The screening of Jaguar films at the Las Palmas did not directly lead the LAPD to investigate Jaguar's production and distribution operations. However, since the opening of the Hollywood Century signaled an increasing legitimation, visibility, and market power for gay pornography, the theater (and by extension Jaguar) almost immediately became a new target of stringent policing. Police seized prints of the first four features exhibited at the Hollywood Century, but no charges were filed.<sup>47</sup> Four weeks after the opening of

46 For officer statement and officer photographs of the Las Palmas Theatre, see Roger Arnebergh and David M. Schacter, "Points and Authorities in Opposition to Preliminary Injunction," July 11, 1972, 19–26, box 334, folder Bell, etc. et al. v. Davis, etc. et al. L.A.S.C. no. C-29025 file no. 2, Fleishman Papers.

47 According to attorney notes, within the first six weeks of the Hollywood Century's

the Hollywood Century on December 19, 1973, a special party was planned for the premiere of *The Light from the Second Story Window*. Allen's film was an adaptation of his radical novel of the same name, which was promoted as "a fictionalized documentary of police brutality against the gay community in Los Angeles" and "a call to arms."<sup>48</sup> One reviewer in the gay newspaper *The Advocate* lauded the book's gay liberationist edge noting that via the protagonist, Lee, the book "insists that it is the police, blue-coated cops and vice squad plainclothesmen, who wield the ultimate power over all men, and whose special affinity with judges and other officers of the court create the most deadly threat to innocent and guilty alike. Lee is obsessed by the conviction that he will be gunned down by the police during the commission of some fake crime. Either that, or his home will be forcibly entered—'no knock.'<sup>49</sup> In this way, Allen's book reflected on and contested the massive and ongoing police harassment campaign against sexual and gender minorities in Los Angeles, which included police officers' recent murders of a Black trans woman (Laverne Turner), a lesbian (Ginny Gallegos), and a white gay man (Howard Efland). The film version of *The Light from the Second Story Window* does not didactically identify police violence via dialogue or monologue, but instead visualizes its critique of anti-gay policing via sequences of police cruelty, including a homophobic cop's brutal rape of the protagonist. Given police attention to the negative depiction of the LAPD, as we will see, it is conceivable that the film's (and book's) overt critique of police authoritarianism was a pivotal factor prompting the investigation of Jaguar's new vertically integrated operations.

Records of police presence at the premiere of *The Light from the Second Story Window* display the law enforcement tactics of visual allegation and visual incrimination. At least one plainclothes officer, R. B. Guzman, attended the premiere of *The Light from the Second Story Window* at the Hollywood Century. Guzman took down a detailed account of the event release of the film and specifically targeted SPREE member and Century manager James Miah Kelley (a.k.a. Kelle) because "on three occasions [*sic*] Ofcr obs susp Kelley in the viewing portion of the theater watching the film."<sup>50</sup> This description triangulates the centrality of visual perception to the claim that the film was obscene and that Kelley was culpable for exhibiting it. To support the misdemeanor complaint against Kelley, Officer Guzman had to establish (1) that he (Guzman) was in the theater viewing the film, (2) that

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opening, prints for *Nights in Black Leather* (1973), *Magnificent Cowboys* (Dick Martin, 1972), *Roundabouts* (Dick Martin, 1972), and three prints of *The Light from the Second Story Window* (1973) were seized; "Monroe Beehler," June 5, 1974, box 580, folder Beehler, Monroe, et al. adv. Peo. L.A.M.C. no. A-304195, Fleishman Papers. The earlier police seizures were reported in the gay press. "3 Films 'Arrested' at L.A. Theatre," *The Advocate*, January 2, 1974, 6–7.

48 *The Light from the Second Story Window* advertisement, *Los Angeles Free Press*, July 7, 1972, 28.

49 Patrick Doyle, "Novel Hits Police, Courts," *The Advocate*, May 10, 1972, 26, 32.

50 R. B. Guzman, "Los Angeles Police Department Complaint Application," December 20, 1973, box 10, folder Kelley, James adv. Peo. L.A.M.C. no. 31-475546 (Beehler), Fleishman Papers. The shorthand abbreviations "Ofcr," "obs," and "susp" mean "Officer," "observed," and "suspect," respectively. It should be noted that a three-hour version of the film was originally advertised as premiering at the Las Palmas in January 1973; however, Guzman was attending the premiere of the two-hour edit at the Hollywood Century Theatre.

he saw Kelley on the premises, and (3) that Kelley was at some point present in the theater viewing the film.<sup>51</sup>

On January 2, 1974, Officer Joseph Brazas returned to the theater to document his viewing of the film as part of a larger felony charge against Beehler, Kelley, John Winslow, Jaguar, and the Hollywood Century for a conspiracy to exhibit *The Light from the Second Story Window*, an allegedly obscene film. The officer's copious notes on the film included detailed visual descriptions of characters, locations, and performances, in language evincing both the officer's attention to detail and his status as a cultural outsider.<sup>52</sup> The detailing of the film's sex scenes was the primary focus of the officer's affidavit because it supported his interpretive claim—his subjectivity and interpretive action signaled on the final page of the affidavit with the phrase “in your affiant's opinion”—that the film was obscene.<sup>53</sup>

Officer Brazas took particular interest in the previously mentioned sequence in which a cop sexually assaults the film's protagonist. Brazas described the scene as follows:

Mr. Currey takes a male, depicted as a policeman, into another room. Lee enters the room and is paid by Mr. Currey. . . . The policeman then begins to degrade Lee. . . . The policeman whips Lee with his beld [*sic*] and then undresses and sits on a chair. He then orders Lee to get on his knees and orally copulate his penis. Lee complies. The policeman then throws Lee on the bed and orders Lee to continue to orally copulate his penis. The policeman then masturbates his penis and ejaculates a white substance onto Lee's face. All during this action, the policeman is constantly ridiculing Lee for being a homosexual. After he ejaculates, the policeman beats Lee about the head and face with his hands, dresses, and then leaves.<sup>54</sup>

Unlike other paragraphs describing *The Light from the Second Story Window*, which aspire toward a one-to-one correspondence between what was projected on the screen and what was written in the affidavit, the recounting

51 The third assertion was especially necessary because at this time, as stated previously, obscenity charges were dependent on a notion called *scienter*, knowledge that one was committing a crime. In this case, the *scienter* requirement was ostensibly verified by Guzman's perception of Kelley viewing the film, in other words, Kelley's knowledge of the film's content.

52 The officer's character descriptions usually included specifics such as the character's name, form of costume, and blocking within the *mise-en-scène*; notably, only Black characters were identified by race. The officer identified locations, with a particular focus on determining outdoor sequences' placement within the geography of Los Angeles; for example, “The scene opens showing the Greyhound Bus Depot at 1409 North Vine” or “The scene changes showing Lee walking Northbound on Laurel Canyon Boulevard north of Mount Olympus.” See Mary E. Waters and Joseph C. Brazas, “Affidavit in Support of and Petition for Search Warrant,” January 3, 1974, 4–5, box 580, folder Century Theatre: Search Warrants 10528 and 10528-A, Fleishman Papers.

53 Waters and Brazas, 1.

54 Waters and Brazas, 6. Ellipses are employed in the quote given the scene description's overall length of nearly a page. The shortened quote is meant to give a sense of the officer's descriptive and interpretive focus on the depiction of police abuse in the scene. Sentences excised in the ellipses deal with tertiary characters in the scene and do not add or subtract substantively to the description of police abuse.

of this scene calls attention to the officer's viewing position as a mediator between the screen and the document. There are at least two components of Brazas's description that demonstrate its function as a register of an officer's visual perception. First, the sexual components of the film are described with terminology that detaches the viewer from the act.<sup>55</sup> Second, it is telling that Brazas uses the formulation "depicted as a policeman" when other character personas such as pimp, drag queen, and film director are simply stated as self-evident and unmediated. The "depicted as" phrase underscores the officer's detached position as a viewer applying a process of interpretation to the film's images.

These distancing components not only document Brazas's unique spectatorial positioning as a cultural outsider watching a gay film in a gay theater, but they also visually incriminate and thus register an anxiety that the act of viewing a gay film in a gay theater might have implications for the viewer's sexual identity. As Brazas states earlier in the document, his expertise in the field of gay pornography was not acquired from immersive viewing of gay films—as suggested by his detailed visual documentation—but from having "made or assisted in numerous arrests for vice violations" and having "received formal and informal academic training in the field of pornography."<sup>56</sup> In order to visually corroborate *The Light from the Second Story Window's* alleged obscenity, officers returned to seize the film and arranged for its later projection in the courtroom as visual evidence of obscenity that supposedly spoke for itself.

The investigation of exhibition practices at the Hollywood Century precipitated a broader investigation in which the LAPD sought felony charges against not only Jaguar employees but also visible gay community figures Rocco and Dave Glascock. On January 4, 1974, police coordinated a massive raid on five spaces: Jaguar Productions' offices at 7801 Beverly Boulevard, the Hollywood Century Theatre at 5115 Hollywood Boulevard, Rocco's home at 1545 North Detroit Street, the Homophile Entertainment Guild (HEG)—an organization responsible for a gay community shelter for the homeless—at 1720 North Gower Street, and the Cinema Video rental studio at 1051 North Ridgewood Place.<sup>57</sup> The raids were organized following a tip from at least one police informant, Tom Pepin (a.k.a. Erick Murphy). Pepin had appeared in the Jaguar film *Zoomerang!* (Gorton Hall, 1974) and was a former client of HEG's roommate service, which paired working-class and homeless gay youth with roommates to obtain affordable housing. The day of the *Zoomerang!* shoot, Pepin was paid in full (\$75) for his performance in the film. However, the cinematographer Brian King offered him an additional \$50 for assistance cleaning up the sound stage, which was not immediately paid, according to Pepin. Feeling he was exploited, Pepin took his grievance to police, and officers sequenced his story into a narrative list of "overt

55 For example, the terms *orally copulate* and *white substance* have nearly clinical associations distinct from more common terms *suck* and *semen* and slang terms *blow job* and *cum* that would have been employed by contemporaneous audiences.

56 Waters and Brazas, "Affidavit," 3.

57 Police confiscated two hardcore gay films from Rocco's home: *Country Chicken* (Ron Orney, 1973) and Jaguar's *Roundabouts* (1972).



acts” that allegedly established a conspiracy to commit oral copulation and sodomy.<sup>58</sup>

In sum, Jaguar associates were charged with two felony counts of violating California’s conspiracy statute (Penal Code Section 182), a law contingent on events—dubbed “overt acts”—and their corroboration through visual evidence.<sup>59</sup> The first felony count was conspiracy to commit oral copulation and sodomy (Penal Code Sections 288a and 286, respectively) in the production of *Zoomerang!* The second felony count was conspiracy to violate the California obscenity statute (Penal Code Section 311.2), with the Hollywood Century’s exhibition of *The Light from the Second Story Window*. There are two reasons why the two counts were conspiracy charges rather than simply charges against the enactments of oral copulation, sodomy, and obscenity. While obscenity was a misdemeanor, conspiracy was a felony charge and thus was usually accompanied by heftier penalties.<sup>60</sup> Additionally, a conspiracy charge allowed for netting not just individuals involved in an act itself; it also allowed for embroiling anyone allegedly connected to events leading up to an act. Notably, the use of the term *overt* itself infuses the conspiracy statute with a rhetoric of visibility. While the penal code did not define “overt act” explicitly, cases informing the statute applied descriptors of the term that convey *overt* as synonymous with visible, self-evident, or apparent to an observer.<sup>61</sup>

Simultaneous to the LAPD siege of Jaguar, the FBI was conducting its own investigation toward seeking a federal indictment against the company for interstate transportation of obscene matter. On February 3, 1973, a carton from Pittsburgh containing 16mm reels of gay pornographic films—Jaguar’s feature *The Insatiabes* (Robert A. Williamson, 1972) and short *Summer Fireworks* (unknown director, 1972)—allegedly burst open in transit to a Railway Express Agency location at Los Angeles International Airport. The FBI was contacted and, upon receiving a warrant, seized the films on February 5. On February 7, Strickland attempted to file a claim on the package and was met and interrogated by FBI agents. The FBI then seized two more film cartons—containing Jaguar’s *Come of Age, Get That Sailor* (Brad Kingston, 1972), and short films—after a search of Strickland’s car. Throughout the year, the FBI continued to build a case, leveraging informants, special agents, and local law enforcement to gather information on Jaguar’s distribution network, which included theaters in Pittsburgh, Portland, and Denver.<sup>62</sup> It is

58 *People v. Beehler et al.* (1974), Los Angeles Municipal Court Case File CR A 304195, 1, Archives and Records Center, Los Angeles, CA.

59 *People v. Donahue*, 46 Cal. App. 3d 832 (1975), 838.

60 This practice was referred to as “bootstrap[ing] a misdemeanor into a felony.” *People v. Donahue*, 838.

61 The fusion of “overt acts” with conspiracy charges arose out of case law on treason where it was understood that “thoughts and attitudes alone cannot make a treason,” but instead treasonous acts must be apparent to witnesses as open activity consisting “of something outward and visible and capable of direct proof.” See *Cramer v. United States*, 325 U.S. 1 (1945), 29. The interpretation of the California conspiracy statute similarly reflected the accepted definition of “overt act” as being visibly manifest. For example, as an “open act,” see *People v. Olson*, 232 Cal. App. 2d 480 [Ct. App. 1965], 490; or as “an outward act done in pursuance of the crime and in manifestation of an intent or design, looking toward the accomplishment of the crime,” see *Chavez v. United States*, 275 F.2d 813 (9th Cir. 1960), 817.

62 This information was gleaned from a heavily redacted Freedom of Information

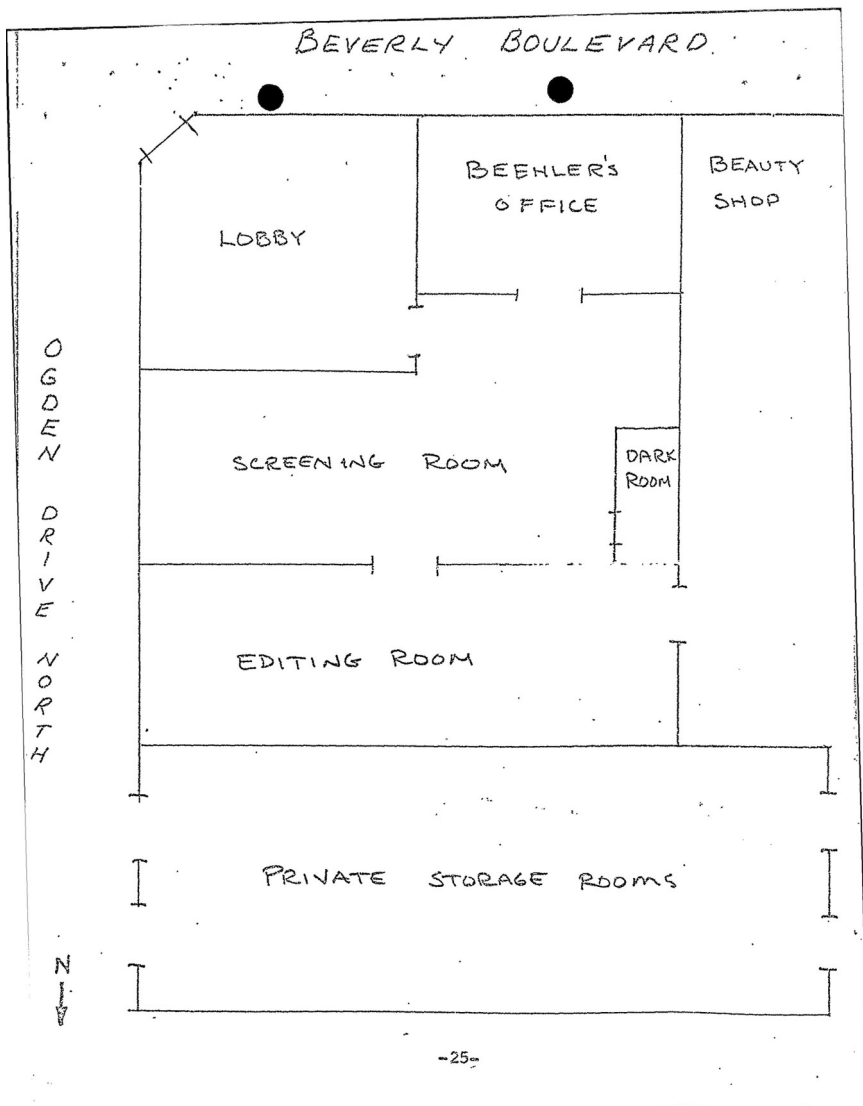


Figure 2. FBI map of Jaguar Productions' offices at 7801 Beverly Boulevard as described by a name-redacted informant on December 14, 1973 (Hardy to Freibert, FOIA Release, July 23, 2019, 127).

likely that the LAPD's raid on Jaguar's headquarters was coordinated with the federal agents, given that the FBI had a map of Jaguar's Beverly Boulevard location in advance of the 1974 police raid (see Figure 2). At first glance,

Act release of 167 pages pertaining to their investigation of Brian King and Monroe Beehler. Hardy to Freibert, FOIA release, July 23, 2019. Informant information included detailed descriptions of Jaguar associates and places such as the map of the Beverly Boulevard location.

this map offers potential insights into the Jaguar workplace, which is unique in the absence of an official archive. Yet it should ultimately be understood as a tactical map within a methodical project of gay community decimation, and it is representative of the visual fabrication of criminality (a map for retroactively staging so-called overt acts) associated with such archival traces.

During its investigation, the FBI employed tactics of identification and intimidation that recall earlier methods of systematic harassment forged during the Lavender Scare.<sup>63</sup> In December, the FBI visited numerous friends, relatives, and associates of Jaguar and employed their status as federal law enforcement to compel individuals to consent to questioning. The FBI even interviewed Beehler's mother, attempting to appeal to her religious views to condemn her son's involvement in the gay pornography industry.<sup>64</sup> Of particular note was the FBI's stringent targeting of Strickland because they viewed him as "the only overt homosexual" working at Jaguar.<sup>65</sup> Agents confirmed this identificatory allegation through a compilation of Strickland's criminal history, which, in addition to Strickland's fifteen arrests at Woody's for obscenity, included three arrests for violations of anti-gay lewdness and vagrancy laws from 1954 to 1963. Such records contained visual allegations from a 1954 arrest—"it appeared that defendant was masturbating"—that supposedly corroborated Strickland's sexual identity in conjunction with his purported admission to officers of being homosexual for eleven years.<sup>66</sup> Strickland recalled that FBI agents threatened imprisonment in an attempt to get him to inform on Beehler and other Jaguar associates, an FBI tactic reflecting the Cold War cultural association of homosexuality with vulnerability to influence (such as blackmail).<sup>67</sup>

Despite intense investigations into Jaguar's interstate distribution processes, the FBI was ultimately not successful in establishing grounds for a federal indictment. This was especially due to Beehler's sophisticated methods of clandestine distribution including the copious use of pseudonyms (the FBI listed at least six other aliases for Beehler alone), the hand delivery of prints to theaters, and the use of pay phones for making all shipping reservations.<sup>68</sup> On August 13, 1974, an FBI memo indicated the case against Jaguar was closed. Importantly, the case was closed both because no additional evidence could be acquired *and* "in view of the fact Beehler has apparently ceased

63 David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 61.

64 Rheba Beehler, "Interview between Rheba Beehler and FBI Agents," December 11, 1973, box 580, folder Beehler, Monroe, et al. adv. Peo. L.A.S.C. no. A-304195, Fleishman Papers.

65 Hardy to Freibert, FOIA release, July 23, 2019, 96.

66 Hardy to Freibert, FOIA release, July 23, 2019, 66–73.

67 Strickland recalled agents' statements included "is it really worth it to you, knowing that you might hang, that you might spend at least 3 years in jail, to protect Ken Werner in this manner," and "why don't we just serve the deposition on him now, and arrest him right at this moment?" See Gerald Strickland, "Interview between Gerald Strickland and FBI Agents," December 11, 1973, box 580, folder Beehler, Monroe, et al. adv. Peo. L.A.S.C. no. A-304195, Fleishman Papers. Ken Werner was allegedly one of Beehler's pseudonyms.

68 For discussion of pay phone and hand-delivery methods, see "Peek at Porn's Past," 63.

making film.”<sup>69</sup> This reasoning suggests that Jaguar’s shutdown was the ultimate goal—regardless of the outcome of any criminal charges—and it was achieved through coordinated FBI and LAPD intimidation. The LAPD’s case was also ultimately unsuccessful, dismissed following the suppression of the LAPD’s main evidence due to improper property seizures. As we will see in the next section, law enforcement’s imposition into the gay community functioned as a wedge to pry apart the cooperation between pornographic visual culture and gay activism.<sup>70</sup>

### **POLITICS OF IDENTIFICATION AND TRACES OF A VISUAL COUNTER-ARCHIVE**

Following the raid on Rocco’s home and the subsequent arrests of Rocco, Glascock, and Jaguar employees, gay activists employed three key visibility tactics to counter the police siege on the gay Los Angeles community: public protests against law enforcement, published photographs of undercover cops, and visual-rhetorical disarticulations of gay liberation from gay pornography. A first demonstration was held on January 21, 1974, at the Parker Center—the LAPD headquarters—and the Federal Building, which housed an FBI field office. The protest drew over 250 demonstrators and was headed by gay liberation activists Morris Kight and the Reverend Troy Perry. On February 22, a candlelight march for solidarity with the raid victims began on the steps of Hollywood High School and proceeded down Hollywood Boulevard to the Hollywood police station. Activists also threatened a two-day boycott of all non-gay-owned Hollywood businesses in order to demonstrate the impact of the gay dollar to the Hollywood Businessmen’s Association, an organization that supported the police’s anti-gay policies through its use of rhetoric that associated gay men with an increased crime rate in Hollywood.

In addition to these public demonstrations, a visual counter-archive of police and informants was assembled and circulated in the gay press. Gay activists collected visual documents of police harassment, mirroring the LAPD’s collection of photographs and textual-visual descriptions of those involved in gay pornographic enterprises. A January issue of *The Advocate* ran photographs of the faces of five plainclothes officers for the purposes of reader identification.<sup>71</sup> In a similar move, *SPREE News Pictorial* featured photographs of five undercover officers alongside its coverage of the Federal Building demonstrations.<sup>72</sup> Additionally, following an officer mistake in which the police informant’s name was revealed, the gay press published identifying information such as Tom Pepin’s name and photograph.<sup>73</sup> This

69 Hardy to Freibert, FOIA release, July 23, 2019, 168.

70 As Lucas Hilderbrand has observed, gay pornography became the most pervasive form of gay visual culture during the late 1960s and into the 1970s. See Hilderbrand, “Historical Fantasies,” 327–335.

71 “Raids Jar Hollywood Gays,” *The Advocate*, January 30, 1974, 3.

72 “Photo-Story of the Gay Raids, Arrests and Demonstrations,” *SPREE News Pictorial*, February 1974, 2–3.

73 Pepin’s name was publicized through numerous issues of *The Advocate* and in a competing local gay newspaper, *Entertainment West*. *The Advocate* ran at least two photographs of Pepin for identifying purposes; see “No Witness? Case Dismissed!,” *The Advocate*, March 13, 1974, 5; “Harassed Vice Cop Cries Treason,” 10; and Vic Vance, “Life in Gay L.A.,” *Entertainment West* 100 (January 1974): 12.

counter-archive of visual and identifying information was circulated so that gay men could recognize police and informants in order to avoid them.

Despite the assembly of a visual counter-archive and the calls to solidarity with raid and arrest victims in the Jaguar case, the aftermath of the case was marked by significant attempts to distance gay community figures (such as Rocco and Glascock) from Jaguar. Following the raids, Glascock exited his position at Beulahland (an HEG crash pad and alleged casting hub of Jaguar), refused to defend gay pornography generally, and treated his alleged association with Jaguar employees as a falsely imposed witch hunt tactic.<sup>74</sup> Rocco doubled down on his assertion that he never was involved in pornography, ultimately disavowing the Jaguar films he directed—a stance he maintained throughout his life. This dissociation with Jaguar was solidified visually in the gay press coverage of the dismissal of all charges in the LAPD's case on December 11, 1974. Photographs accompanying the dismissal announcement centralized Rocco and Glascock while notably eliding Jaguar associates Beehler, King, Joe Caruso, John Winslow, Strickland, and Jack Foley—emphasizing Rocco and Glascock's victory as the significant component to celebrate.<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, the dismissal was immediately followed by Glascock's appointment as deputy to the recently elected county supervisor, Ed Edelman, a move signaling that an association with gay pornography would not have resulted in the appointment. This tactic of visually and rhetorically differentiating gay activists from gay pornographers reflected a broader fissure between the two camps.

The policing of Jaguar exacerbated a rift between gay liberation and gay pornography that reflects the complex and shifting relationship of liberation and pornography throughout the 1970s. This convoluted relationship has been examined by pornography studies in a variety of ways. Thomas Waugh's pioneering work parsed how gay pornographies often encoded incompatible positions, including a gay liberation ethos alongside ideologies of self-hatred, racism, and the closet.<sup>76</sup> In terms of causality, contradictory historical trajectories have been identified in gay adult media studies: whereas Richard Dyer has partly attributed the development of gay pornography to social infrastructures established by gay liberation, David K. Johnson has identified early forms of gay sex media as the incubator of a gay liberation consciousness.<sup>77</sup> Lucas Hilderbrand has traced the rich complexities inherent in the circulation and reception of 1970s gay pornographies, sometimes perceived as aligned with gay liberation (as in *Boys in the Sand*, Wakefield Poole, 1971) and other times understood as refusing gay identities or politics with the

74 "Dave Glascock Quits Position at Beulahland," *The Advocate*, January 16, 1974, 17; and "Gays Plan Solidarity March against L.A. Police Center," *The Advocate*, January 30, 1974, 3.

75 Douglas Sarff, "L.A. Gay Leaders Cleared," *The Advocate*, January 1, 1975, 3.

76 Thomas Waugh, "Men's Pornography, Gay vs. Straight: A Topographical Comparison," *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*, no. 30 (1985): 34.

77 Richard Dyer, "Male Gay Porn: Coming to Terms," *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*, no. 30 (1985): 28; David K. Johnson, "Physique Pioneers: The Politics of 1960s Gay Consumer Culture," *Journal of Social History* 43, no. 4 (2010): 867–892, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jsh.0.0342>; and David K. Johnson, *Buying Gay: How Physique Entrepreneurs Sparked a Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019).

prevalence of the advertising term *male* rather than *gay*.<sup>78</sup> Recently, Ryan Powell coined the term *liberation porn* to name a subcategory of 1960s and 1970s gay pornographic films that appear to align with a gay liberation politics.<sup>79</sup> In her field-forging book, Linda Williams famously engaged Michel Foucault's critique of the "repressive hypothesis" to identify how the perception of repression energized the politics of liberation and the industry of pornography; both the politics and the industry generated forms of sexual expression that espoused an illusion of freedom from repression.<sup>80</sup>

This rich literature points to how the cooperation and tension between gay liberation and pornography are often expressed through rhetorical positioning. Employed in a capitalist enterprise, gay pornographers could embrace a liberationist ethos to promise sexual emancipation, or they could downplay any relation to gay politics to cast a broader consumer tent. Working with a pliable ideology, self-described gay liberationists may point to pornography as the epitome of capitalist oppression or might celebrate pornography as the filmic embodiment of a gay liberation aesthetic. In the contexts of the Jaguar raids, police abuse incited an array of rhetorical responses that had consequences for local gay unity.

While certainly the aims of public visibility and sexual liberation were a focus of both gay liberation politics and gay pornography aesthetics, some Los Angeles-based gay activists and pornography entrepreneurs began to diverge in their views toward gay commercial enterprise. At least two police informants (Pepin and Charles Brisendine) were identified in the gay press with the gay liberation cause, prompting Houston-based pornography distributor Charles Anson to exclaim in an *Advocate* editorial, "I, for one, resent the actions of liberationists such as Brisendine who would deliver them [hustlers, pornographers, and clients] into the hands of the Gay's real enemy, the police!"<sup>81</sup> With the exception of Kepner, major figures in Los Angeles gay liberation—including Kight and W. Dorr Legg—engaged the rhetoric of respectability to urge that pornography had no place in gay liberation. Kepner countered with a speech culminating with the rhetorical question, "How can you separate the two issues when, historically, the courts and the laws have considered homosexuality itself to be obscene?"<sup>82</sup> Kepner's counterargument points to a breakdown in solidarity between police sympathizers who touted a politics of respectability and other "fastidious homosexuals among us" who were rightly opposed to collaboration with the police and not seduced by a politics of respectability.<sup>83</sup> These antagonisms historically situate the tension between pornography and gay liberation, contradicting any perception that both were strictly aligned or opposed.

At the same time that *The Light from the Second Story Window* visualized

78 Hilderbrand, "Historical Fantasies," 333.

79 Ryan Powell, *Coming Together: The Cinematic Elaboration of Gay Male Life, 1945–1979* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 164–222.

80 Linda Williams, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible"* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 1–23.

81 Charles Anson, "Self-Serving Tripe," *The Advocate*, November 21, 1973, 36.

82 Douglas Sarff, "Gays Divided on Porno Defense," *The Advocate*, February 27, 1974, 24.

83 Sarff, 24.

a trenchant critique of state abuse—arguably a quintessential commitment of gay liberation—some gay activists rejected pornographic representations while others went further to assist the police in dismantling the infrastructures for independent gay media production. This breakdown in solidarity is in notable contrast to the fact that the midcentury development of gay pornographic media, through its infrastructures of clandestine production and circulation, enabled the development of a gay liberation consciousness.<sup>84</sup> How do we make sense of these conflicts, and where does culpability lie? Applicable insight can be gained by revisiting a Humphreys quotation describing what occurs when a potential cop intrudes into a space of public sex: “Until the legitimization or departure of the intruder, a sort of ‘panic reaction’ ensues: play becomes disorganized; and the focus of strategies shifts from the payoff—first to self-protection.”<sup>85</sup> Applying this insight to the broader notion of gay solidarity, the chaotic breakdown in solidarity mirrors in macrocosm Humphreys’s description of the “panic reaction,” the “disorganiz[ation],” and the individualist shift toward “self-protection.” Therefore, by extension, it is the presence—or, more radically, the existence—of police that resulted in a breakdown of solidarity within gay liberation Los Angeles. The visual archives of Jaguar support this conclusion. Rather than document a significant moment of gay cultural production, they document that moment’s dismantling through the existence of law enforcement as an annihilator of gay collectivity.

The contents of the law enforcement archives of Jaguar show that gay pornographic entrepreneurs of the 1970s were vulnerable and under state siege, to an extent that is surprising from a contemporary perspective.<sup>86</sup> State abuse not only influenced the operation of Jaguar in the 1970s but also significantly affects the historiographic study of the company in the present. In the case of Jaguar, the company was simultaneously more embedded in gay politics and more precarious than one might expect. Films such as *The Light from the Second Story Window* evinced a radical gay politics aligned with a critique of state abuse, yet many gay liberationists (with the exception of Kepner) rejected the cultural work of Jaguar’s films. Since the vast majority of existing archival documentation of Jaguar comes from the vector of law enforcement oppression, those documents are necessarily framed in a shade of blue that must be taken into account when recovering Jaguar’s story. State abuse not only affected the history of Jaguar but now also affects the historiographic process for making sense of what happened to the company,

84 Johnson, “Physique Pioneers,” 867–892.

85 Humphreys, “Tearoom Trade,” 88.

86 Rather than more overt forms of censorship such as police raids, incarceration, surveillance, and arrest that were dominant in the context of Jaguar’s birth and decline, in our contemporary moment, dominant forms of pornography censorship tend to include neglect, indifference, and corporate greed, some of which were enabled by the passage of FOSTA-SESTA in 2018. Recent examples include Tumblr’s excision of pornographies in 2018, Pornhub’s deletion of content in 2020, and the closure of Xtube in 2021. Some important scholarly considerations of these forms of contemporary censorship include Peter Alilunas, “Contemporaneous Mundanity and Pornography Regulation by Indifference,” *Porn Studies* 9, no. 1 (2022): 38–55, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23268743.2020.1865191>; and Feona Attwood, Clarissa Smith, and John Mercer, eds., editorial, *Porn Studies* 6, no. 3 (2019): 279–281, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23268743.2019.1677045>.

revealing the extent to which police existence played a role in annihilating solidarity within gay Los Angeles of the 1970s.

Many thanks to Whitney Strub, whose feedback on an early proposal draft of this article made me think more critically about my arguments and the sources I engaged. I thank the staff of UCLA's Special Collections and the ONE Archives for their important archival work. I'm grateful to the two anonymous reviewers whose constructive comments greatly improved this article. Finally, I thank Lucas Hilderbrand and Joe Rubin for their informal discussions about Jaguar Productions in 2017, when I began this project.

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