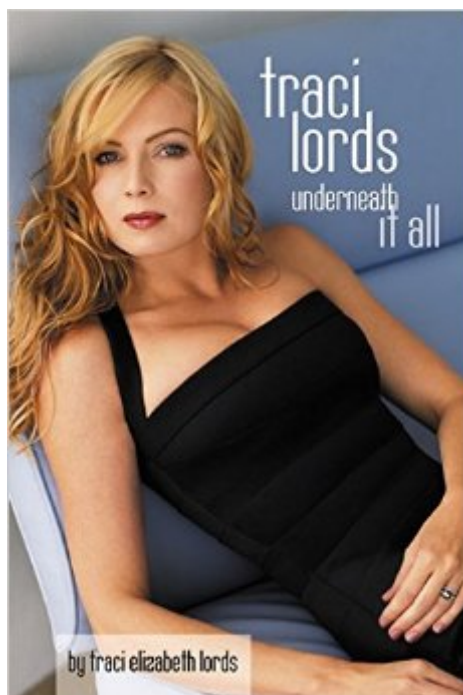


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Traci Lords: Underneath It All



Synopsis

The moving, gripping, and tell-all autobiography of Traci Elizabeth Lords, a former child porn queen, electronica maven, and cult movie and TV star. At 14, Nora Kuzma ran away from home and ended up on the dirty streets of Hollywood. She fell in with a fast crowd, and her dreams of modelling soon landed her a spectacular centrefold in Penthouse magazine, where at 15 she became internationally known as 'Traci Lords'. From there she appeared in numerous adult films and magazines, denying her past and battling a deep addiction to cocaine and men. Three years later she got out. This is her memoir – a tale of loss, redemption, and ultimate survival as Traci Elizabeth Lords takes you into her secretive past, faces her demons, and shares her extraordinary journey of personal growth. Snippets of Traci's story have been told here and there, but this book will set the record straight. What happened to her as a child to make her pursue a porn career? Why was she blamed as the person who brought down porn in the late 1980s? How many sex movies did she really star in? Why did she quit? There's more misinformation floating around about Traci Lords than almost anyone. This book sets the record straight.

Book Information

Hardcover: 304 pages

Publisher: It Books; 1 edition (July 8, 2003)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0060508205

ISBN-13: 978-0060508203

Product Dimensions: 6 x 1 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.4 pounds

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars – See all reviews (153 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #288,942 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #49 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Pornography #790 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Arts & Literature > Television Performers #2461 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Arts & Literature > Actors & Entertainers

Customer Reviews

Traci Lords became famous or infamous, it depends how you see her situation, after she and the adult film industry were caught with their pants down. Which's isn't a bad thing in porn unless your under 18 which Traci was for most of her triple X career. So 20 years later it's not surprising that Ms. Lords revisits that dark time in her life. The first half of the book is compelling. In it she details her

young life in Ohio working class towns. It's probably no surprise that she had father issues. Her Dad was abusive and her Mom, making a series of bad decisions, dropped that deadbeat for an even sleazier deadbeat. Traci was also developing at an early age found that her sex not only brought unwanted attention, but often unwanted advances. A move to California and the drug culture combined to make the perfect storm for young Traci. By 15 she was posing as a model and by 17 she was an established porn star. After a late night FBI raid Traci and the adult industry was busted. Traci would leave the triple X fare behind and strike out as a "legitimate" actress with moderate success. This is where the rest of the book, which chronicles her mainstream career, falters. It reads more like a resume than an autobiography. No real insights are offered after her porn career and to be honest few insights are shared before and during her porn career. Because Lords avoids many details and offers little insight into her self, we're left with a pretty non-descript depiction of her life. The first half of the books works better because the story is so compelling, but Traci makes few attempts to look inside herself and the result is stunting. The book is also very non-sexual. This is neither good nor bad, but those looking for an erotic read will be disappointed.

"Imagination is more important than intelligence," as Albert Einstein used to say and Traci Lords has now proved in her new autobiography "Underneath It All." Not that Ms. Lords is dumb. Far from it. Throughout her book she displays a keen mind to match her accomplishments as the only former adult movie actress ever to achieve mainstream success. Although this does not mean much in global terms of important world news, her life story is interesting enough in its own right, and in its own way even has a moral of redemption. Born Nora Kuzma in Steubenville, Ohio, in 1968, Ms. Lords' childhood was marred by a traumatic rape that occurred when she was only 10 years old. After her mother moved the family to California, the young Miss Kuzma found herself a stranger in a strange land just when she most needed guidance. Instead, left largely neglected, with little parental supervision for long periods of time, she became a heavy drug abuser in high school. Then her mother's ex-boyfriend introduced her to nude modeling and got her started performing in XXX-rated movies when she was just 15. This is the most delicate and difficult part of "Underneath It All." On the one hand, Ms. Lords must answer legitimate questions about her role in what was the biggest porn scandal of the 1980s. On the other hand, there is a fine line between addressing those questions and describing details of her erotic exploits that appeal more to the reader's prurient interests than to advance her main story. Generally speaking, Ms. Lords does an admirable job in covering this ground with grace and honesty. For legal reasons, she does not provide the real name of the producer who hired her as an underage actress (but the pseudonym she uses identifies him

for anyone remotely familiar with the case). She also makes it clear that she did not call in the authorities and set up the FBI bust that instantly made her such a notorious figure. In fact, Ms. Lords even claims that President Reagan's smut-busting Meese Commission had been investigating her for three years before finally cracking down on her illicit activities. By then, of course, the former Nora Kuzma was famous for her newly adopted screen persona. There are areas where Ms. Lords tries to have it both ways, though. She talks repeatedly and at great length about how she hates being "the poster child for a business I loathe." She movingly asks, "What do you do when your past is your present? How do you leave it behind?" And yet she also expresses some mixed feelings about her brief career as an adult movie star. It is obvious that she enjoyed the attention she received at the time, and has not been above capitalizing on the publicity that went along with her previous reputation as "a sex-crazed, drugged-out wild child." However, in spite of Ms. Lords' occasional attempts to deceive the reader (and sometimes, one suspects, herself), she still comes across as a decent person with a talent for thinking outside of the box that others built for her. And it is worth noting that she gives ample credit to her friends and supporters such as John Waters, Christina Applegate, and Roseanne Barr. No one will ever confuse Traci Lords with Katharine Hepburn, but Ms. Lords has become a good actress and an excellent singer. That transformation did not occur overnight and it is a tribute to Ms. Lords' hard work that she was able to make it happen, even at the cost of her first marriage. When she first sought legitimate jobs in the entertainment industry, she could not have known how difficult it would be. Cynicism aside, learning about how Ms. Lords struggled to overcome her personal and professional demons is almost inspirational in its impact. Maybe the best way to read "Underneath It All" is with an equal mix of healthy skepticism and sympathy for the author. Certainly no one has done more to earn a small measure of respect. As absurd as it may seem, it is not too much to say there is a kind of nobility of spirit about Ms. Lords. A lesser person could never have survived such a trial in the court of public opinion, and her resilience has been remarkable. Like Bob Dylan before her, Traci Lords literally reinvented herself under another name and then had to live with the consequences. What could be more American than that? At a mere 286 pages, "Underneath It All" is a bit too slender for its own good. In addition, the book would benefit from fewer fashion-model pictures of Ms. Lords and the addition of an index, but these are relatively minor flaws in a biography that otherwise has much to recommend it. In the end, Ms. Lords seems not so much against porn as she is opposed to what it has become in today's depraved and sexually violent culture. And while others talk about profound "national security" and "homeland defense" issues, Ms. Lords makes a convincing case that the real security (or lack thereof) depends more on what is happening to our children in our families and on

the streets. For those who still hope for a brighter future, "Underneath It All" is a book that shows change is possible.

Dysfunctional families is something I know something about. And Traci not only came from a dysfunctional family, but she also had a pretty face and killer body; her life was trouble waiting to happen. (How killer a body? Natural C cups, never augmented. She actually got a modeling contract with L'Eggs pantyhose, till they found out she was a porn star.) When she walked away from porn and booze/drugs, she did so completely. She stayed clean and sober, and she stayed away from porn, even when she was starving as a legit actress. I couldn't have done that. Traci Lords in her forties is strong, confident, and has exorcised her demons. Good for her. She writes the book as if she were a reporter observing her life: This happened, then this happened, then this happened.... The one-star reviewers are upset that she didn't constantly beat herself up, "Oh, I was a wicked, wicked little girl." But then, the one-star reviewers think that a gorgeous fifteen-year-old who falls into nude modeling after being raped, lied to, and browbeaten should nonetheless be held completely responsible for the agreements she makes.

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