

# WAKEFIELD POOLE

**(Everything You Fantasized about Porn Director  
Wakefield Poole, But Were Too Wrecked to Ask)**

“SM is a subtly essential part of sex whether or not  
homogenized homosexuals admit it or not.”

—Wakefield Poole

## **Author’s Historical Context**

Interview conducted August 24, 1978 at Wakefield Poole’s swanky Victorian mansion and film studio on the Panhandle of Golden Gate Park near Haight-Ashbury; written October 26, 1978, and published in *Drummer* 27, February 1979. *Playboy* interview-style head photos of Wakefield Poole by David Sparrow and Jack Fritscher.

In a letter dated September 7, 1978, Wakefield Poole, immediately following up our interview, wrote: “Dear Jack, Enclosed is a copy of *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu, The Proust Screenplay* [written by Harold Pinter]. I hope you enjoy it as much as yours truly. I’m on my third reading and it gets better each time. — Love, Wake.” The book itself is inscribed, “To Jack, I found a copy for you today. Now you need only read and enjoy. —Wakefield”

He sent the film script, because outside our taped interview, we had talked earnestly of our “Proustian” responsibility as artists in the 1970s to write and create the 1970s from the inside out—he in the recorded visions of his films, and I in the recorded journal entries which he knew were being worked into the 1970s drafts of *Some Dance to Remember*, which I shared with him and with Robert Mapplethorpe who was also capturing esthetic documentary “takes” on the 1970s.

In 2001, Alyson Publications printed Wakefield Poole’s memoir, titled the same as this 1978 interview, *Dirty Poole: Autobiography of a Gay Porn Pioneer*.

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**HOW TO LEGALLY QUOTE FROM THIS BOOK**

I had planned a series of celebrity covers. Just as *Drummer* 24, September 1978, had been “the Mapplethorpe cover,” this was *Drummer*’s “Wakefield Poole cover.” I chose the precise image from a remarkable set of color transparencies photographed during Wakefield’s shoot of his film, *The Bible*. The shot featured a heroic goateed hunk (looking very stoned) stretched spreadeagle on a bed by a diversity of mythic and muscular male beings, accompanied by a nubile black woman and a white dwarf in a blue wig—and, oh, how, in the name of Fellini it worked!

Wakefield Poole directed the porn star Roger in his Nob Hill Theater appearance. See “Pumping Roger” which appeared one year earlier in *Drummer* 21, March 1978. The Wakefield Poole filmography includes many pioneering and early gay films: *Boys in the Sand*, 1971; *Bijou*, 1972; *Wakefield Poole’s The Bible*, 1973; *Moving*, 1974; *Take One*, 1977; *Hot Shots*, 1981; *The Hustler*, 1984

In February, 1979, to celebrate the publication of this interview, Wakefield Poole hosted a small party in his studio for me and my then lover, the competition bodybuilder, Jim Enger, who, as part of a concerted performance art piece planned by the three of us, posed on a dais designed by Wake and lit by Paul Hatlestad. The select group of about a dozen men admired Jim Enger’s intense and powerful posing routine which he slowed down to an absolutely cool southern-man mosey. His intensity drew everyone in closer. In the 1890s, evenings with the great Eugen Sandow were like this; and there we were replicating Sandow and then some.

I’ll never forget Jim Enger’s wonderful disarming, engaging sentence as finally he peeled down and off his brown nylon posing briefs, revealing his actual immensity, as his muscle-show turned to muscle-worship. “You see,” he said, “it’s not true what they say about bodybuilders.” It wasn’t exactly as monumental as Alfred Jarry pronouncing *merde*, or Lytton Strachy daring to say out loud in Virginia Woolf’s parlor the single word, *semen*, but at that moment, melting into his sense of humor, every man in the studio who was in lust with him fell madly in love with him, as I had been from the first night I met him.

Ninety days later, at Harvey Milk's birthday party, May 22, 1979, the night after the White Night Riots, I met Mark Hemry, and history changed again.

Jim Enger was legendary at that time. He was, famously, the most desired man on Castro and Folsom and Christopher. Mark Hemry and I published him on the cover of the premiere issue of *Man2Man Quarterly* #1, October 1980.

In 2012, film director Jim Tushinski interviewed me for his documentary, *I Always Said Yes: The Many Lives of Wakefield Poole* (2013).

*Drummer* 27, February 1979

**Great Men of the Silver Screen:  
The Fabulous Director of *Boys in the Sand*,  
How He Worked with Juice-Queen Anita Bryant, &  
How Pornstar Roger Disappeared...**

## ***DIRTY POOLE***

**(Everything You Fantasized about Porn Director  
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**WAKEFIELD POOLE:** Is this a Dewar's Profile? [Dewar's Scotch featured a very popular magazine advertising campaign profiling the accomplishments of famous people who enjoyed Dewar's.]

**JACK FRITSCHER:** More like a Do-er's Profile.

**Wake:** Then this interview is your movie.

**Jack:** Are you ready for your closeup, Mr. Poole?

**Wake:** You just direct it.

**Jack:** When was the first time you were beaten with a coat-hanger as a child?

**Wake:** Never...as a child.

**Jack:** Then how, with your classic *Boys in the Sand* (1971), *Bijou* (1972), *The Bible* (1973), and *Take One* (1977), plus your Broadway

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and TV experience, have you been driven to deliver such richly “sick” male fantasies?

**Wake:** Pull out your coat-hanger and maybe I’ll confess. Do readers really want to know the neuroses that make me a Celluloid Junkie?

**Jack:** Your actors are all supermen, and men always want to know what makes a Super Do-er actualize what they only fantasize about.

**Wake:** No shit.

**Jack:** Absolutely. In fact, in *Superman*, director Richard Donner cribbed your technique. He sends Superman and Lois off into a fuck-flight in weightless black space. You delivered bodies fucking in directionless space as early as *Bijou*. You make male bodies float disconnected from...

**Wake:** Reality. I float them because if nothing is there, then everything is there. I’m almost purely into the bodies. Something in the way they move. The action and interaction of the muscles of the body.

My film loops are bodyscapes. I like to film people. I like to film them so they can see not only how they look, but how I see them when they do some really beautifully basic, *personal* things. They never see what I see when they’re jerking off looking into the mirror. When they see the footage, that’s the big surprise.

For instance, Louis DeVries in *Night Driver* has this incredible chest. When he’s jerking off, his whole pec gives off a motion that is totally erotic; but he can’t see it from his mirrored point of view. So I zoom right in on it. His pec is reacting as much as his hand and his dick are. Same reaction at the top of the body as at the bottom. And yet the camera allows the pec to be isolated from all else. You can study it, savor it—that’s the word for bodies and parts of bodies and faces disconnected in space. *SAVOR*. You can savor flesh. No distractions.

**Jack:** *Boys in the Sand*, on the other hand, was noted for its beautiful surroundings: seashore, beach houses.

**Wake:** That atmosphere was very controlled. That’s why straight film reviewers took notice. *Boys in the Sand* was the first gay film

that straights perceived as not sleazy. *Bijou*, which followed *Boys*, is as intentionally sleazy as a film can get, yet there's really nothing literally sleazy in it. The sleaze in *Bijou* is suggested and suggestive.

**Jack:** I virtually came out a second time on *Bijou*. It was the most erotic movie I'd ever seen.

**Wake:** Ha. When Bill Harrison walks into *Bijou*, you hear this carny music and the pinball machine. Noises calculated to set a *mondo sleazo* mood. But when you and he get inside, there's not any literal sleaze. *Bijou* is a dark drop down a gay White Rabbit's fantasy hole.

Take the woman at the ticket window. Fat. Heavy ugh-style make-up. Reading a wrestling magazine. Eating an orange with the juice dripping down the fat wattles of her mouth. What a FACE! The whole intro is calculated to be low-key and low-down.

Then when Bill goes inside. He finds nothing but the black void. Yet your attitude is programmed for sleaze. You figure this place is the pits, but he surprisingly passes through a chamber of sculpture and those reaching hands. Is this art? The walls are covered with *Playboy* centerfolds and Bill's jerking off his enormous meat, thinking about what? The girls? The sleaze? I'm not trying to film, in quotation marks, "art."

**Jack:** The best art is the art that conceals art. Your sleaze-cover makes the art of your films work, much the same way as Derek Jarman in his *Sebastiane*. At your films, guys get to go in and jerk off, but at the same time their intelligence isn't insulted.

**Wake:** And that's a problem. Lately I've felt a bit self-conscious about "art." I sometimes see "art." That's self-indulgent. That's like forcing the Mona Lisa down someone's throat.

Fuck art.

I want to get back to the fantasy of it all.

**Jack:** *Take One* to me was an erotic documentary.

**Wake:** Yes.

**Jack:** It would make a good double-bill with something as main-line media as *Word Is Out*. [*Word Is Out: Stories of Some of Our Lives*, 1977; 26 gay interviews] You deal with people who have

come out into their bodies, their heads, their sensuality—without politicizing sexuality.

**Wake:** There's more sex in *Take One* than in any movie I've ever made. And I *never* have a lot of come shots... *Take One* must have at least twenty. It had a lot of problems with censorship in L.A.

When the two brothers ball for the first time in their lives that was documentary on film. It happened in real life while it happened on film. Somehow, instinctively, naturally, they knew exactly what brother-to-brother they were going to do, but nothing was set before the cameras started to roll. The trip was that they wanted to do a whole leather number. They wanted their friends to see how hot they were and what they were really into—just like I sometimes reveal myself on film and just like you sometimes reveal yourself in your writing.

**Jack:** Is everything autobiography? [A crucial question]

**Wake:** Mostly. We better check with our analysts. Anyway, the brothers actually did a fistfucking scene which I cut because handballing is not allowed in L.A. Same for piss scenes. The LAPD busts you for both. What I did was cut it so you see the *suggestions* of everything that's happening: the greasing up of the arm.

I made almost a leather ballet out of it. I hate to say *ballet*, but you catch the ballet ruse. So it's a total penetration of the two brothers really experiencing each other for the first time. That's documentary reality. That's also many men's fantasy: to ball with their own brothers.

Then they took off the leather, and I scored in on the soundtrack the noise of kids on a playground, and if you listen really closely you can hear the last words on the track saying, "Hey! You got one just like mine!"

Then they play, wrestle, get into bed, and make love to one another.

That's when it happened for me.

Up to then, they were doing all the things they thought they *should* do. That wasn't bad, the way they started. They were wonderful. But you really see them peel themselves down to some basic, honest relating, again, in front of the camera. They just let it all loose.

**Jack:** So your camera's kind of a truth verite machine.

**Wake:** Sort of. In *Bijou* I do a self-tattling Hitchcock number where I make a "guest appearance." I jerk off in the multi-media section where the four guys have four orgasms while the girl takes off her clothes. One of the four guys didn't come back to do his jerkoff scene after lunch. So Peter Fisk, who was my lover at the time, suggested I do it, since he was already in it.

So there I was, the big-deal erotic filmmaker, my lover shooting me from the other room and I couldn't get a hardon.

Then, THEN, I realized what all these actors go through. So I grabbed the popper and said, "Goodbye, Peter" and I completely forgot the camera. It was a take. Cut and print. So I assume that's what others do: forget the camera. Some, I'm sure, in fact, don't forget the camera; they turn on to it directly. Jesus! To say: "Here I am jerking off for all the world to see." What a trip! Even though my face wasn't showing. Just chest to thighs. So, really, my secret little approach to exhibitionism had nothing to do with ego or identity. We just needed some stand-in meat for that scene.

**Jack:** You're a fantasy source for a lot of people.

**Wake:** A reality source too. So many people say, "God! you changed my life. I saw Casey Donovan sit on a dildo in *Boys in the Sand*. I heard men did that, but when I saw a beautiful man plug himself suddenly that became alright for me. So I went out and bought one." That's wonderful! Other men have seen my films and come out of the closet. [The 1970's was the dawning of the age of the butt. As late as the 1960's, the majority of gay men, particularly in the Midwest, looked down on butt action and referred to men who did anything anal as "brownie queens." —JF]

I guess I'm proof of Anita Bryant's accusation.

I make recruiting films.

**Jack:** In *Bijou* the ending is highly suggestive SM and in *The Bible* the "Samson and Delilah sequence" is so hot a guy needs a popper to watch it. Given the fact that most gay men are basically middle-class and not much beyond kissy-face vanilla sex, have you ever thought about making a heavily ritualistic S&M documentary/fantasy film?

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**HOW TO LEGALLY QUOTE FROM THIS BOOK**

**Wake:** *Moving* (1976) is my SM film extravaganza. With Peter Fisk and Terry Weekly. [Peter Fisk was a muscular, rugged, tattooed Top. Terry Weekly was a slight little guy who was one of the most aggressive, creative, and popular Bottoms in San Francisco; he rented the cottage behind Thom Morrison's house of coprophagia, and famously in 1979 suffered severe facial burns when a large amount of popper accidentally spilled on his face and caught fire.—JF]

**Jack:** To me, Peter Fisk is SM by sheer presence. On screen he reads like an absolute, authentic Top. He really points out heavy mutual sensuality.

**Wake:** Mutuality. Heavy SM to me implies heavy enjoyment on both sides. In *Moving*, you see that Peter as Top and Terry as Bottom both input some control to each other. In that sequence, they fucked united. Take your one hand and hit it with the fist of your other. Which feels the more? Both feel the same force except from different directions.

**Jack:** You've made *Take One*. Now you can make *Give One!*

**Wake:** SM is in every movie I've made. SM is subtly essential part of sex whether or not homogenized homosexuals admit it or not.

**Jack:** You use ritual SM. Would you become visually literal with bondage, torture toys, whipping?

**Wake:** On film? Because if you mean in real life, I've been there. That leather hanging there ain't no Nancy Grossman sculpture. [New York sculptor Nancy Grossman's disconnected heads covered in black leather hoods with dildos protruding from their mouths were popular in the SM-leather culture and sometimes were positioned as virtual idols or conjure-guardians in some very primal and decadent scenes; see pages 41-42 for a particularly detailed orgy in the memoir book, *Mapplethorpe: Assault with a Deadly Camera*. —JF] Voyeurism of SM isn't the same as the experience. Voyeurism stays on the outside. SM experience means the pleasure of giving oneself away, the pleasure of submission, the pleasure of vulnerability, as well as the pleasure of giving another man the chance to experience topping you into submissive vulnerability.

**Jack:** The media often confuse our ritual SM with news headlines like serial killers Dean “Candyman” Corll some time ago in Houston and, more recently, this John Wayne Gacy in Chicago, molesters and murderers of non-consenting young men.

**Wake:** Those guys aren’t into SM or even sex. They’re into something psychopathic. Men like that have no more in common with us than Anita Bryant has with real singing.

**Jack:** What was your impression of the classic *Born to Raise Hell*? [*Born to Raise Hell* was the first commercial SM film; it was directed by Roger Earl and produced by Terry LeGrand in 1975; in summer 1989, on location in dungeons and bars in Amsterdam, Dusseldorf, Koln, Hamburg, and West Berlin (the exciting last summer in the divided Berlin before the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989), Mark Henry and I shot a six-film sequel to *Born to Raise Hell* for director Roger Earl and producer Terry LeGrand who turned us loose as we composed and filmed for them their first two-camera shoot. The story of that on-location road-trip through Europe with all those personalities (including the British painter and photographer, David Pearce) is another tale altogether: a comedy like *Boys in the Band*, but a very focused shoot that turned out six very hot documentary films of real guys engaged in real SM. —JF]

**Wake:** *Born to Raise Hell*? A well-made film. But then Macy’s is a well-made department store. Neither gets me off. In *Born to Raise Hell* I saw no mutual pleasure. Only brutality. Maybe this is a failure of my perception. Where were the hard dicks? Where was the energy exchange? Rumor says that the fistfucking scene where the guy is tied over the bench started out consensually, but that the tied-up actor changed his mind on camera. They fisted him anyway. His protests turned into real screams. That’s torture. Not SM. I’m not into torture. I’m into mindfucks.

**Jack:** You like to mindfuck whole theaters full of men.

**Wake:** Yeah. Yeah. Oh yeah!

**Jack:** You penetrate audiences. How about when you walk into a theater and catch a whole audience jerking off to one of your films?

**Wake:** I spent an incredible year in New York at the 55th Street Playhouse. If someone I knew was there, like Nancy Grossman, the wonderful artist who does all the SM leather-bondage sculptures, I experienced the movie from an entirely different point of view. Another night twin brothers came in. A friend had fucked with them separately so I was curious how they reacted to *Take One's* sequence of the brothers balling.

One twin said: "They weren't really brothers were they?"

I said, "Yes."

The other twin said, "It wasn't really their first time?"

I said, "Yes."

They looked at each other.

I said, "Haven't you two thought about it?"

They got edgy. Hemmed. Hawed. And said, "Uh, goodbye."

**Jack:** Gay films have no Pauline Kael to pronounce them hot, and Rex Reed sells his criticism to the highest bidding publicist. Besides word-of-mouth and box-office receipts, how can you tell if a gay erotic film satisfies its audience?

**Wake:** Jack DeVeau of Hand-in-Hand Films says, "If they're walking around the theater cruising each other, the movie is hot." I say if they're walking around cruising, they're not into the movie. They're looking for another source to get hot. Truth is probably somewhere in between our two views.

**Jack:** Bodies are what your films are all about. So what in gay pop culture do you predict as the realities and fantasies you will reflect from the mirror of your screen in the 1980's?

**Wake:** Technically, we're moving into the Videotape 1980's. All my films will soon be available through Irving on video cassette. Not only is the transfer quality excellent, you don't get grease all over your tape the way Super-8 film, loaded during sex, looks like it was developed by Crisco.

**Jack:** You created Roger, and Roger created a stampede to the box office. Nobody's bothered to pick up where Roger left off when Roger disappeared.

**Wake:** Gay erotic stars have short careers usually. Fresh meat is the name of the game. But a lot of these guys are really fine

people. I went to a party at Falcon Studios. Curtis Taylor took me upstairs. There sat six guys who made Falcon films. My mouth fell open. Armies could have marched over my tongue. Me, the “sophisticated” filmmaker!

I said to them all, “My God! I’m a fan!” Seeing them all in the flesh for the first time, I admitted how much I’d jerked off to their wonderful movies.

That’s something about erotica: the energy exchange. When you shoot a film, or act in a film loop, or—as in your case with *Drummer*—write something hot, you put out a lot of energy. Much sooner than later that energy circles back to you when some guy in Dubuque jerks off to what you’ve done. Whenever I get a chill unexpectedly down my spine, I figure some man somewhere just got off on something I put on celluloid. That energy exchange, not money and not “art,” is the real reason I make films, or these Falcon men act in them, or—I’ll bet—you write.

My fantasy for the 80’s is to produce a live Broadway show. Multi-media. Using all the pornstars I could employ. Just like *A Chorus Line*. Have it all take place in a discotheque.

**Jack:** Sort of Queens of the Studnuts Ballroom?

**Wake:** Each star could reveal what he really wanted to do. For instance, Bill Harrison of *Bijou* is a fine actor who has appeared with San Francisco’s American Conservatory Theater. If Bill were in the show, he’d reveal that he had played Beau in ACT’s *Bus Stop*. A projection would come up showing him as Beau while downstage a spot picks up a girl singing, as Marilyn sang in the movie “That Old Black Magic.” Suddenly Bill puts on a cowboy hat and he’s Beau, doing a scene live on the spot.

**Jack:** Lets call Michael Bennett and Billy Goldenberg right now.

**Wake:** Musical numbers. Dance numbers. If we had twenty pornstars, the finale would have twenty scenes playing their fuckfilms simultaneously all around the theater. Can you see the wonderful Georgina Spelvin in *The Devil in Miss Jones* in a Grand-finale Fuck-Movie Production number? Maybe this is for the 80’s. Do you know any angel with a million bucks? [Wakefield Poole later set up a meeting for me with porno superstar Georgina Spelvin, a terrific woman, whom I interviewed on a giant bed in a hotel in

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Sausalito with nothing between us but the audiotape recorder and the one red rose I had brought her. The interview, “The Devil in Miss Spelvin” appeared in *Hooker*, Vol. 1 No. 4, May 1981. —JF]

**Jack:** Sounds not too far-fetched. After all you continually turn out good feature-film and loop product at Irving. You’re known for your artistic discipline within a largely self-indulgent gay culture. The public believes you lead a hi-ho glamorous life.

**Wake:** I wash my own dishes.

**Jack:** And your creative product is good stuff.

**Wake:** Discipline is my biggest problem. I’m in one way so disciplined that I could sing a couple choruses of “Don’t Get Around Much Anymore.” Some rumors have it that I’m a drug recluse. Ain’t so. I don’t run around because I don’t have time. Instead of 48 hours at the Slot, I feel better in my studio producing something. That gets me off.

Don’t get me wrong. I’m not Maria Monk.

I worked on editing till 6 AM the other night and was so horny I climbed to the top of Buena Vista Park for sunrise services [sex in the bushes] that lasted till 11 AM. Sometimes I kneel so much I feel positively religious. I came back, worked all day, and went to a private re-screening of my friend John Schlesinger’s *Day of the Locust*.

If that’s what you define as discipline, then I’m disciplined to the degree I enjoy what I do. I don’t even think about money. With money, I’m totally undisciplined. I play. My playing makes money. It’s magic.

**Jack:** Yet you say you’re always in hock.

**Wake:** True. I’ve long wanted my own video. So I charged my videotape system. If I charged one, anybody in the world can have one. I mean, I have parts of five companies and I have no money. How can I live in debt? What else is there? I shot most of my first film, *Boys in the Sand* on a Master Charge.

**Jack:** How do you feel about having buffed Roger’s act into a bonanza?

**Wake:** How do *you* feel about having kicked *Drummer* into gear? Actually Cliff Newman, who operates the Nob Hill Theater here in San Francisco, and I got no credit. Not that it matters. Cliff, credited or not, is incredible. I'd seen Roger in L.A. Went backstage and introduced myself. We hit it off. I told Roger he should do some serious physique posing. "You're the only man," I said, "in this business so far who can make real muscle stuff work. You're built, hung, and beautiful. For God's sake, don't just go-go dance." That's all I said.

**Jack:** *Drummer* No. 21 did a fullblown article on Roger and what you did for him.

**Wake:** Transferring Roger from L.A. to San Francisco was a trip just this side of Josef Von Sternberg creating Dietrich. When Cliff, who had already booked Roger sight unseen into the Nob Hill, asked me what the act was like, I tried not to prejudice him. I said, "Roger is personable, charming, dances well; he's a real showman; he has a great dick, muscles, and—I think—a nice head." I said nothing about Roger's L.A. act *per se*.

When Roger arrived at the Nob Hill two days before his scheduled opening, he auditioned for Cliff. When Roger finished, Cliff said, "If that's the act you intend to lay on San Francisco on this stage, you have your first week's guarantee and your ticket back. I suggest you use it. San Francisco will laugh you off the stage."

I took a good deep breath and said to Roger, "Now that Cliff has said that, I'll tell you what I think. You're a very hot man. You've got everything but backup to pull you off. If you're willing, Cliff and I are going to take you apart and put you back together."

I looked back at his manager and said, "Jim, if we say too much, or if you've had enough, just stop us. But we're going to lay it on the line." [Roger's manager, Jim Bacon, called me Thursday, February 17, 1994, at 3:30 PM; he was a 65-year-old smoker suffering from severe emphysema, and wanted to talk to someone he knew would know a little of his history, and care about his story of what happened to him and Roger. My notes on that phone call appear in "Pumping Roger." —JF]

Roger was wonderful about it. He opened up. We added in the wet nylon beach pants and white headband that had made him famous on that center-spread *Blueboy* bicycle seat. We added in the beginning and closing classic muscle-posing presentation. Roger had the slides, but I had to shoot the movie and have it ready in two days.

It shot on negative stock straight through. Before the end of the 200-foot four-minute reel, Roger stroked it up from scratch. Big, floppy, and soft to big, thick, and hard. And he shot. Heavy. Talk about lights, camera, action! We printed it and exhibited it on the Nob Hill screen precisely as it happened. Another documentary.

Such a hit! Cliff and I had never worked together before; but Cliff has always been supportive. He exhibits my films and allowed me to use the Nob Hill Theater itself as the shooting set for *Take One*. At any rate, on opening night after a minor adjustment in the finale, Roger came back beaming. The audience tore the house down. Every night thereafter, Cliff kept working with the production, making the lights, sound, and visuals always a little different. He kept the act fresh. Roger ran for weeks to an SRO [Standing Room Only] house. A really fine energy exchange. [I attempted to both chronicle and satirize the frenzy Roger created in San Francisco at the Nob Hill Theater in *Drummer 21*, March 1978, as well as my personal feelings about Roger, based on his *Blueboy* cover, in the short homage, “A Beach Boy Named Desire.” Roger, who was “Eliza Doolittle to Wakefield Poole’s Henry Higgins, was a star, a blazing phenomenon. —JF]

**Jack:** How do you audition talent? Everyone imagines you have this incredible casting couch that never gets a chance to cool down.

**Wake:** Usually I just fondle my whip and say, “Take off your clothes.” Actually, even though I want my actors to make love to the camera, I very seldom have them strip. Sometimes I do when in doubt. I mean, in an audition, with three of us interviewing the prospect, we might say, “Drop your jeans and get it hard.” That’s more for the shock therapy than for any exploitation. I cast

basically by feedback, aura, securities, insecurities. I find faces as important, if not more important, to my films than genitalia.

**Jack:** Are you insecure?

**Wake:** Is Flushing in New York? Everyone is insecure. Especially when you're both a private and a public person. To have to relate to people as the public Wakefield Poole—whoever the fuck *he is* in their minds—is difficult. Just like you getting chased by *Drummer* groupies. People think I have hot and cold running numbers here all day long. Please don't tell them I don't. People see my movies and think I have answers. What I have is insecurities. Like: who's going to pay my Master Charge. My life is no different from the moviegoers' lives. Except that it's mine. Jeez. This joint won't stay lit.

**Jack:** What's your favorite movie from your own canon of films?

**Wake:** Usually, the last one I made. I really like to screen my films for friends. I really got off the night I screened *The Bible* for you, and you got up and walked over to me and asked for the poppers. How fabulous.

**Jack:** Your work deserves a very specific kind of “salute.”

**Wake:** Actually, re-screening my films is a bit like celluloid self-analysis. And I don't mean just trying to find mistakes I wish I hadn't flubbed—like the Pepsi can caught within a scene where it should never be. I mean, discovering stuff about the film that slipped in subconsciously when it was made and is only now after several more years of living becoming consciously apparent to me.

Sometimes I watch the actor's performance: Georgina Spelvin, Bill Harrison. Harrison, as I said, is an incredible actor. He structured his *Bijou* performance meticulously. Beginning to end. The secret of *Bijou* is that Harrison's face never shows doubt or pleasure. Then at the end, he smiles. That Harrison smile is the orgasm. His smile is the only thing the audience has not seen. They've seen his enormous cock; they've seen him suck men and fuck women. The only thing left is his incredible pleasureable smile. His face.

**Jack:** Fred Halsted, whose *L.A. Plays Itself* is an erotic classic, should learn that about his own filmmaking. Halsted's own face

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is his greatest asset. While his films are appropriately menacing, he too rarely uses a reaction shot of his own face. He should take a cue from early Warhol: Halsted's greatest film will be twenty minutes of nothing but a close-up of his own face. I know he prefers not to be typecast into role-playing Top or Bottom, but anyone who is projected larger than life on screen or page is automatically perceived by the viewer as a Top. [Halsted's *L. A. Plays Itself* is in the permanent collection of the New York Museum of Modern Art. —JF]

**Wake:** That's the essence of cinema: *face*. Not tits or ass or cock or fist. *Face*.

**Jack:** Hollywood traditionally cast heroes as men around 35.

**Wake:** My men have grown progressively older as have I. I mean, I'd love to have growing old in my attic *The Film of Dorian Poole*, but I really get into whatever age I am. My heroes reflect my age. I'm 43, but I feel 32. Currently, I'm casting men in their 30's.

Beef has character chicken lacks.

Joe Markham, who has worked with Falcon and Brentwood, is a good example. He really is a film-loop star. One of my all-time favorites. We balled one night at Dave's Baths and I asked him to play in my new film. He said he was too old. The movie is called *Windows*. I couldn't use him before; but now he's the right age and he's hotter than he's ever been.

**Jack:** You cast a spectrum of types from the beachboy Cal Culver (Casey Donovan) to the night-creature Peter Fisk. Great range for the audience.

**Wake:** One from Column A. Two from Column B. Except for *Bijou*, I never cast any type consciously. For *Bijou* I cast seven specifically different types. Most often I cast from my friends. Casting sort of "happens." One critic slapped my hand because there was no long-haired boy in *Boys*, so in *Bijou* I added one: Bob Stubbs. In fact, when I made *Bijou*, my hair was long. I was trying to be the Breck Shampoo girl. Can I say that in *Drummer*? Then I cut it off. Cut it off with a straight razor.

**Jack:** That you can say in *Drummer*. But why *The Bible*? Religion and sex? But then all your films are highly ritualized. Therefore:

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**HOW TO LEGALLY QUOTE FROM THIS BOOK**

religious. Maybe you really are a religious filmmaker. You make the body a temple and sex a religious act.

**Wake:** You make me sound like Pope Poole I. I was raised very religiously. My biggest disappointment in life was when I could no longer believe all that traditional stained-glass stained-soul stuff. I remember the day I lost all faith. Yet my religious instincts are intact. I have a sense of worship. I worship with my camera. I worship everything: men, women, everything!

This sounds like *My-Life-And-Hard-Times*; but I've been an alcoholic, on my back in a camel-hair coat, lying in a snowdrift with cabs running by me on 6th Avenue.

**Jack:** Was that the worst thing that's ever happened to you?

**Wake:** I could have gone to the Guyana "Film Festival" [where on November 18, 1978 (one month before this interview), nearly 1,000 followers of cult-leader Jim Jones committed suicide drinking poisoned Kool-Aid; a great many of the dead were actually from San Francisco]. But I loathe Kool-Aid. Actually, I'm a survivor. Like the song from *Follies*: "I'm Still Here." The worst thing that ever happened was the year I went dry. I had not one creative thought. Nothing in my head. Talk about *unhappy*. I was married at the time. My wife was wonderful; but there we both were, caught in a fundamental change in my career and life.

That's why I empathized so much with Kris Kristofferson in *A Star Is Born*. I dried up. I had energy and no place to put it. I knew I wasn't gone forever, just stuck. I watched TV sixteen hours a day. I'd call my agent. I'd go for a job. I was up to direct *Lolita*. I had a wonderful concept, but it was never done. It just wasn't my time. I couldn't even get arrested.

Fortunately, it was my wife's time. She was making money doing commercials. There was so much negative energy coming in, caused by me at that time, that nothing positive could possibly go out.

**Jack:** But you were a big success in the straight New York whirl. How'd you engineer that?

**Wake:** Are you going to believe this? I started choreographing the Macy's Parade for NBC. Suddenly I got creative. What shit.

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**HOW TO LEGALLY QUOTE FROM THIS BOOK**

That's when I worked with Anita Bryant. For two years we did the Orange Bowl Parade. Four months after the second Florida parade, I made *Boys in the Sand*.

**Jack:** You used to work on the Ed Sullivan Show also. Your sequences with [ballet superstar] Edward Villella were way ahead of their time.

**Wake:** Sullivan was one thing. Bryant was another. Anita and I are very similar: raised in the South; religious; we both like guys. I have six or seven ministers in my family tree. One uncle started 23 churches. When I was seven, I stood in St. John's Lutheran Church in Salisbury North Carolina, and sang "God Bless America." A little to the west of me, Anita was singing "Jesus Loves Me."

The verdict's still out on that one!

When I was twelve, I played my first Orange Bowl. I sang "The Marine Hymn" while a bunch of recruits re-enacted the flag-raising on Iwo Jima. When they make the ABC-TV movie of my life, I hope they start out with that number. Now that she's finished playing Judy Garland in *Rainbow*, I fantasize "Wake-at-12" to be played by Andrea McArdle.

**Jack:** When did you have your first sex with a male?

**Wake:** I don't ever remember not having sex with men. Chickens first. I thought chickens were first to fuck and then to eat. My family never knew their Sunday chicken died happy. I had no qualms. I mean, my grandmother cleaned them with scalding water.

**Jack:** Did you ever kill one with your dick in it?

**Wake:** I don't believe in pulling out. You've seen my movies.

**Jack:** Filmmaker talk with tongue-in-cheek.

**Wake:** Like Holly Golightly, I'd rather be *natural* than *normal*. That's a subtle, but essential, difference in philosophy of living. *Normal* is what most people do because they see other people doing it. *Natural* is what you feel like expressing when you're being true to yourself.

I had a boyfriend, a childhood lover, from my earliest recollection. We crawled through each other's windows to get at each other. Later my family moved to Florida and it tore my heart out to leave him. I thought everybody enjoyed and suffered this kind of thing. What did I know then from *gay* or *homosexual*? I knew *natural*. I just knew I loved this boy.

One summer he came down to Florida. It was the summer WWII ended. I remember hearing it on the radio as we sat on the porch playing cards wearing shorts, dressed in appropriate 1940's little-boy drag.

The last time I saw him was at my grandmother's funeral. He called his wife, talked to his two little boys, told them he was spending the night with me, and we made love. I'm sure he's never made love to another man before or since. We never discussed it. Our love was a very natural thing.

**Jack:** Has your name always been Wakefield Poole?

**Wake:** Always. Walter Wakefield Poole, III. My father was Walt. My grandfather was Walter. I was Wakie.

**Jack:** How do you feel about being the end—as most gay men are—of a long geneological line? Our personal collection of genes stops with us. We are sort of punctuation marks at the end of long sentence that descend from time immemorial.

**Wake:** Then I want to be an exclamation point!

**Jack:** I'm going out as a question mark.

**Wake:** My sister, now dead, once said: "You're all that's left to carry on."

**Jack:** And look how you're carrying on.

**Wake:** What's in a name? Peter Fisk changed his name legally when we made *Boys*. He hated his last name. it was over fourteen letters and very German.

**Jack:** I always wanted to relate to Peter. But I get speechless around him. [Except a couple years later when he came into the room I reserved every Saturday night on the third floor, just to the left of the top of the stairs, at the Slot...and we both thought the other one was the Top! Peter had that sexual-identity problem.

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**HOW TO LEGALLY QUOTE FROM THIS BOOK**

Because he looked in person and on screen so like a Top, he could rarely find anyone prepared to top him. I just couldn't relate to him crawling across the floor toward me. Just like everyone else, I'm shallow enough to have wanted the movie-star fantasy. The Top-Bottom struggle is always the funniest moment in SM. —JF]

**Wake:** When's your birthday? Astrologically?

**Jack:** June 20. Gemini on the cusp of Cancer. Scorpio rising. Moon in Leo. Tony Tavarosi did my chart.

**Wake:** What's in a name? I've left my films to go on. Guys, I hope, will be watching them 580 years from now. Hard to tell where my sister's bloodlines will be. I won't be here. I mean Wakefield Poole won't be here. I'll... Well, wait a minute and think about that.

**Jack:** For now, at least, your screen is a mirror.

**Wake:** Everything is done with mirrors. Gay people are done with mirrors. We are our own best creation. I want my audiences to hit their poppers and go through the doors my films hope to open to them. Filmmaking is an actualization of fantasy. Films give people permission to realize what they want. Film helps people function.

[In early 1979, Wakefield Poole, very taken by the golden-blond look of my lover, Jim Enger, invited me to bring Jim to perform a private muscle-posing performance in Wake's film studio soundstage where he had arranged the set and the lighting. I was well aware of the private posing done by the physique pioneer Eugene Sandow. So Jim Enger and I invited a short-list of guys as did Wakefield. When Enger climbed the posing platform in his brown nylon posing briefs which he had worn when he won the Mr. Iron Man contest, the muscle-posing by the champion bodybuilder caused even the guests, jaded by all the 1970's had to offer, to fall back in awe. Wakefield stood to the side carefully observing the dynamic. As both a director, and as Jim Enger's lover, I felt the need, and the access, to break down the invisible wall separating the audience from the man offering them, actually quite personally, an erotic view of his muscle. Jim Enger was, after all, the most desired man on Castro. I walked up to the posing platform, knelt on its edge, and reached up to Jim's

massive tanned thigh upholstered with thick blond hair. With a gasp realizing permission was being given, the invited men on the soundstage took up enough courage to move in closer, to actually peer at, Jim Enger. Still they kept their distance as if Jim was art in a museum where touching statues is not permitted. Jim, always out-going, himself took a step toward directing the scene. As the crowd closed in forming a ring of absolute muscle-worship, Jim pulled down and off his brown nylon posing briefs, exposing his enormously hung dick. I'll never forget his words. I was so proud of his humor in the midst of sexual heat. "See, he said, spinning the folklore about musclemen hung like stud mice, "we're not all hung small." His humor caused a laugh that broke the ice. Jim Enger's appearance at Wakefield Poole's studio was one of the high moments in the fast-lane of the 1970's. —JF]

**Jack:** That's your art.

**Wake:** Maybe. Maybe, that's entertainment.

One last thing I'll tell you before discretion gets back its hold on me.

I love reality. I love to film reality.

Sometimes that disturbs the vast majority of gays who for all their gayness still cling to middle-class values. But I'll tell you a truly real moment in one of my films that says everything anyone needs to know, if in fact anyone cares to know anything, about me.

In *Moving* when Peter pulls his hand out of Terry's ass, audiences gasp at the juices and fluids that come running out. When we were editing, I said to Peter: "That's not blood. That's not scat. Those are juices, life fluids. I can't cut that moment, because that is the REAL moment when the fluid comes out around the arm tattooed to the elbow. That's one interpretation of reality related man-to-man."

Critics can play forever with *who put what where* in my films. I don't care. Just as long as they see, the way audiences see, that somebody has put something somewhere.