



The Man Who Invented Rock Hudson: The Pretty Boys and Dirty Deals of Henry Willson

Robert Hofter

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Henry Willson started off as a talent scout under powerhouse mogul David O. Selznick, for whom Willson procured women. The starmaker-to-be was therefore on the lookout for promising newcomers—as actors, lovers and sometimes both—when he received an unsolicited photograph from a movie star hopeful named Roy Scherer. Unbeknownst to Willson, the photograph of the handsome young man with bad teeth would have not only a career-defining impact for himself but, more importantly, redefine Hollywood’s concept of the male heartthrob. Roy Scherer became Rock Hudson and for the next twenty-five years Henry Wilson became the man behind movie “beefcake.”

The Man Who Invented Rock Hudson delves into Willson’s life in explicit, unsparing detail. Variety reporter Robert Hofler deftly chronicles Willson’s maneuvers to sidestep the FBI's investigation into Hudson's sex life; the starmaker's use of off-duty L.A.P.D. cops and Mob ties to scare off Hudson's blackmailers; Hudson's "arranged" marriage to Willson's secretary, Phyllis Gates; as well as Hudson’s affair with a Universal Pictures vice-president to help secure starring roles in Magnificent Obsession and Giant. Additionally, the book digs into Willson’s other star clients, including Robert Wagner, Troy Donahue, Tab Hunter, and John Derek.

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