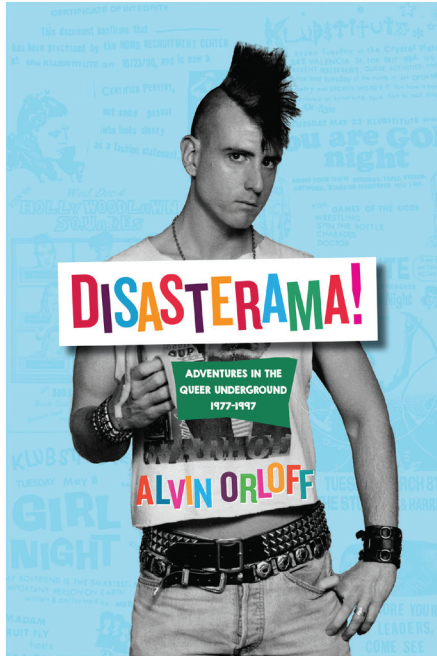


DISASTERAMA!

ADVENTURES IN THE QUEER UNDERGROUND 1977 TO 1997

ALVIN ORLOFFFEATURED FOR
**FALL
2019**
ON SALE
OCTOBER 8**MARKETING POINTS:**

- A brilliant and often humorous memoir about the San Francisco queer punk/camp underground in the 80s and early 90s.
- Explores the devastating effects of AIDS and how the camp counterculture used humor to stay sane.
- An superb addition to the #ownvoices queer history genre.
- Author Alvin Orloff has previously written three humorous queer novels, including *I Married an Earthling*, *Gutter Boys*, and *Why Aren't You Smiling?*
- As manager of one of the premier LGBTQ+ bookstores in the US, author Orloff is deeply enmeshed in queer literary community and will be instrumental in marketing.
- Includes 60 iconic b/w photos from the period

“Alvin Orloff’s memoir of queers facing the mounting AIDS crisis and freaking, caring, denying, performing, and carrying on is a witty remembrance that avoids cheap sentiment or easy responses. Tackling a mass of contradictions with unflinching realism, this book both entertains and inspires.”—Michael Musto, columnist, author, *Fork on the Left, Knife in the Back*

Disasterama! is the true story of Alvin Orloff who, as a shy kid from the suburbs of San Francisco, stumbled into the wild, eclectic crowd of Crazy Club Kids, Punk Rock Nutters, Goofy Goofballs, Fashion Victims, Disco Dollies, Happy Hustlers, and Dizzy Twinks of post-Stonewall American queer culture of the late 1970s, only to see the “subterranean lavender twilight shadow world of the gay ghetto” ravished by AIDS.

In *Disasterama!*, Orloff recalls the delirious adventures of his youth—from San Francisco to Los Angeles to New York—where insane nights, deep friendships with the creatives of the underground, and thrilling bi-coastal living led to a free-spirited life of art, manic performance, high camp antics, and exotic sexual encounters. Orloff looks past the politics of AIDS to the people on the ground, friends of his who did not survive AIDS’ wrath—the boys in black leather jackets and cackling queens in tacky frocks—remembering them not as victims, but as people who loved life, loved fun, and who were a part of the insane jigsaw of his community. Includes more than 60 rare photos of the underground counterculture, club flyers, drag queens, and queer icons of era.

ISBN: 978-1-941110-82-9

5.5” x 8.25”

266 PAGES

TRADE PAPER ORIGINAL

THREE ROOMS PRESS

CONTACT INFO:

\$16.00

TERRITORY: Worldwide

OCTOBER 8, 2019

LGBTQ+ NONFICTION (MEMOIR)

www.threeroomspress.com

info@threeroomspress.com | 212-731-0574

ALVIN ORLOFF began writing in 1977 as a teenager, penning lyrics for early San Francisco punk band, The Blowdryers. He spent the 1980s working as an exotic dancer while concurrently attending U.C. Berkeley and performing with The Popstitutes, an absurd performance art/homocore band. In 1990, he and his bandmates founded Klubstitute, a floating queer cabaret devoted to the ideal of cultural democracy that featured spoken word, theater, drag, and musical acts. In 1995, the club, whose staff and patrons had been ravaged by the AIDS epidemic, closed its doors and Orloff suddenly remembered that all he’d ever wanted to be was a writer. He subsequently published three rather whimsical novels, *I Married an Earthling*, *Gutter Boys*, and *Why Aren't You Smiling?* before producing *Disasterama!*. Orloff currently works as the manager of Dog Eared Books, a literary hot-spot in the heart of San Francisco’s Castro District. He lives in San Francisco.



ABOUT ALVIN ORLOFF

Alvin Orloff began writing in 1977, while still a teenager, by penning lyrics for The Blowdryers, an early San Francisco punk band. He spent the 1980s working as a telemarketer and exotic dancer while concurrently attending U.C. Berkeley and performing with The Popstitutes, a somewhat absurd performance art/homocore band. In 1990 he and his bandmates founded Klubstitute, a floating queer cabaret devoted to the ideal of cultural democracy that featured spoken word, theater, drag, and musical acts. In 1995 the club, whose staff and patrons had been ravaged by AIDS epidemic, closed its doors and Orloff suddenly remembered that all he'd ever wanted to be was a writer. He subsequently published three rather whimsical novels, *I Married an Earthling*, *Gutter Boys*, and *Why Aren't You Smiling?* before producing his memoir of life amongst San Francisco's queer underground during the height of the AIDS crisis, *Disasterama!* Orloff currently works as the manager of Dog Eared Books, a literary hot-spot in the heart of San Francisco's Castro District. He lives in San Francisco.

HIGH PRAISE FOR *DISASTERAMA!*

“Alvin Orloff’s memoir of San Francisco queers facing the mounting AIDS crisis and freaking, caring, denying, performing, and carrying on is a witty remembrance that avoids cheap sentiment or easy responses. Tackling a mass of contradictions with unflinching realness, this book both entertains and inspires.”

—**Michael Musto, columnist, author, *Fork on the Left, Knife in the Back***

“Disasterama takes us deep into the 80s and the daily creative resistance that saved the culture’s soul during the plague years. With wit and flair Alvin Orloff gives us a guided tour of the era’s vibrant subcultures; glittering, pointed reactions to a cold-hearted status quo. Heartbreaking and hilarious, sexed-up and political, Disasterama is a deeply personal coming-of-age story. —**Michelle Tea, author *Against Memoir and Modern Tarot***

“A book that all at once reads as a memoir, a eulogy and a love letter to San Francisco—set in those critical years between the death of disco and the first tech boom—Disasterama offers up a chronicle of fags, dykes, punks, freaks, and club kids partying on the Best Coast and the impact of AIDS, art, and activism on the post Baby Boomer/pre-Millennial van garde. SPOILER ALERT: the last three chapters will completely rip yr heart out.”

—**Brontez Purnell, author, *The Cruising Diaries***

“I’ve never read a better story of the true love of friendship. Alvin tells the story of the San Francisco I lived in when I first arrived, when all kinds of social misfits and cultural weirdos could call it home. No matter who you were, you could come here and find a place to not only fit in, but to shine.”

—**Bucky Sinister, author, *Black Hole***

“An irresistible and seminal work that gives us a glimpse into an explosive era of outspoken and unprecedented art, breathless interpersonal discourse and dysfunction, dug-in protest culture, and mind-bending fashion that put the word “flamboyant” to shame.

—**Richard Loranger, author, *Sudden Windows***

PAST PRAISE FOR ALVIN ORLOFF

“Insightful, lively prose and believable, adorable characters. . . .” —***Publishers Weekly***

“Hilarious.” —***The San Francisco Chronicle***

“It’s rare to find such erudite and analytical displays of biting camp logic.” —***Bay Area Reporter***

“A fun ride.” —***Comet Magazine***

“A delightfully hilarious coming of age story that asks us to laugh at ourselves, at pop culture and religion, and at all those things people just don’t laugh at quite enough.” —***Lambda Literary Journal***

“Alvin Orloff writes with a sharp mind and a gentle touch.” —**K. M. Soehnlein, LAMBDA award-winning author of *The World of Normal Boys***

“Quirky, insightful . . . glam as hell. . . iconic.” —***The Bay Area Reporter***

“Highly enjoyable.” —***The San Francisco Bay Guardian***

“Wonderfully whimsical yet astutely political . . . Strangely and defiantly cheerful without being trite or sentimental.”

—**Trebor Healey, author, *Through It Came Bright Colors***

ABOUT THREE ROOMS PRESS

Three Rooms Press is a fierce New York-based independent publisher inspired by dada, punk, and passion. Founded in 1993, it serves as a leading independent publisher of cut-the-edge creative, including fiction, memoir, poetry translations, drama and art. In addition, Three Rooms Press produces and promotes a variety of literary and cultural events worldwide, including readings, plays, workshops, and concerts. All Three Rooms Press titles are distributed by Ingram/Publishers Group West and are available in wholesale and independent bookstores, libraries, universities, and online retail outlets nationwide and internationally.

RECENT AND FORTHCOMING BOOKS FROM THREE ROOMS PRESS

FICTION

Meagan Brothers
Weird Girl and What's His Name

Ron Dakron
Hello Devilfish!

Michael T. Fournier
Hidden Wheel
Swing State

William Least Heat-Moon
Celestial Mechanics

Aimee Herman
Everything Grows

Eamon Loingsigh
Light of the Diddicoy
Exile on Bridge Street

John Marshall
The Greenfather

Aram Saroyan
Still Night in L.A.

Richard Vetere
The Writers Afterlife
Champagne and Cocaine

Julia Watts
Quiver

WOMEN IN BUSINESS

Womentality: Thirteen Empowering Stories by Everyday Women Who Said Goodbye to the Workplace and Hello to Their Lives
edited by Erin Wildermuth

MEMOIR & BIOGRAPHY

Nassrine Azimi and Michel Wasserman
Last Boat to Yokohama: The Life and Legacy of Beate Sirota Gordon

William S. Burroughs & Allen Ginsberg
Don't Hide the Madness: William S. Burroughs in Conversation with Allen Ginsberg
edited by Steven Taylor

James Carr
BAD: The Autobiography of James Carr

Richard Katrovas
Raising Girls in Bohemia: Meditations of an American Father; A Memoir in Essays

Judith Malina
Full Moon Stages: Personal Notes from 50 Years of The Living Theatre

Phil Marcade
Punk Avenue: Inside the New York City Underground, 1972-1982

Alvin Orloff
Disasterama! Adventures in the Queer Underground 1977-1997

Stephen Spotte
My Watery Self: Memoirs of a Marine Scientist

PHOTOGRAPHY-MEMOIR

Mike Watt
On & Off Bass

SHORT STORY ANTHOLOGIES

SINGLE AUTHOR
Alien Archives: Eighteen Stories of Extraterrestrial Encounters
by Robert Silverberg

First-Person Singularities: Stories
by Robert Silverberg
with an introduction by John Scalzi

Tales from the Eternal Café: Stories
by Janet Hamill
with an introduction by Patti Smith

Time and Time Again: Sixteen Trips in Time
by Robert Silverberg

MULTI-AUTHOR
Crime + Music: Twenty Stories of Music-Themed Noir
edited by Jim Fusilli

Dark City Lights: New York Stories
edited by Lawrence Block

Florida Happens: Bouchercon 2018 Anthology
edited by Greg Herren

Have a NYC I, II & III: New York Short Stories;
edited by Peter Carlaftes & Kat Georges

Songs of My Selfie: An Anthology of Millennial Stories
edited by Constance Renfrow

The Obama Inheritance: 15 Stories of Conspiracy Noir
edited by Gary Phillips

This Way to the End Times: Classic and New Stories of the Apocalypse
edited by Robert Silverberg

MIXED MEDIA

John S. Paul
Sign Language: A Painter's Notebook (photography, poetry and prose)

FILM & THEATER

Israel Horowitz
My Old Lady: Complete Stage Play and Screenplay with an Essay on Adaptation

Peter Carlaftes
Triumph For Rent (3 Plays)
Teatrophly (3 More Plays)

Kat Georges
Three Somebodies: Plays about Notorious Dissidents

TRANSLATIONS

Thomas Bernhard
On Earth and in Hell
(poems of Thomas Bernhard with English translations by Peter Waugh)

Patrizia Gattaceca
Isula d'Anima / Soul Island
(poems by the author in Corsican with English translations)

César Vallejo | Gerard Malanga
Malanga Chasing Vallejo
(selected poems of César Vallejo with English translations and additional notes by Gerard Malanga)

George Wallace
EOS: Abductor of Men
(selected poems in Greek & English)

POETRY COLLECTIONS

Hala Alyan
Atrium

Peter Carlaftes
DrunkYard Dog
I Fold with the Hand I Was Dealt

Thomas Fucaloro
It Starts from the Belly and Blooms

Inheriting Crazyness is Like a Soft Halo of Light

Kat Georges
Our Lady of the Hunger

Robert Gibbons
Close to the Tree

Israel Horowitz
Heaven and Other Poems

David Lawton
Sharp Blue Stream

Jane LeCroy
Signature Play

Philip Meersman
This is Belgian Chocolate

Jane Ormerod
Recreational Vehicles on Fire
Welcome to the Museum of Cattle

Lisa Panepinto
On This Borrowed Bike

George Wallace
Poppin' Johnny

HUMOR

Peter Carlaftes
A Year on Facebook

DADA

Maintenant: A Journal of Contemporary Dada Writing & Art (Annual, since 2008)

CONTACTS

Book website

<http://threeroomspress.com/authors/disasterama/>

Author website

<http://www.alvinorloff.com>

Publicity / Publisher

Three Rooms Press

Peter Carlaftes

Co-Director

(212) 731-0574

peter@threeroomspress.com

WEBSITE: threeroomspress.com

FACEBOOK: [facebook.com/threeroomspress](https://www.facebook.com/threeroomspress)

TWITTER: [@threeroomspress](https://twitter.com/threeroomspress)

THE MAKING OF *DISASTERAMA!*

by Alvin Orloff

Some people are good in emergencies, others less so. My friends and I were dizzy twinks, club kids, punks, hustlers, and assorted gender deviates. You couldn't count on us to pick up the right carton of milk at the store, let alone file our taxes or remember to take out the trash on Wednesday. As denizens of what used to be called "The Underground" we were prepared for lives full of social exclusion and unrelenting bohemian squalor. We were not prepared for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.

It began with newspaper articles full of rare, spooky diseases with unpronounceable names or mysterious acronyms. GRID. Pneumocystis. KS. My friends and I didn't pay attention because, well . . . papers were always full of bad news, right? Then, the rumors started. A friend of a friend of a friend went into the hospital with a cough and never came out. A co-worker's neighbor dropped in his tracks. That guy who was always sitting outside that café? Gone. Still we didn't panic. We were barely into our twenties, so healthy and robust we felt immortal. Our delusions of immunity didn't last long. First one friend took ill, then another, then another, then another and another and another.

As if we didn't have enough problems already, my friends and I!

In those days wide swaths of the populace believed all homosexuals were degenerates. In our case they were basically right, but—oh!—they were so mean and judge-y about it. Everyone I knew was scarred from family rejection, queer-bashing, or the bigoted blathering of right-wing politicians and televangelists. Unwelcome in respectable society, we descended into the subterranean lavender twilight shadow world of the gay ghetto. There, in dark clubs and dive bars, we frolicked and reveled, determined to wring every last ounce of fun from our wretched lives in what little time we had left.

Meanwhile, the aforementioned politicians and televangelists loudly proclaimed we gays were getting our just rewards. The resulting climate of intolerance led many to abandon the hallowed gay traditions of camp humor, arched aestheticism, and sexual anarchy—as if normalcy might appease the bigots. Not so, my friends and I. We doubled down on the queer, assaulting the public with agitprop street theater, drag cabaret, sex work, spoken word poetry, performance art, and worse. Our lives became one giant *cri de coeur*: We want to live! And yet, even during this riot of rococo rebellion, we kept dying.

Then, after a decade and a half of terror and trauma, it ended, or slowed down anyway, when the development of protease inhibitor "cocktails" sent the death toll plummeting. The band of merry misfits who'd assembled for mutual support and collective hijinks during the crisis scattered to the winds. People wanted to get on with their lives, not sit around feeling shattered and tragic. A feigned amnesia prevailed across queendom, albeit one interrupted by brief, sanctioned occasions for dignified mourning.

My dead friends, however, were anything but dignified or mournful. The ghosts of sleazy boys in black leather jackets and cackling queens in tacky frocks nagged me in my dreams. "Get off your ass and write something fun about us. Nobody else doing it." Strangely, this appeared to be true. The heroic crusades of ACT UP and Queer Nation were well and justly remembered, but the swirling, whirling, daffy, and demented fringes of queer social life during the height of the AIDS crisis were all but forgotten.

I, too, tried to forget. Then one day, a young friend (the now-successful author, Brontez Purnell) asked me something no one had ever asked before: What was it like when everyone started dying? I felt my face blanch. My mouth opened, but no words came out. How do you explain what it's like to watch helplessly as your entire world is erased? Eventually I managed to stammer something incoherent involving the words "scary" and "sad," but my feeble response shamed me.

That very night I began the years-long process of sifting through the jumble of faded images, vaporous impressions, and half-recalled conversations lurking in the back of my mind. Once I'd finally gotten them in order, I felt curious if my recollections of the plague years resembled those of other survivors. To find out, I conducted half a dozen interviews with half a dozen old friends and delved into book and internet research. I quickly realized that my youth was not as atypical as I'd thought. As a result, I can say that book is not only a memoir, but also a social history, as well (perhaps) as an elegy, apologia, and cautionary tale. Read it to learn how a bunch of pathologically flippant kids floundered through a deadly serious disaster.