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Hiding In Plain Sight: The Secret Life Of Raymond Burr



Synopsis

Now in paperback, the complete story of the actor's career, including his secret gay life. Raymond Burr (1917-1993) was an enigma. A film noir regular known for his villainous roles in movies like *Rear Window*, he eventually became one of the most popular stars in television history as the lead actor on two top-rated dramas, *Perry Mason* and *Ironside*, which between them ran virtually uninterrupted for 20 years. But Raymond Burr was leading a secret gay life at a time in Hollywood when exposure would have been career suicide. To protect his secret, Burr fabricated a tragic past for himself as a grieving husband and father. He claimed to have been twice widowed - he said his first wife had died in a plane crash, and his second marriage had ended with his wife's early death from cancer. And there was also a dead son - 10-year-old Michael, who lost his battle with leukemia. Neither of the wives nor Michael ever existed. But that didn't stop these lies from being perpetuated again and again, even in Burr's New York Times obituary. *Hiding in Plain Sight* examines the totality of Raymond Burr's career and his personal life, including his 35 years with partner Robert Benevides. The author interviewed over 30 people who knew or worked with Burr, including Angela Lansbury, Barbara Hale, Robert Wagner, Gale Storm, and more.

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Customer Reviews

This is a workman-like account of Burr's life and career. Unfortunately, author Michael Starr relies almost exclusively on second-hand sources for his text-- newspapers, magazines, and other print material. There are few first-hand sources which could relate all-important private aspects of the celebrity's life and career. Thus what emerges is largely a portrait of the public man-- the beloved

figure of television melodrama-- instead of the carefully guarded private one. There is, however, one highly significant exception to this public account. Starr makes no bones about Burr's secret life as a gay man during the homophobic decades in which he became a revered public figure. Nor does Starr soft-peddle the many cover stories Burr concocted to hide his sexual orientation. This is the book's main virtue and should lay to rest the many stories and confusions about this controversial phase of the actor's personal life. However, as a result of Starr's reliance on secondary sources, we can only guess at Burr's private emotions during the key Perry Mason period. For better or worse, his character came to stand for the American criminal justice system to much of the public. Yet the man himself could have been arrested in many parts of the country as a "deviate". The anxiety must have been difficult at times. Too bad author Starr could not give us an inside glimpse of a period when great success also meant great apprehension. Perhaps, by Ironside's more tolerant era, Burr could have "outed" himself without too great of a career risk. But likely the cover story of dead wives and child had become too embedded to undercut. Anyway, these fictitious stories continued to define the private man in the public's eye right up to the end.

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