

BOOK REVIEWS


**BUNKER SPRECKELS: SURFING'S
DIVINE PRINCE OF DECADENCE**

**BY ART BREWER AND CRAIG
STECYCK III**

Taschen

Was he divine? Bunker Spreckels was a prince of sorts, and decadent to the end. Indeed this book is timed to precede a film that Spreckels was having made about himself and his decadent existence ... named Decado ... that didn't get finished because ... well ... he was found dead in Hollywood in 1977 at the meagre age of 27.

The guy was a hurricane, a whirlwind of flamboyant excess, a dangerous mutherfucker, deeply embedded but utterly disconnected, wealthy beyond imagination but impoverished by lack of direction etc. etc. He was, though, somehow special. Stepson to Clark Gable, his real family line was of German-origin bankers and businessmen who built swathes of San Francisco, LA, Santa Cruz and Hawaii. These were West Coast aristos in the truest West Coast sense. Tough, pioneering, inventive, rich as Croesus and somehow cool in a gambling-womanising- and, by the time Bunker was let loose on the world, -surfing kind of way. This book details his short life through his own eyes, midwifed by edgy interviewer Craig Stecyck III, only three months before Spreckels' death. Scary-good photos by Art Brewer illustrate the star's epic trajectory – Brewer had been wheeled in by Bunker to document his life (more than once getting fired and shot at by his employer). But lest we forget, this

young man was a genius in the water, too, building and riding freaky craft somewhat akin to kneeboards, but actually fat-railed pre-fish creatures that flew under his royal toes at oversize Sunset, Backdoor (before anyone else dared) and rarer royalty-only spots on 'outer islands'. He doesn't sound divine to me, but, man, Spreckles lived! Buy this and you'll learn about one of surfing's great one-offs, burned out, and tragically glorious.

ADR