



Boystown: La Zona de Tolerancia

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Stark, compelling images from border-town brothels

In the early 1970s, Boystown was a collection of brothels along the border between Texas and Mexico, where cowboys and college boys, gang members and family men, drunkenly traveled desert highways to dance to six-piece Tejano bands, guzzle cheap liquor, and pay for sex. A group of photographers worked these clubs every night, shooting sharp, in-your-face souvenir pictures of girls with round faces quietly smoking while men fondled them and cowboys danced on tables. These shimmering flash photos of prostitutes and their johns appear here for the first time, along with formal portraits of the women and their families taken by the same anonymous club photographers.

In 1974, screenwriter and photographer Bill Wittliff went to Boystown and contacted several of the photographers who took pictures at the brothels. He has archived thousands of their negatives, the discards of the souvenir business, and preserved them for posterity. This remarkable volume provides the first opportunity for the rest of us to witness the mesmerizing world of Boystown through the eyes of a group of photographers who were an integral part of that world.

Boystown is published in association with the Wittliff Gallery of Southwestern and Mexican Photography at Southwest Texas State University in San Marcos, Texas.



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