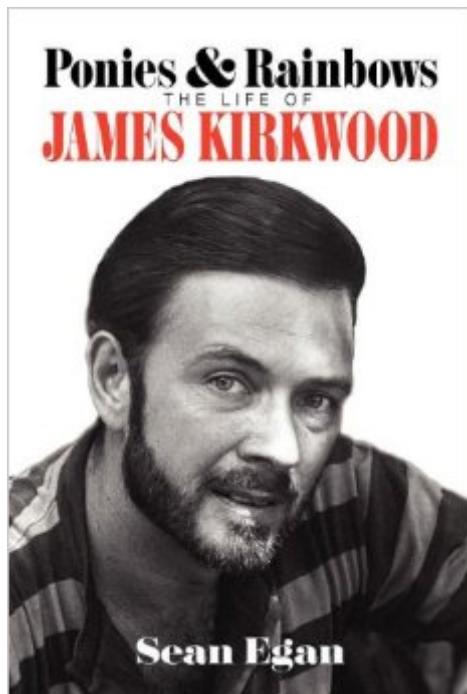


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Ponies & Rainbows: The Life Of James Kirkwood



Synopsis

James Kirkwood is the forgotten man of American letters. In 1975, he had two shows playing on Broadway, while his latest novel *Some Kind of Hero* saw reviewers comparing him to Saul Bellow and Joseph Heller. One of those shows - *A Chorus Line* - won him a Pulitzer Prize for his co-writing contribution and went on to become the biggest stage phenomenon in history. Yet today his work is largely out of print and his name rarely mentioned. Kirkwood led a life that was as gripping as any of his novels or plays. The son of silent screen stars, he grew up in Hollywood surrounded by celebrities and opulence before his parents went broke. His childhood was littered with trauma, including finding the dead body of his mother's fiancé when he was twelve. Before writing, his professional life encompassed the coast guard, stand-up comedy and soap opera acting. His private life was equally varied, involving loving sexual relationships with both men and women. Sean Egan - author of seventeen books - took over seven years to write this definitive biography, interviewing more than sixty of Kirkwood's family, lovers, colleagues, friends and adversaries in the process. In a sweeping narrative that takes in Hollywood in the Twenties, the boom era of New York nightclubs in the Forties and the Eighties AIDS holocaust, *Ponies & Rainbows* both details a remarkable life and seeks to re-establish an even more remarkable talent.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Ponies & Rainbows: The Life of James Kirkwood (Bear Manor Media, \$32.95), a biography written by Sean Egan, has several things going for it. Primarily it is factual, insofar as the laws of libel and

good taste demand. It's also infinitely, un-put-down-able reading (which is never a bad thing), and finally, it celebrates a man whose life should be celebrated. (Parenthetically, there is another Kirkwood bio recently published. Purportedly by a friend of Kirkwood, it is so badly written as to be virtually impenetrable. Mercifully, I can't recall either the author or the title. That it was free on is the only excuse, and at that, it's much too expensive. It's the kind of book that makes one want to seek the author out and whack him with his word processor.) Mr. Egan presents Kirkwood with all of his genius and foibles. A reasonably good playwright, actor, and librettist, he will be remembered as a brilliant author of light fiction, an art form which has all but disappeared, drowned in chic-lit and procedural clap-trap. Kirkwood's first book, *There Must be a Pony!*, is about a young boy getting a bag of horse manure for Christmas. Rather than tears, he beams, because he knows that if he got this, there must be a pony, somewhere. And this pretty must sums up Kirkwood's life---always knowing that regardless of what is happening now, happiness will, always and by necessity, follow. Kirkwood was a celebrity who knew everyone, and who everyone loved. Despite a vicious temper that would surface like a bad storm and then just as suddenly disappear, he once walloped the be-Jesus out of his stand-up comic partner Lee Goodman. That they were in the middle of a performance made no difference to Kirkwood. He also decked Joe Papp at a very snooty and important party in NYC.

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