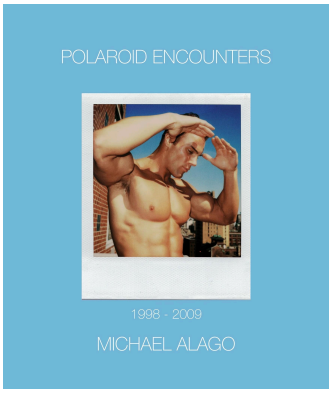
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Polaroid Encounters: 1998–2009 — Michael Alago's Love Letter to Analog Lust and Masculinity

"…the instant gratification of his page-turning collection creates an old-school nostalgia for cruising gyms the way guys hunted before dating apps." – Jack Fritscher

Polaroid Encounters: 1998–2009 is the fourth monograph published by music industry legend and photographer Michael Alago. Like his previous books, *Rough Gods*, *Brutal Truth*, and *Beautiful Imperfections*, *Polaroid Encounters* is a sexy, self-contained shrine to macho masculinity in all its flexing, flirting, full-frontal glory.



Polaroid Encounters is a love letter to analog lust. As pioneering author, editor, and former lover of Robert Mapplethorpe, Jack Fritscher puts it in the book's introduction: "The two hundred Polaroid images pop like poppers because the instant gratification of his page-turning collection creates an old-school nostalgia for cruising gyms the way guys hunted before dating apps."

Starkly framed across 142 pages are candid and posed Polaroids shot in New York, Dallas, New Orleans, Los Angeles and San Francisco between 1998 and 2009 — the same year gay porn magazine *Mandate* ceased publication amid the rise of the internet. The images feature tricks, friends, models, bodybuilders, tattooed roughnecks, and ex-con boyfriends in various settings and stages of undress and arousal. Adding to the tantalizingly intimate vibe, many were shot in Alago's own Chelsea apartment.

A native New Yorker with an "only in New York" career, Alago says he "was never in the closet." As a gay teen who grew up in Hasidic Brooklyn, he dove into the NYC punk scene, booking bands at East Village club the Ritz, before quickly emerging at 24 as the risk-taking, genre-crossing A&R executive known for signing Metallica and for his extraordinary work with White Zombie, John Lydon of Public Image Ltd., Misfits, Cyndi Lauper, and Nina Simone, for whom he executive-produced her final album, *A Single Woman*.

After a tumultuous career — surviving AIDS in the 1990s and recovering from drug and alcohol addiction — Michael Alago left the music business in 2003 to focus on his parallel lifelong passion: photography. Having first picked up a Polaroid camera in the 1990s, and later working with a variety of cameras, he embarked on an ongoing series of erotically charged portraits that would eventually appear across four books, including *Polaroid Encounters*.

Alago's fascinating career is recounted in the 2017 documentary *Who the F**k Is That Guy? The Fabulous Journey of Michael Alago*, which streamed on Netflix and is now available on Amazon and

YouTube, and in his 2020 *memoir I Am Michael Alago: Breathing Music, Signing Metallica, Beating Death*.
"A master of composition, he constantly seeks out and finds a smile, a fist, a tattoo that he cannot resist," observes Sean Yseult of White Zombie on the back cover of *Polaroid Encounters*. Yseult describes the book's images as "shocking, sexy, rough, tough, and gorgeous."
Polaroid Encounters is available as a limited edition exclusively from punk and hardcore books and zines publisher Shining Life Press at www.shininglifepress.com The first 100 books come with a signed Polaroid from Alago's collection.

About Michael Alago



Michael Alago is a former A&R executive and photographer whose career spans music, publishing, and visual art. His career in music was the subject of the 2017 documentary Who the F**k Is That Guy? The Fabulous Journey of Michael Alago, followed by his 2020 memoir I Am Michael Alago: Breathing Music, Signing Metallica, Beating Death. Since transitioning to photography, he has published four books of male portraiture and erotic imagery, including Polaroid Encounters, following Beautiful Imperfections, Brutal Truth, and Rough Gods. His photographs have earned him a Facebook following of more than 116,000 worldwide. In 2010, he also published the poetry and prose collection "night blooming jasmine will never smell the same" with Keith Caputo of Life of Agony.

About Shining Life Press

Shining Life Press is a publisher based in Silver Springs, MD specializing in punk and hardcore books and fanzines.

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