

McQueen



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著者:Sandford, Christopher

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A full and frank portrait of the complex man behind the icon of cool. Steve McQueen, one of the first 'cool' film stars, remains a cultural icon the world over. His image is used to sell everything from cars, to beer, to a range of dolls. From the Cincinnati Kid to Frank Bullitt, Tom Crown to Papillon, his roles exemplified a certain school of male charm, as well as grit and a hint of menace. McQueen was born in 1930 into a poor Mid-western family to a highly strung mother and truant father. In and out of reform school from a young age, he was eventually made a ward of court and the resulting sense of abandonment never left him. His big break came with the TV Saga Wanted: Dead or Alive and the now cult-classic B-movie The Blob. Just two years later he was one of the leading lights of tinseltown. Sandford goes on to chart McQueen's phenomenal Hollywood career, starring in some of the world's best-loved films, in tandem with his turbulent private life: his marriages, his bisexuality, the drink, the fast cars, casual sex and violence. As a close friend has remarked: 'You couldn't peg him. He wanted to be memorable as an actor -- but in his private life you got the impression he was trying to speed up, to get into the next hour without quite living out the last one.' As Sandford reveals, McQueen's public demeanour of studied nonchalance hid chronic self-destructive urges which emerged in his favourite hobbies, including bare-knuckle boxing and porsche-racing, as well as several suicide attempts. His 'lost' years at the

very height of his fame are illuminated with disclosures of rampant addiction, bizarre health cures, fringe religion and androgyny. McQueen died in 1980 at a 'wellness' clinic in New Mexico, having been earlier diagnosed with lung cancer . His last words were 'Lo hice' -- Spanish for 'I did it'. Sandford has spoken to a wide range of McQueen's contemporaries -- Hollywood stars, friends and family -- and discovered the man behind the myth, the abandoned little boy underneath the movie-god swagger.

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