



Hutch - A Biography of Leslie Hutchinson

By Charlotte Breese

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Born in Grenada in 1900, Leslie Hutchinson, known universally as Hutch, went to America in 1916, ostensibly to study medicine, but soon escaped to Harlem where he witnessed the birth of 'stride' jazz piano. Moving to France in 1923, he became the protegee and lover of Cole Porter and entered the vibrant milieu of Parisian cafe society. In 1926, encouraged by another admirer, Edwina Mountbatten, Hutch came to London where he was soon topping the bills in variety and on radio. Immaculate in white tie and tails, Hutch's enormous sex appeal and charm, his velvet voice and superb improvisation on the piano attracted legions of fans among both the impossibly rich and the slump-struck poor. Hutch's love life was rich and varied. Yet for all his glamour, Hutch was a profoundly insecure man in thrall to insatiable appetites for sex, drink, gambling and social status which precipitated his fall from stardom and fame to a squalid, hand-to-mouth existence by the late 1960s. In her riveting biography, meticulously researched over many years, Charlotte Breese has gathered material from an enormous range of sources and has written a vivid cautionary tale which throws new light on the development of jazz, the decline of music hall, the changing status of blacks in Britain as well as illuminating the life of an extraordinarily talented man.

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