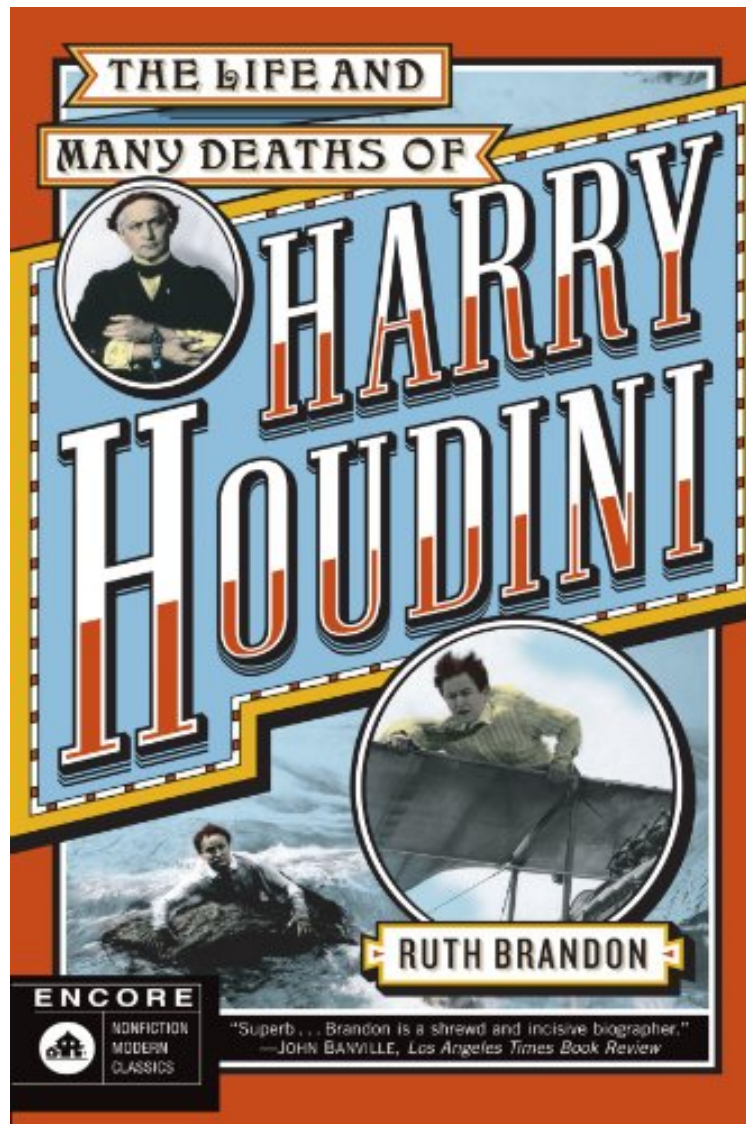


[Download free pdf] The Life and Many Deaths of Harry Houdini

The Life and Many Deaths of Harry Houdini

Ruth Brandon

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#3247301 in Books Random House Trade Paperbacks 2003-10-21 2003-10-21Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 8.00 x .85 x 5.241, 1.00 #File Name: 081297042X392 pages | File size: 26.Mb

Ruth Brandon : The Life and Many Deaths of Harry Houdini before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Life and Many Deaths of Harry Houdini:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy Lon CerelGreat product; great seller; highly recommended!28 of 29 people found the following review helpful. Good but...By John CoxI've read every biography on Harry Houdini and this one is good...but it isn't the best. (The best is Ken Silverman's Houdini! The Career of Ehrich Weiss.) Here Ruth Brandon has mined information from older Houdini bios and created a skillful patchwork. Even her much publicized (and much maligned) "psycho-babble" comes right out of Bernard C. Meyer's Houdini A

Mind in Chains (1976). Indeed, this excellent long out-of-print book seems to be Ms. Brandon's Deep Throat. Her chapter relating the events leading up to Houdini's death is taken almost paragraph for paragraph from the Meyer book. And do we really need to hear about the author's own childhood experiences with magic? Still, it's a good read, but for a serious and truly revealing Houdini bio, go with the Silverman book. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. not even real. By Michel Olson Who allowed this to even make the presses. It should have been shelved with the National Inquirer It really reaches. It is not even interesting for being so crazy.

For many performers, stage life and real life are separate identities. For master illusionist Harry Houdini, the two were inextricably linked. In this widely acclaimed biography, Ruth Brandon shows how Houdini's obsession with his own mortality drove him to create death-defying stunts that not only captivated the public but also subdued his own raging psychological demons. As Brandon relates Houdini's methods of escape, she asks: What was he trying to escape from? Her exploration of the psychic landscape of one of the most enduringly famous performers of the twentieth century makes for utterly fascinating reading. Brandon reveals much that is new: how Houdini invented a phantom son; why he wrote long daily letters to his wife, Bess, who lived one floor below him; his combative relations with mediums and spiritualists, including Arthur Conan Doyle; and the first full description of his fabled death. This definitive biography allows readers to peer into Houdini's psyche and understand him more deeply than ever before.

From Publishers Weekly Brandon, who has written on Sarah Bernhardt (Being Divine) and the Singer sewing machine family, approaches this master of illusion with skepticism and sympathy. Houdini was born sometime in 1874 (virtually nothing about him was easy for his biographer to establish). She considers what psychological needs drove a man to jump handcuffed into an icy river to prove he could free himself, or to hang upside down in a straitjacket from the top of a skyscraper for the same reason; and she portrays "this conspicuously brave man" as also a "conspicuously frightened man." Houdini's every performance carried the threat of death and, more important, the threat of failure. The dramatic escapes of this meticulous craftsman were in essence faked but nonetheless often highly dangerous. Obsessively devoted to his mother and to his wife, Bess, Houdini numbered among his friends both Edmund Wilson and Conan Doyle. He died in 1926 at the age of 52 from appropriately mysterious causes. Brandon draws the reader inexorably into the magical, slightly crazed world of the Great Houdini, born Erich Weiss in Budapest, or was it Appleton, Wisconsin? Photos not seen by PW. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. From School Library Journal YA? As Houdini mesmerized his audiences, Brandon skillfully unfolds the mystery and drama behind the Handcuff King's obsession with the illusions and tricks of death. Besides being very readable, this biography is accessible to students because of its numerous photographs, added notes, selected bibliography, and index. Beth Gourley, Handley Regional Library, Winchester, VA Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist A writer of detective stories as well as biographies of such seminal figures as Sarah Bernhardt, Brandon has now created a psychologically intrepid portrait of the great and enigmatic escape artist Harry Houdini. She not only reveals Houdini's impressive technical secrets but also identifies the sources of his unabashed melodramatics and puzzling innocence. Houdini, who was the son of Hungarian Jewish immigrants named Weiss, took his name from the great French magician Robert-Houdin, had very little education, an unhealthy attachment to his mother, and a fierce sense of integrity and unrelenting competitiveness. He was also a born performer, a perfectionist, and an adept mythologizer and self-promoter. Fascinated by locks and bondage, Houdini invented a thrilling repertoire of increasingly complex and daring feats, from extricating himself from handcuffs and straitjackets to escaping from jail cells, coffins, tanks of water, and padlocked trunks submerged in water. He was manacled from head to toe, and then suspended from skyscrapers or hurled into rivers and seas. As Brandon describes these galvanizing performances with the aid of newspaper accounts, she analyzes Houdini's classic "little man" complex, speculates about his impotency, and ponders his obsession with death. Houdini was one of the most compelling "idols of popular culture" in the early years of this mass-appeal century, and he still works his magic through the medium of Brandon's bold and magnetic interpretation. Donna Seaman