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Tyson: Nurture of the Beast

Ellis Cashmore



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Beast. Monster. Savage. Psycho. The glowering menace of Mike Tyson has spooked us for almost two decades. And still we remain fascinated. Why? Ellis Cashmore's answer is disturbing: white society has created Tyson as vengeance for the loss of privilege produced by civil rights.

Cashmore's eviscerating analysis of Tyson's life and the culture in which he grew up, rose to prominence and descended into disgrace provokes the reader into re-thinking the role of one of the most controversial and infamous figures of recent history. Told as an odyssey-style homeward journey to Tyson's multi-pathological origins in the racially-explosive ghettos of the 1960s, Tyson's story is part biography, part tragedy and part exposition. His associations with people like Al Sharpton, Don King and Tupac Shakur shaped his life; and events, such as the O J Simpson trial and the Rodney King riots, formed a turbulent background for the Tyson psychodrama.

Over the course of an epic boxing career, Tyson was transformed from the most celebrated athlete on earth to a primal, malevolent hate-figure. Yet, even after being condemned as a brute, Tyson retained a power - a power to captivate. Cashmore reveals that the sources of that power lie as much in us as in Tyson himself.

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