

The Brief, Madcap Life of Kay Kendall

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" Comedic film actress Kay Kendall, born to a theatrical family in Northern England, came of age in London during the Blitz. After starring in Britain's biggest cinematic disaster, she found stardom in 1953 with her brilliant performance in the low-budget film, Genevieve . She scored success after success with her light comic style in movies such as Doctor in the House, The Reluctant Debutante, and the Gene Kelly musical Les Girls. Kendall's private life was even more colorful than the plots of her films as she embarked on a series of affairs with minor royalty, costars, directors, producers, and married men. In 1954 she fell in love with her married Constant Husband costar Rex Harrison and accompanied him to New York, where he was starring on Broadway in My Fair Lady. It was there that Kendall was diagnosed with myelocytic leukemia. Her life took a romantic and tragic turn as Harrison divorced his wife and married Kendall. He agreed with their doctor that she was never to know of her diagnosis, and for the next two years the couple lived a hectic, glamorous life together as Kendall's health failed. She died in London at the age of 32, shortly after completing the filming of Once More with Feeling!, her husband by her side. The Brief, Madcap Life of Kay Kendall was written with the cooperation of Kendall's sister Kim and includes interviews with many of her costars, relatives and friends. A complete filmography and numerous rare photographs complete this firstever biography of Britain's most glamorous comic star. Eve Golden is the author of several biographies of actresses, Anna Held and the Birth of Ziegfeld's Broadway, as well as a collection of essays on silent film stars.

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