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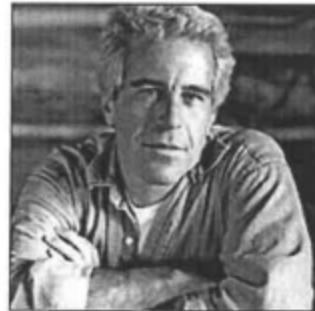
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Profile

Jeffrey Epstein: International Moneyman of Mystery

He's pals with a passel of Nobel Prize-winning scientists, CEOs like Leslie Wexner of the Limited, socialite Ghislaine Maxwell, even Donald Trump. But it wasn't until he flew Bill Clinton, Kevin Spacey, and Chris Tucker to Africa on his private Boeing 727 that the world began to wonder who he is.

By Landon Thomas Jr.



Cash Casual: Epstein dresses down. (Photo credit: Courtesy of Jeffrey Epstein)

He comes with cash to burn, a fleet of airplanes, and a keen eye for the ladies -- to say nothing of a relentless brain that challenges Nobel Prize-winning scientists across the country -- and for financial markets around the world. Ever since the Post's "Page Six" ran an item about the president's late-September visit to Africa with Kevin Spacey and Chris Tucker -- on his new benefactor's customized Boeing 727 -- the question of the day has been: Who in the world is Jeffrey Epstein?

It's a life full of question marks. Epstein is said to run \$15 billion for wealthy clients, yet aside from Limited founder Leslie Wexner, his client list is a closely held secret. A former Dalton math teacher, he maintains a peripatetic salon of brilliant scientists yet possesses no bachelor's degree. For more than ten years, he's been linked to Manhattan-London society figure Ghislaine Maxwell, daughter of the mysteriously deceased media titan Robert Maxwell, yet he lives the life of a bachelor, logging 600 hours a year in his various planes as he scours the world for investment opportunities. He owns what is said to be Manhattan's largest private house yet runs his business from a 100-acre private island in St. Thomas.

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Power on Wall Street has generally accrued to those who have made their

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open bids for it. Soros. Wasserstein. Kravis. Weill. The Sturm und Drang of their successes and failures has been played out in public. Epstein breaks the mold. Most everyone on the Street has heard of him, but nobody seems to know what the hell he is up to. Which is just the way he likes it.

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"My belief is that Jeff maintains some sort of money-management firm, though you won't get a straight answer from him," says one well-known investor. "He once told me he had 300 people working for him, and I've also heard that he manages Rockefeller money. But one never knows. It's like looking at the Wizard of Oz -- there may be less there than meets the eye."

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Says another prominent Wall Streeter: "He is this mysterious, Gatsbyesque figure. He likes people to think that he is very rich, and he cultivates this air of aloofness. The whole thing is weird."

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The wizard that meets the eye is spare and fit; with a long jaw and a carefully coiffed head of silver hair, he looks like a taller, younger Ralph Lauren. A raspy Brooklyn accent betrays his Coney Island origins. He spends an hour and fifteen minutes every day doing advanced yoga with his personal instructor, who travels with him wherever he goes. He is an enthusiastic member of the Trilateral Commission and the Council on Foreign Relations.

He dresses casually -- jeans, open-necked shirts, and sneakers -- and is rarely seen in a tie. Indeed, those close to him say the reason he quit his board seat at the Rockefeller Institute was that he hated wearing a suit. "It feels like a dress," he told one friend.

Epstein likes to tell people that he's a loner, a man who's never touched alcohol or drugs, and one whose nightlife is far from energetic. And yet if you talk to Donald Trump, a different Epstein emerges. "I've known Jeff for fifteen years. Terrific guy," Trump booms from a speakerphone. "He's a lot of fun to be with. It is even said that he likes beautiful women as much as I do, and many of them are on the younger side. No doubt about it -- Jeffrey enjoys his social life."

But beautiful women are only a part of it. Because here's the thing about Epstein: As some collect butterflies, he collects beautiful minds. "I invest in people -- be it politics or science. It's what I do," he has said to friends. And his latest prize addition is the former president. In his eyes, Clinton as a

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species represents the highest evolutionary form of the political animal. To be up close to him, as he was during the African journey, is akin to seeing the rarest of beasts on a safari. As he put it to a friend upon his return from Africa, "If you were a boxer at the downtown gymnasium at 14th Street and Mike Tyson walked in, your face would have the same look as these foreign leaders had when Clinton entered the room. He is the world's greatest politician."

"Jeffrey is both a highly successful financier and a committed philanthropist with a keen sense of global markets and an in-depth knowledge of twenty-first-century science," Clinton says through a spokesman. "I especially appreciated his insights and generosity during the recent trip to Africa to work on democratization, empowering the poor, citizen service, and combating HIV/AIDS."

Before Clinton, Epstein's rare appearances in the gossip columns tended to be speculation as to the true nature of his relationship with Ghislaine Maxwell. While they are still friends, the English tabloids have postulated that Maxwell has longed for a more permanent pairing and that for undetermined reasons Epstein has not reciprocated in kind. "It's a mysterious relationship that they have," says society journalist David Patrick Columbia. "In one way, they are soul mates, yet they are hardly companions anymore. It's a nice conventional relationship, where they serve each other's purposes."

Friends of the two say that Maxwell, whose social life has always been higher-octane than Epstein's, lent a little pizzazz to the lower-profile Epstein. Indeed, at a party at Maxwell's house, her friends say, one is just as apt to see Russian ladies of the night as one is to see Prince Andrew. The Oxford-educated Maxwell, described by many as a man-eater (she flies her own helicopter and was recently seen dining with Clinton at Nello's on Madison Avenue), lives in her own townhouse a few blocks away. Epstein is frequently seen around town with a bevy of comely young women but there has been no boldfaced name to replace Maxwell. "You may read about Jeffrey in the social columns, but there is much more to him than that," says Jeffrey T. Leeds of the private equity firm Leeds Weld & Co. "He's a talented money manager and an extremely hardworking person with broad interests. Most unusual, though, is that in this media-obsessed age he is not in any sense a self-promoter."

Born in 1953 and raised in Coney Island, Epstein went to Lafayette High School. According to his bio, he took some classes in physics at Cooper Union from 1969 to 1971. He left Cooper Union in 1971 and attended NYU's Courant Institute, where he took courses in mathematical physiology of the heart, leaving that school, too, without a degree. Between 1973 and 1975, Epstein taught calculus and physics at the Dalton School.

By most accounts, he was something of a Robin Williams-in-*Dead Poets Society* type of figure, wowing his high-school classes with passionate mathematical riffs. So impressed was one Wall Street father of a student that he said to Epstein point-blank: "What are you doing teaching math at Dalton? You should be working on Wall Street -- why don't you give my friend Ace Greenberg a call."

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