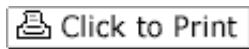




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## Cameraman: The Life and Work of Jack Cardiff -- Film Review

By Frank Scheck, October 08, 2010 06:06 ET

**Bottom Line:** Fascinating doc about the legendary cinematographer is as entertaining as it is informative.

Destined to become a perennial for film buffs everywhere, the explicitly titled "Cameraman: The Life and Work of Jack Cardiff" pays well deserved tribute to the legendary cinematographer who also became a respected director ("Sons and Lovers") in his own right. Recently showcased at the New York Film Festival, Craig McCall's documentary was recently acquired for theatrical distribution by Strand Releasing. Although its widest exposure will certainly be via home video, the film, unlike most documentaries, deserves to be seen on the big screen due to the sheer voluptuousness of its images.

Cardiff, who received an honorary Academy Award a decade ago, has hardly been forgotten by film buffs, thanks to his indelible cinematography for such Michael Powell-helmed classics as "Black Narcissus," "A Matter of Life and Death" and, of course, "The Red Shoes." His decades-long career, which began in 1918, virtually spanned modern film history.

Although he died last year, the elderly but sprightly Cardiff is a dominant presence in the film, which includes extensive interview footage in which he discusses his life, career and methodology in a straightforward, humorously self-effacing manner. He also provides no shortage of priceless anecdotes, such as his description of the chaos unleashed on a film set when Marlene Dietrich filmed a bathtub sequence in the nude.

Also providing fascinating analysis are such obvious fans as Kirk Douglas, Lauren Bacall (humorously describing the troubled filming of "The African Queen"), Charlton Heston, Michael Powell (audio only) and that most ubiquitous of film history commentators, Martin Scorsese.

A special treat for film fans are the excerpts from extensive home movies shot by Cardiff during his various shoots, including amusing footage of Kirk Douglas trying (and sometimes failing) to perform his own stunts on "The Vikings."

Informative and insightful for films buffs without sacrificing accessibility to the casual fan, "Cameraman" is essential viewing for anyone interested in film history.

*Venue: New York Film Festival (Strand Releasing)*

*Production: Modus Operandi Films, Smoke and Mirrors*

*Director/producer: Craig McCall*

*Executive producers: Mason Cardiff, Lenny Crooks, Chris Roff, Julie Williams*

*Cinematography: Steven Chivers, Ricardo Coll, Simon Fanthorpe, Nicholas Hoffman, Jonathan Rho, Ian Salvage, John Walker, James Welland, Bob Williams*

*Editor: Dan Roberts*

*Music: Mark Sayer-Wade*

*No Rating, 86 minutes*