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[Home](#) > Cameraman: The Life and Work of Jack Cardiff

# Cameraman: The Life and Work of Jack Cardiff

By *Editorial Test*

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**Dir. Craig McCall.** 2010. N/R. 86mins. Documentary.

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Review

**Compound Review?:**

Individual Review

**Dek:**

The gorgeous case is made for a behind-the-lens legend.

By Joshua Rothkopf

We're all "cameramen" these days, but the more our YouTube opuses dominate everything from reality TV to the *Paranormal Activity* movies, the further we get from understanding cinematography as an artform. The elegant Jack Cardiff, a British painter, shooter and ace anecdote-teller (here captured near the end of his magnificent career), will always represent the finer, even fussier side of the lushness of movies. Martin Scorsese, one of this doc's many articulate testifiers to the Technicolor expert's importance, puts it well: "Maybe it's because of where I came from," Scorsese says, referring to his NYC mean streets. "Neorealism I had right around me. If I wanted to go to a movie, I wanted something...fantastical."

And fantastical is what we get: *Cameraman* is filled with Cardiff's achingly beautiful work, from the furious violet moods of *Black Narcissus* (1947) and his ballet fantasia *The Red Shoes* (1948) to Sylvester Stallone's agonized poses in *Rambo: First Blood Part II* (1985). The more Cardiff remembers, the more clearly he becomes an enabler, never rejecting a director's wildest flight of fancy, despite the hulking weight of the "enchanted cottage," as he and his crews called their boxy, three-strip camera. Craig McCall's profile, 17 years in the making and incomplete until after Cardiff's 2009 death, makes crucial connections between Cardiff's spinning prima donnas and Scorsese's raging bulls; it definitely leans toward the showier side of the résumé. There's a missed opportunity in skimming over Cardiff's years in the exploitation wilderness as a director in the 1960s and '70s: The man loved to be transported, no matter where.

[TONY exclusive: Six cinematographers remember Jack Cardiff](#) <sup>[1]</sup>

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GIRLS ON FILM Cardiff remembers subject Audrey Hepburn.

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