

# David Lean



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The life and its biographer provide a landmark work on the cinema. Emerging from a childhood of nearly Dickensian darkness, David Lean found his great success as a director of the appropriately titled *Great Expectations*.

There followed his legendary black-and-white films of the 1940s and his four-film movie collaboration with Noel Coward. Lean's 1955 film *Summertime* took him from England to the world of international moviemaking and the stunning series of spectacular color epics that would gain for his work twenty-seven Academy Awards and fifty-six Academy Award nominations. All are classics, including *The Bridge on the River Kwai*, *Lawrence of Arabia*, *Doctor Zhivago*, and *A Passage to India*.

Kevin Brownlow, a film editor in his own right and author of the seminal silent film trilogy initiated with *The Parade's Gone By...*, brings to Lean's biography an exhaustive knowledge of the art and the industry.

One learns about the making of movies as realized by a master, but also of the highly personal costs of genius. The troubled Quaker family from which Lean came influenced his relationship with his son, his brother, and his six wives. Yet he showed in

his work a deep understanding of humanity.

The vastness of this scholarly and entertaining enterprise is augmented by sixteen pages of scenes from Lean's color films, thirty-two pages from his black-and-white movies, and throughout the text a vast number of photographs from his life and location work.

作者介绍:

Best known as the director of such epic films as *Lawrence of Arabia*, *The Bridge on the River Kwai* and *Doctor Zhivago*, British filmmaker David Lean (1908-1991) enjoyed a long and distinguished career. In turn, this volume, begun as an autobiography told to Brownlow, has been wrought by its author, a noted film historian (*The Parade's Gone By...*) and documentarian, into an epic account of an epic life. Coming from a stifling middle-class family who frowned on movies, Lean worked his way up through the lowest ranks of British cinema to become a top editor, then a director. The narrative here, based largely on interviews with those who knew Lean, and including long excerpts from Lean's correspondence, centers on extensive anecdotal accounts of the making of Lean's films. Brownlow shows that each one, including Lean's great films of the 1940s and '50s like *Brief Encounter*, *Great Expectations* and *Oliver Twist*, as well as the epic masterpieces, arose from a messy tangle of artistic ambition, dodgy finances, obsessive perfectionism, clashing egos and unforeseen contingencies. Brownlow's 90 pages on the contentious production of *Lawrence of Arabia* are unsurpassed by any other account. Even his descriptions of the flops and failed projects, such as Lean's attempt to film the story of the *Bounty* mutiny, are fascinating and instructive. Indeed, this book is as much an education in the realities of filmmaking as it is a biography. But ultimately, it is Lean's personality—charming, insecure, stubborn, maddeningly heedless of the feelings of others and, above all, brilliant—that dominates the text. The book's flaws—too much detail about Lean's tortuous love life; a lack of critical analysis of the films themselves—are serious but forgivable. As a movie insider's affectionate, admiring but unblinkered look at a great director, this is a magnificent, essential work. Photos and filmography. First serial to *Cineaste* magazine.

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