

The Daily Telegraph

Film Reviews

Cameraman: The Life and Work of Jack Cardiff, review

Jack Cardiff was a cinematographer who created miracles of light on nearly every one of the scores of pictures he worked on.



By **Sukhdev Sandhu** 5:43PM BST 06 May 2010

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Dir: Craig McCall; Rating: * * * *

pg cert, 85 min

It's not often in these days of cinematic sprawl and girth that you wish a film could be longer. If only Craig McCall's *Cameraman: The Life and Work of Jack Cardiff* could be a 10- or 20-part series. For Cardiff, who died at the age 94 in 2009, is one of the key figures in 20th-century movie making, a cinematographer who created miracles of light on nearly every one of the scores of pictures he worked on. He would have hated that assertion; he thought the film industry was "full of hypocrisy, hyperbole".

Yet cast your mind to the swooning unworldliness of Powell and Pressberger's *The Red Shoes* and *A Matter of Life and Death*, the sweltering lushness of John Huston's *The African Queen*, even the glistening monochromes in the self-directed *Sons and Lovers*: these indelible achievements lead Martin Scorsese, featured heavily in this dotting documentary, to argue that, in Cardiff's films, "colour itself became the emotion of the picture". Cardiff, dapper and eloquent, has an easy way with an anecdote, whether it concerns Errol Flynn's drinking habits or Marlene Dietrich's savvy around a set. A roster of distinguished figures — among them Bacall, Heston and Kirk Douglas — line up to pay tribute to his greatness.