



Alfred Hitchcock: A Life in Darkness and Light

By Patrick McGilligan

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Alfred Hitchcock: A Life in Darkness and Light is the definitive biography of the Master of Suspense and the most widely recognized film director of all time.

In a career that spanned six decades and produced more than 60 films – including *The 39 Steps*, *Vertigo*, *Psycho*, and *The Birds* – Alfred Hitchcock set new standards for cinematic invention and storytelling. Acclaimed biographer Patrick McGilligan re-examines his life and extraordinary work, challenging perceptions of Hitchcock as the “macabre Englishman” and sexual obsessive, and reveals instead the ingenious craftsman, trickster, provocateur, and romantic.

With insights into his relationships with Hollywood legends – such as Cary Grant, James Stewart, Ingrid Bergman, and Grace Kelly – as well as his 54-year marriage to Alma Reville and his inspirations in the thriller genre, the book is full of the same dark humor, cliffhanger suspense, and revelations that are synonymous with one of the most famous and misunderstood figures in cinema.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Director Hitchcock is in a class by himself. His legendary films, including *Rear Window*, *The 39 Steps* and *Notorious*, coupled with his TV show, *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, aired his singular brand of evil and salvation. In this enthralling, scholarly and candid appraisal of the artist, McGilligan, a biographer of James Cagney and Jack Nicholson, neatly reveals the man behind the camera. A quiet Catholic boy from London's East End, Hitchcock (1899- 1980) began as a production designer on silent films and eventually became Britain's premier movie director. David Selznick tapped him for Hollywood, and although their relationship was stormy, it spelled success. Hitchcock, who claimed, "I'm not interested in logic, I'm interested in effect," quickly redefined the medium. He told his stories visually, invented innovative camera angles and reveled in suspense tales. Always, he was aided by his wife, Alma, an invaluable partner on every project. A Hitchcock film "characteristically mingled light with darkness," possibly because its creator was so conflicted. Hitchcock adored gossip, dirty jokes and icy blondes, though, sexually impotent, he could not consummate his desire; his voyeurism instead played out on screen. He relished the occasional cruelty, but it did not obscure his genius or his generosity. He worked tirelessly for the British war effort, though America was committed to neutrality until Pearl Harbor, and was deeply loyal to old friends. McGilligan has crafted an inside look at this unique director and the studio machinations that sustained him. Film buffs will relish how power and creativity play out in Hollywood. The rest will learn how obsession can produce art. 32-page b&w photo insert not seen by PW.

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From [Booklist](#)

The author of the useful *George Cukor* (1991) and *Fritz Lang* (1997), biographies of film directors less documented than Hitchcock, now turns to that perhaps most-written-about filmmaker of all. Of course, the last major biography (as opposed to various kinds of studies) came 20 years ago, and McGilligan's effort incorporates many significant findings made since. It also serves as a corrective to Donald Spoto's *Dark Side of Genius* (1983), which focused unduly on Hitchcock's baser qualities. McGilligan portrays Hitchcock as driven by his neuroses, but also as a devoted husband and father and a clear-headed businessman. Still, the gist of the volume focuses on its subject's inventive filmmaking in detailed accounts on the making of each of his 60 movies, with particular attention paid to the screenwriters, many of them relative tyros, with whom Hitchcock collaborated. McGilligan's valuable discoveries include short fiction by a 19-year-old Hitchcock; his insights, illumination on Hitchcock's flawed final films. So detailed and readable that it is hard to imagine another Hitchcock biography will be needed 20 years hence. *Gordon Flagg*

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Review

"Staggering. . . . Illuminating. . . . The Master of Suspense finally gets an authoritative life."

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Ward Bishop:

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