

# BOOK REVIEWS

"Never say what you can imply."

James Wong Howe.

**The Work of the Motion Picture Cameraman, Freddie Young.** (1972) \$15.50

Freddie Young's book comes at a time in the development of Canadian filmmakers when it is most needed. Pauline Kael observed some time ago that many of the young directors were starting their careers in commercials and that this fact might be a fair comment on the future of American motion pictures. The influence is now evident. In a desperate effort to substitute technique for content and/or idea, the filmmaker is using slick visuals and rapid cutting to keep his audience from total boredom. The work of the motion picture cameraman is entirely different than what is called "technique". For the vast millions of movie-goers, technique is not the element they enjoy in a film. It takes film courses and education to develop this mindless sort of discussion about the "great technique and fantastic photography". What Freddie Young has to offer as his contribution to a film is something that any aware mind can appreciate. In this volume some of the intangibles are translated into realities. Here are recorded the results of fifty-five years of experience, knowledge and love for his craft. After reading his book, I hope no one will talk of the cameraman, as Sir Michael Balcon does in the Forward, as "painting with light". It is an appalling revelation to look at Freddie Young's credits. It is startling to realize what awfully trite scripts he had to work on: **Doctor Zhivago, You Only Live Twice, The Battle of Britain, Ryan's Daughter and Nicholas and Alexandra**, and of course **Lawrence of Arabia**. The last will suffice to make my point. In retrospect what comes to mind is not the twitching lip of Peter O'Toole or the hollow unconvincing lines delivered by Omar Shariff, but the desert scenes, where fortunately the actors and the script have disappeared into atmosphere and composition. It is possible to say that Freddie Young is too accomplished for the present situation in the motion picture industry.

Young's accomplishments rise out of artistic and technological considerations. His book differs from **The Technique of the Motion Picture Cameraman** and the **Technique of Lighting for Television and Motion Pictures**, in that his book reflects the personal techniques of Freddie Young. Young's technique, attitudes and ideas have been developed after the standard texts on the subject are just a memory.

Young is a traditionalist. He has the truly professional approach to his work. He is not the type of man who would come onto the set on the first day and "let it all hang out". He arrives prepared. He has defined his approach to the script. He has planned in detail just how he is going to get the effect he desires. Not unpredictably, he approached his book in the same manner. He begins with definitions and job descriptions. The work of the Cameraman, Operator, Focus-puller (this screen credit mystifies the audience), the Clapper-loader and the Dolly-pusher (the latter have not as yet been given screen credit - Unions to Action!) Young emphasizes that an essential requirement in the crew is an ability to exercise tact, to have physical durability and remain calm. His suggestions as to how successful teams work reveal insight; his ideas about recruiting crews show common sense. This formula for Crew/Director relationships reflects his awareness of others' wants and limits. The diagrams (these are plentiful) aid the reader and provide a format for in-production situations. The work of the

second unit is not overlooked. After the terms of work have been established he proceeds to reveal the background and facts about the tools of the trade: cameras and lenses, lighting and other equipment, the film itself, are all examined and evaluated.

What standard texts cannot provide is the personal insight that only Young possesses. The 'Lighting Objectives' and 'Procedures' are considered in exact detail. 'Tricks for Handling Light', 'Shadow and Movement' are revealed and discussed. Very valuable, in practical terms, is the section under Camera Techniques. Items include: Conversation, Two-shot Camera Treatment, Eye-line etc., Young's systematic approach has no academic heaviness about it. Reading these taped interviews, although they are not presented in the interview format, the freshness of his devotion to his work, the respect he has for his fellow craftsmen and the humility of a person who is the master of his profession is transmitted easily and thoroughly to the reader.

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Cameramen are not always aware of the vast amount of available reading there is on their art. Here is a partial list of books.

**Professional Cinematography**, Carle G. Clarke, A.S.C.

**Principals of Cinematography: A Handbook of Cinematography**, Leslie J. Wheeler.

**The Technique of the Motion Picture Camera**, H. Mario Raimondo Souto.

**An Introduction to Cinematography**, John Mercer.

**Practical Motion Picture Photography**,

**Photographic Theory For Motion Picture Cameraman.**

**Professional 16/35 Cameraman's Handbook**, Vern & Sylvia Carlson.

**The American Cinematographer's Manual.** (4th Edition 1973)

**The Technique of Special Effects Cinematography**, Raymond Fielding.

**The Technique of the Television Cameraman**, Peter Jones.

**The Technique of Special Effects in Television**, Bernard Wilkie.

Freddie Young's books are an addition to the healthy growth in the literature of the cameraman's knowledge.

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In addition to technical books there is a number of books that reveal a growing appreciation of the achievements of the cameraman. Here are a few books that have recorded the life and times of some of these artists.

**Behind the Camera**, Leonard Maltin. Paperback, \$1.50.

Realizing that the motion picture cameraman was possibly the most neglected contributor to the art of the motion picture, Leonard Maltin set out to record interviews with some of Hollywood's greats. Hal Mohr, Conrad Hall, Hal Rosson, Lucien Ballard and Arthur C. Miller are presented in the interview format. A filmography of each man's work along with the nominees and winners of the Academy Award for Best Cinematography up to 1970 is appended.

**Hollywood Cameramen**, Charles Higham, Paper, \$3.95.

Charles Higham can be called the historian of Hollywood. His many books testify to his great knowledge of the American movie industry. This volume is a tribute through interviews to men of the Golden Era and after. Higham is able to discuss the difference in the films, say, of John Ford, in relation to the cameraman Ford used from picture to picture.



## DAVID BEARD

An Arthur Miller Ford is seen in **How Green Was My Valley** and **Tobacco Road**. A Joe August Ford, A Bert Glennon Ford, an Archie Stout Ford and a Gregg Toland Ford are discussed in various aspects, e.g. A Gregg Toland Ford with deep focus and ceiling sets, ahead of **Citizen Kane**, is seen in Ford's **The Long Voyage Home**. Other interviews concern, Leon Shamroy, Lee Garmes, William Daniels, James Wong Howe, Stanley Cortez, Karl Strauss and Arthur Miller.

**The Men With the Movie Cameras: Seventy-Five Filmographies**, \$1.00.

This is valuable reference material. When studying the style of a given cameraman this list of credits can guide the viewer to the sequence and development or decline of the individual artist. It may be discouraging to a young Canadian cameraman to see the list of credits some have accumulated, but it is encouraging to realize that more and more the men of his profession are being finally recognized for their contribution.

**James Wong Howe: An Interview with Win Sharpless**, Filmmakers Newsletter, Vol. 6 No. 4, .75¢.

It is significant to see such an interview with Howe's image on the cover of the magazine. The interview, although short, does reveal the man behind the camera as a devoted artist. Reading through the material mentioned above does make one aware of the terrible injustice the cameraman had to suffer in the past. But the future is bright for him. This new recognition can be nothing, but good news!

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### New Arrivals.

**Young Soviet Film Makers**, Jeanne Vronskaya. \$7.50

**International Film Guide 1973**. \$3.95

**The Primal Screen**, Andrew Sarris. \$11.50

**Film 71-72**. Members of the National Society of Film Critics. \$4.50

**Son of Groucho**, Arthur Marx. \$9.25

**Deeper Into Movies**, Pauline Kael. \$14.50

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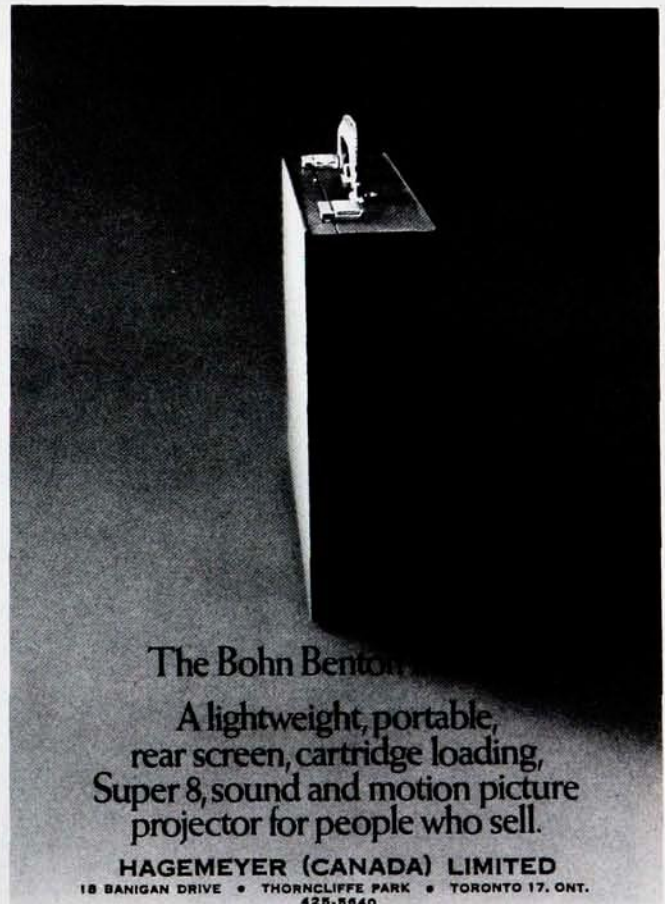
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