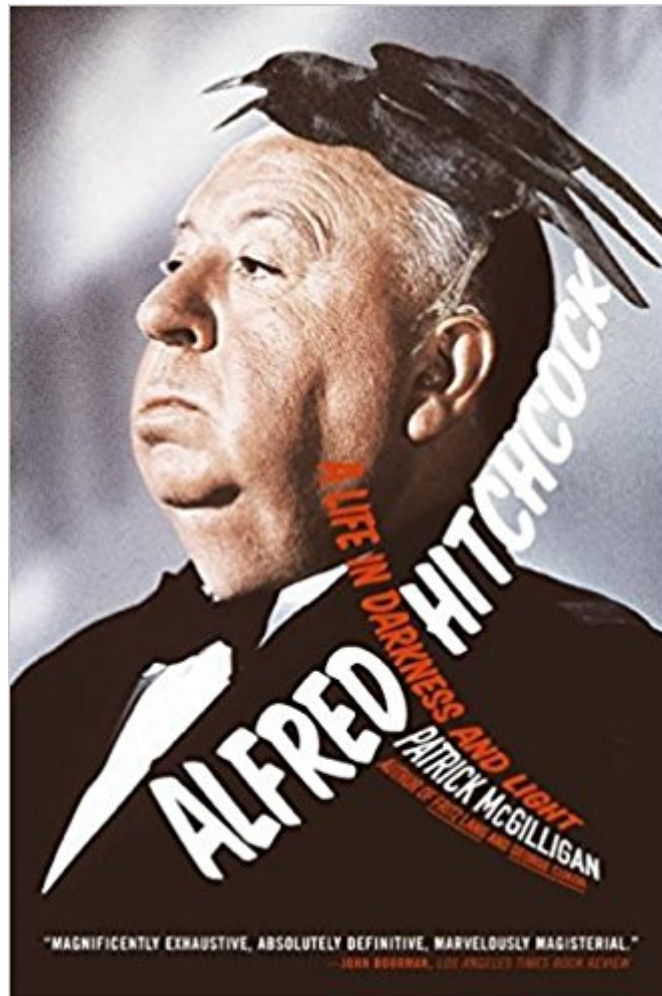


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Alfred Hitchcock: A Life In Darkness And Light



Synopsis

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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Customer Reviews

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. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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 Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I would recommend this book for:- Fans of Hitchcock movies, or at least people familiar with the movies and the actors/actresses from the decades of Hitchcock's body of work.- Fans of very detailed, microscopic biographies. Make no mistake, this one takes awhile to get through and would be much more rewarding for film aficionados and fans of the great director.- Those looking to

expand their vocabulary. Have a dictionary close by! Unfortunately for me, I fall in none of these camps, but I was able to soldier on and finish it. Parts of it are very interesting (Hitchcock's relationships, his wife Alma, the personalities of the movie stars) other parts were very monotonous and difficult to wade through (Hitch's every minute of the day detailed, the entire script writing process of nearly every one of his films). In the end, I look at it as a difficult journey. Hard to get through at the time, but I'm happy for what I've learned on the trip. For me, the big payoff was the sad and almost anticlimactic ending. I read as this young couple (Alfred and Alma) fell in love, had experiences, grew up together, grew old together, and ultimately, Hitch's passing due to the grief of not having his rock and not being able to do the job he loved. A sad end to an interesting genius.

I've read a number of biographies of Hitchcock. There are literally scores of books about all aspects of his life. The last one I read was Donald Spoto's *The Darkside of Genius*. I was disturbed by Spoto's book because I felt it was a sensational attempt to paint a pre-determined portrait of Hitchcock. I enjoyed McGilligan's book at several levels. It was very thorough. It covered his English and American phases of his career with equal vigor. It gave interesting insights into his personality, relationships and films. I also appreciated his ability to take aspects of Spoto's book and address them in a respectful manner. Hitchcock was certainly a complex person. As stated in the title, there are aspects of darkness in his personality and behavior. However, I don't believe he was the monster Spoto paints. McGilligan offers a balanced view I found refreshing. There is so much information about Hitchcock. For a person just beginning this journey McGilligan's volume is thorough, entertaining and balanced.

The main reason I enjoyed the book is that I saw most of Hitchcock's hit movies, starting with *Psycho*. So the author sparked my interest with his revealing descriptions of the major stars, including their relationships with Hitch. Also, I welcomed the intriguing portrait of Hitchcock as a brilliant yet eccentric master of his craft. The most poignant part of the story comes with the coverage of Hitchcock's declining health and approaching death--when his immense fame and wealth could not rescue him. Despite these assets, *A Life in Darkness and Light* becomes pedantic, tedious, and boring--with far more details than readers not connected with the film industry want to know. There are numerous sections where twenty pages could have covered the topic sufficiently, rather than the fifty or sixty pages that appeared. On this point, the author seems out of touch with contemporary readers, who prefer an approach that is adequate in detail yet not encyclopedic.

What a fascinating and complex character Hitchcock was ! I recently read Tippi Hedren's biography and her take on Hitchcock just adds to the story. You probably have to be a fan of his films to really enjoy this book, because it's in his films (or in the making of his films) that Hitchcock reveals himself. I read the book, went back and watched some of his films again and then read it again. Each time, the combination of the book and his films reveals more of the man. At the end, you may love him or despise, but you can't ignore him.

Hitchcock, for better or worse, doesn't on a visual level match up to his work in a heavily visual medium. Bald, rotund, and plain he would never be cast against his favored ice blonde heroines unless he was the murderer or the incidental character boarding the bus or part of a newspaper weight reduction ad. There have been numerous books written about Hitchcock and no doubt there will be more, but for my two bits this is a stand alone book that is or should be viewed as the final or last word. Patrick McGilligan presents Hitchcock as the creative genius who relied heavily on the visual aspects of film to create suspense. His early affiliation with Selznick when he came to the states was at times trying, but also rewarding and productive. As Hitchcock's reputation grew along with his girth, so did his fame. Interestingly, Hitchcock was able to work in different genres though he excelled when he worked in suspense the area of suspense. The Hitchcock presented in this book was a long married man who had one wife and one child. He could be cruel, but also was known for his humor which was generally funny but not without its dark side. What of the cool and icy blondes? No doubt Hitchcock's mind was working, but impotence prevented things from going anywhere. The creativity of Hitchcock's fertile mind appeared to be limitless; his long standing team executed his ideas visually. From my perspective this book is the total Hitchcock package. It is a thorough biography that abounds with personal information and interesting anecdotes while providing comprehensive details about Hitchcock's numerous projects. This is a great book that informed, fascinated, and held my interest.

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