

David Lean: A Biography

By Ronald Paquet

Fall 1998 Issue of KINEMA

DAVID LEAN, unlike other famous film directors, Hitchcock and Wells for example, shunned publicity and the spotlights after the openings of his films leaving as soon as possible for some remote hotel in a far flung land to remain an inaccessible and private person. Long overdue, as a result, is this thorough and insightful biography by renowned film historian, Kevin Brownlow (*The Parade's Gone By, Hollywood, the Pioneers*) told through the authentic voices of Lean's many wives, his friends and co-workers.

The author explores the background to all of Lean's films from his early days as a film editor in the 1930s up to his unrealized *Nostramo* during the 1980s. Along the way we learn of his Quaker upbringing, his work in the British studio system, creating such films as *Brief Encounter*, *Great Expectations* and *Hobson's Choice*. We follow him as he travels to Venice (*Summer Time*), Ceylon (*The Bridge on the River Kwai*), Jordan (*Lawrence of Arabic*), Spain (*Doctor Zhivago*), Tahiti (*The Bounty* -- never filmed) to Ireland for *Ryan's Daughter* and to India (*A Passage to India*). Lean died before starting his *Nostramo*. Kevin Brownlow's meticulous research has given us a thoroughly engrossing, vastly informative, and splendidly written life of the real David Lean, the "Poet of the Far Horizon," and one of the world's finest film-makers.

Editor's Note: Covering some of the same ground and worth reading too, is Adrian Turner's biography, *Robert Bolt -- Scenes from Two Lives* (Hutchinson, 1997, \$50.00). Bolt worked closely with Lean as his scriptwriter and there is much to be learned from their collaboration.

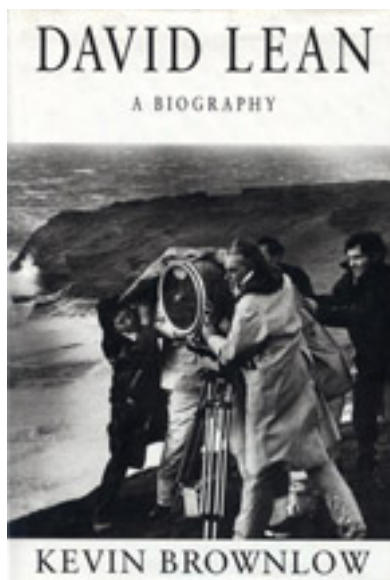


Figure 1: **TITLE:** *DAVID LEAN: A BIOGRAPHY* ¶ **AUTHOR:** Kevin Brownlow ¶ **PUBLISHER:** St. Martin's Press, London 1997, 810pp. ¶ **PRICE:** USD 65.00