

To the Reader

“Film is light”

— Federico Fellini

*“The audience’s identification with the actor is really an
identification with the camera”*

— Walter Benjamin

Like all artists, cinematographers have a deeply personal approach. They offer their unique perspective to the director and to the story. I hope that this book will contribute to your appreciation for the boundless variety of lighting, the wonderful diversity of cinematographers and the depth of their creative work.

Don’t be intimidated

This book starts and ends with the emotional content of film images, yet as befits a technological art form, some of this book is technical and some of it is aesthetic. If you’re a poet, don’t be intimidated by the numbers but start with the diagrams instead, and imagine the flow of light across the set. If you’re an engineer, don’t be intimidated by the aesthetics: look at the images and feel the emotions they convey to you. How flashing or bleach-bypassing work is not as important as what the resulting images look like, and the emotions they evoke.

Read any which way

Although each chapter makes a course-like progression from technical basics to sequence design, my hope is that you will feel free to skip around to a particular theme or cinematographer. I have tried to write the chapters so that they can be read independently, and there are bold headings to facilitate jumping to your favorite topic or ferretting out a tidbit of interest. Once again, the best place to start is the images: the workprint frames, movie stills, even the lighting and technical diagrams.

Hybrid Cinema

I strongly believe that the future of cinema will be hybrid, a mixture of photochemical and digital techniques creatively applied to shooting, post-producing and projection. I regret that I did not have time to cover the digital ventures of cinematographers like Yves Angelo, John Bailey, ASC, Anthony Dod Mantle, Tak Fujimoto, ASC, Jean-Pierre Sauvaire and David Tattersall, BSC. I

would also have liked to depict the digital intermediate processes developing at companies like Duboicolor, Eclair and EFilm. I hope to make up for this omission in future publications. Nevertheless,

whether you're shooting film or digital, it's still all about light, and the knowledge imparted here applies to anyone setting up a shot on a bright location or a dark set.