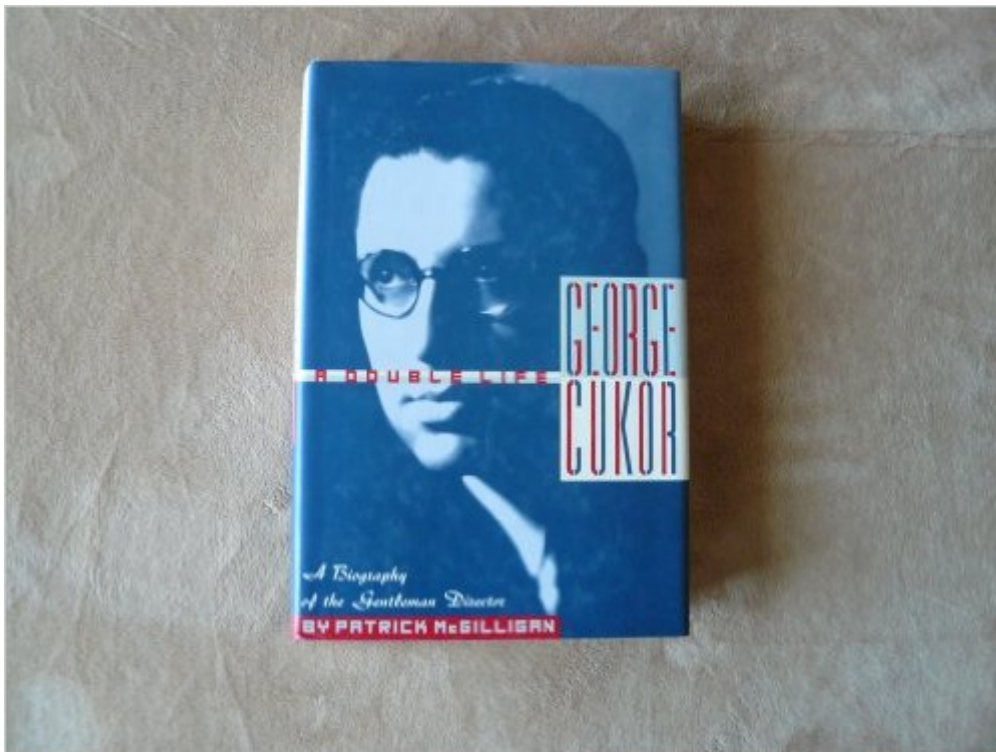


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# George Cukor: A Double Life : A Biography Of The Gentleman Director



## Synopsis

Through 50 years and 50 films--from *Holiday* and *The Philadelphia Story* to *Camille* and *My Fair Lady*--George Cukor created some of Hollywood's greatest motion pictures. The first book to discuss Cukor's homosexuality openly, *George Cukor: A Double Life* is a sympathetic portrait of a man "whose long career is all the more impressive given the double life he was forced to lead"--Los Angeles Book Review. b&w photos. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Very solid biography of the director, George Cukor, covering his long life and career. McGilligan does well covering the dual nature of Cukor's personality, how his homosexuality both colored and hindered his film projects. Very well researched, the book vividly portrays the Hollywood gay society of the 30's - 50's and does well analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of both Cukor and his films. McGilligan is not balanced in his judgments on the films, however. He denigrates many of Cukor's more popular works ("The Women") and lavishes praise on the director's own favorites (the overrated "Adam's Rib"). His assessment of the much-debated firing of Cukor from "Gone With The Wind" also seems simplistic. Overall, a worthwhile read and a fine overview of a major Hollywood career and an important figure in film history.

This platter is full of many good pieces: enlightenment, gossip, display, speculation and journalistic

integrity. Before recommending it for immediate consumption, however, one should ponder the notion that while some bites are indeed chunky and tasty, some have been diced into inedibly large pieces; and while at times the meal is juicy and succulent, at others it is bland and overcooked. More than anything, it is FAR too much to digest in one sitting. It might be better to eat as leftovers than as a buffet. I could not think of a more comprehensive text about Cukor's interesting existence; however some people and relationships (especially with Katherine Hepburn) seem conspicuously more fleshed-out than others that are teased upon (to this reviewer, it is most obvious with Cukor's father, Spencer Tracy and George Towers, all very influential people in Cukor's life with mere paragraphs describing them). The text also suffers at times from trying TOO hard to be fair to Cukor. Certainly, to the author's credit, nasty and contradictory elements are introduced, but it seems that just as much effort is placed on balancing this with excuses or possible alternatives. Cuko was not universally popular, and very few attended his funeral (not even Hepburn was there); so the fairness seems a bit of a disguise. I would recommend a grain of salt to make this tastier; and I would also recommend less than a chapter a day. The book is long on filmography, can be slow reading, and takes time to digest. Overall, it is pleasing, as are Cukor's films, for the most part; but they all took lots of time, according to most accounts. Do the same.

Hollywood's golden era would have been a markedly less memorable place without the contribution of director George Cukor in whose hands movies like "The Women," "The Philadelphia Story," and "My Fair Lady" would have been lesser cinematic events had he not come to Hollywood when he did. A director of Cukor's stature deserves a worthy biography and, unlike some other reviewers on this page, I believe he got one with this account of his singular life. Not only does McGilligan cover life at the top of the Hollywood ladder, but also what it was like to be not only prominent and gay, but also less attractive among the most attractive people in the country, the backlash at being labeled a "woman's director," and how Cukor dealt with being fired from the biggest movie of the decade: "Gone with the Wind." If you like old movies and want to know more about what life was like while they were being made, this is one book that you'll want to read.

George Cukor (1899-1983) grew up in a lawyer's middle class and cosy home in New York. Cukor's family heritage was Hungarian and Jewish (Cukor was a secular Jew). All of his life Cukor fought an inferiority complex based on his ugliness, weight and life in Anti-Semitic America. His biggest secret was his overt and active homosexuality. Among the major directors of the glory years of Hollywood he was the only one who was gay. Cukor directed several blockbusters such as The Philadelphia

Story; Adam's Rib; Pat and Mike' The Women; Camille; Born Yesterday Holiday and My Fair Lady (for which he won his only Oscar for best director) This book contains a complete Filmography of Cukor's oeuvre as well as several vintage photographs. Cukor was a kind man who could show his temper. His famed Hollywood parties drew the likes of Garbo, Kate Hepburn, Spencer Tracy (who lived in a home on Cukor's estate); Vivien Leigh; Laurence Olivier; Humphrey Bogart and a large contingent of his gay friends and lovers. Cukor was a man of wit, intelligence, culture and artistic proclivity. The best chapters deal with his complex relationship with David O. Selznick who fired Cukor as director of *Gone With the Wind*. Another intriguing chapter deals with the disaster that was *A Star is Born* the comeback vehicle for the tortured Judy Garland. Cukor was the director of Marilyn Monroe's last film *Something's Got to Give* until she was fired for failing to show up on time. Cukor was kind to her. The book is a typical Hollywood biography where the films and the backstage life of the personality are discussed in length. Many readers might find this dull. For the classic movie buff, however, this McGilligan biography is well researched and written.

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