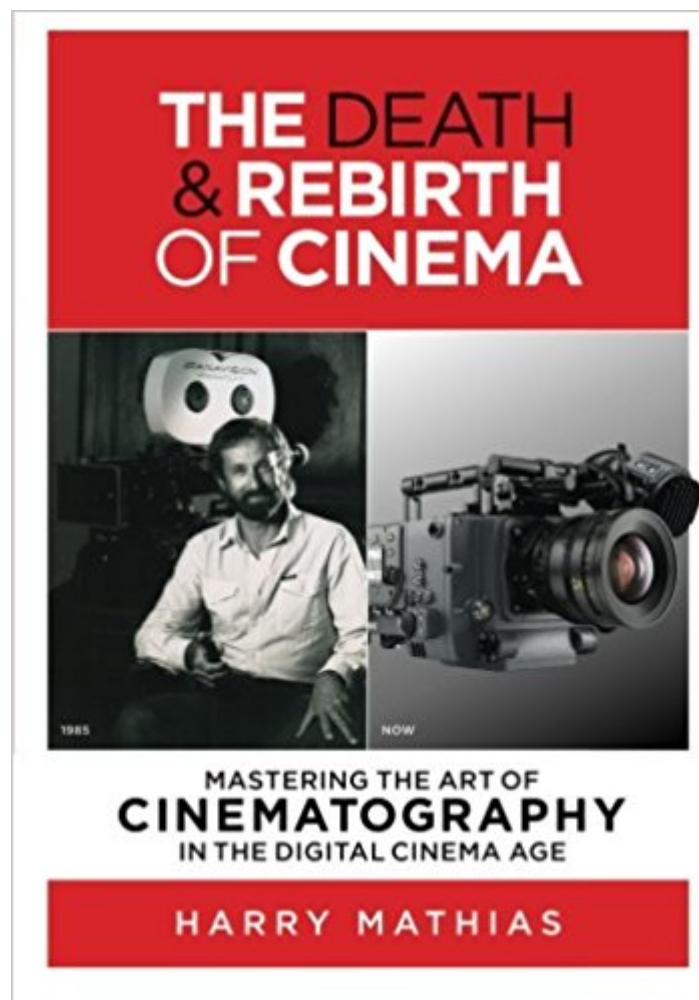




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# The Death & Rebirth Of Cinema: MASTERING THE ART OF CINEMATOGRAPHY IN THE DIGITAL CINEMA AGE



## Synopsis

"Simply put, Harry Mathias has done it again. "The Death & Rebirth of Cinema" solidifies Mathias's standing as THE great translator of film-to-digital imaging technology." The world's cinema has mostly left behind its 100-year tradition of cinematography on film, and begins its search for a new visual foundation. What is next for cinema, is what this book is about. This book discusses the big questions of the future of cinematography, in a cinema that is increasingly preoccupied with technology and not with artistic moving images. "Just as he did with "Electronic Cinematography" 30 years ago, Mathias cuts through the web of misinformation and lays out a brilliant method to gain control over new and constantly changing imaging technologies without losing sight of the valuable lessons cinematographers have taught us for over 100 years. Harry Mathias has the professional experience, technological savvy, and artistic integrity to connect the rich, foundational knowledge of past photographic systems to today's rapidly changing "technology of the month" attitude.--William McDonald, UCLA Professor & Chair, Department of Film, Television and Digital Media, said about this book. This book teaches the vital new cinematography skills that are needed to make great films in a digital cinema world. It covers lighting, lens selection, image control methods, and much more--whether using digital cinema or (photochemical) film with today's technology-driven cinema. Mathias is a very experienced film cinematographer, one who also is a pioneer of digital cinema cinematography. He outlines concrete plans to take the best path forward to a digital imaging future, without leaving behind the photographic skills and lighting arts of films of the past. Exploring the path from our past to the future, this book is not only for cinematographers; it is for anyone who cares about telling dramatic stories visually to film audiences. Film directors, producers, production designers, art directors, editors, colorists, and film critics are all concerned with communicating cinematic images effectively to a theatre audience. Often the issue today is not how can this be done effectively with digital cinema, but how can it be done in spite of all this new technology. In this book, Mathias boldly sets out the plan to reach that cinematography of the future. What is important to cinema is image quality and the art of cinematography--and that is why the major skills required are the same whether a Director of Photography is using film or digital cinema. This book is about making images the right way, regardless of the camera technology being used. Cinema is, after all, technology in the service of art, not the other way around...

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Mathias (Electronic Cinematography, 1985) offers perennial strategies for digital filmmaking in this guide. The author, a veteran cinematographer, is alarmed by a transformation in the film industry. It isn't the migration from film to digital recording--Mathias was actually a pioneer in what was once termed "electronic cinematography." Rather, he says, it's the fact that many people in the film industry have abandoned time-honored aesthetics in visual storytelling. Mathias claims that the disposability of digital technology has led to the production of disposable cinema; filmmakers, he says, lack the patience and experience to carefully craft compelling shots. With this book, he seeks to create a guideline for digital-age film artists, including older filmmakers who may be intimidated by digital technology and younger ones who are less schooled in what he sees as the increasingly lost art of cinematography. Mathias covers essential aspects of the process, including image design, exposure, color timing, lens selection, lighting, and postproduction planning. He doesn't include references to specific models of digital cameras, which become obsolete at the pace of technological innovation; rather, his goal was to create a work that would remain relevant for all future models of camera, as the fundamentals of cinematography will remain intact. As Mathias writes in the preface, this is not a how-to book--it's a "how NOT to" book. How not to turn a hundred year old visual art form comprised of beautifully lit and emotionally compelling images into an efficient and uncreative digital imaging factory." He's a patient, practical instructor, and his prose is clear and conversational. That said, the book is clearly aimed at

readers with some background knowledge of filmmaking, and it dives quickly into industry specifics and jargon. The author's experience and deep love of film is apparent from the beginning, though, and despite all the changes that continue to occur in the world of film production, readers will come away feeling optimistic. The old arts, it turns out, have not yet been lost; they're simply waiting to be rediscovered by a willing generation of artists. A comprehensive, detail-oriented guide to digital cinematography." - Kirkus Reviews

Harry Mathias is an experienced Director of Photography mostly of feature films. He is schooled in the classical Hollywood movie traditions of cinematography and lighting and has collaborated with some of the greatest names in the cinema industry. His feature films have included drama, comedy, action, and special-effects movies. He has also shot documentaries, music videos, commercials, and some television. He is a pioneer of digital cinema, holding three film and digital cinema patents, with two more pending, but he primarily thinks, and writes, like a cinematographer in a world where few people do. He is a Life Fellow of the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers (SMPTE) and is a founding member of the American HDTV Production and Digital Cinema Standards Committees. Harry Mathias was nominated for an Oscar in 1980 for *Solly's Diner*. Mathias has been a design consultant for both film and digital cinema cameras for some of the world's major camera companies. He shares his passion through teaching the next generation of cinematographers by giving invited lectures and seminars on film technology and digital cinema worldwide, in addition to his past teaching at the Santa Fe University of Art and Design (Professor and Cinema Department Chair), UCLA, American University, USC, American Film Institute, and the Swedish Film Institute. He is currently a professor at San Jose State University in California. This is his fourth book.

...not until passing on to others becomes more important than making images yourself.

• From the Preface. Harry Mathias's book *The Death & Rebirth Of Cinema* is the culmination of a lifetime of work in the filmmaking industry as a professional cinematographer. Harry Mathias KNOWS the craft of cinematography. From the writing in his book, and the subjects he covers, I knew that I was reading not just a masterful book, but something far better. Something secret, esoteric. In this day and age, we are quickly losing (if not already lost) the time-tested older ways of the master and apprentice art of teaching and learning. This is how Harry Mathias learned his art. And this is how he teaches the reader in his book. In the book, Harry explains the ways filmmaking has changed over the years, since he started.

Hence the title of the book, *The Death And Rebirth Of Cinema*. He briefly covers the current group of mainstream digital cameras, but doesn't go into too much detail on them, as he says in his book that technology is always changing and updating. He does give a cursory overview of what good directors do, the many positions on a film crew/set, and covers the positions on a camera team. What he covers in detail instead, is the tools and techniques that have been used in filmmaking from years past, and will be (hopefully) used in the years ahead, something that the current crop of young filmmakers are NOT utilizing. I agree with what Harry says repeatedly in his book, in that filmmaking is losing the beauty that it used to have. Theatrical films are looking more and more like television, instead of looking like films. People are not using (or correctly using) the old-school (best school) ways of filmmaking, and instead rely too much on the technology and *we'll fix it in post-work* that is common nowadays. Which means that films are losing the beauty and artistic integrity they used to have. Camera imagers, pixels, photo sites, and all manner of inside and outside components of digital cinema cameras are covered. I particularly LOVED the sections talking about Ansel Adams and his *Zone* system. It is clear that Harry has derived much of his art of cinematography from Ansel Adams, and now I have an interest in it as well. Also covered are light meters, camera stops, skin tones, camera testing and calibration (he gives steps to follow to test a camera for filmmaking purposes), waveform monitors (and how useful they are on-set), lenses (in great detail, as well as HOW a lens work), lighting the actual film image, image size and composition, and more. Too much to discuss in a review, and I barely do justice to how well it is covered in detail. That's why I got the book. This book goes into such great detail, it's almost overwhelming. But it's not. The detail is phenomenal, breaking down how EVERYTHING in cinematography works. Not only does Harry explain his art, but it's clear he has a LOVE of film and his art. His writing is at times very humorous, and when reading it's more like your best friend is right next to you, telling you all this. His writing makes you feel comfortable, like this is something you can learn if you put effort into it. I literally laughed out loud many times, because he has a great sense of humor in his writing that makes it that much more enjoyable. This book is what the newer generation of filmmakers needs to read. We don't want films and filmmaking to suffer as a result of reliance just on newer technology. We need to use newer technology in conjunction with the time-tested ways of filmmaking. Harry Mathias is definitely a Master in cinematography, and this book is his legacy. It's time for us to learn. The Master Class is in session.

Cinematography truly is a fascinating area, although I don't admit that it isn't one that I know a lot about. In this book, Harry Mathias provides a large amount of insight and information into this topic, with a focus on our modern age of digital cinematography. The book appears to be targeted at people interested in actually getting involved in the field but, at the same time, the book is also perfect for anyone who simply wants to know more about cinema and all that is associated with it. One of the most important thing that I have to say about this book is that it is simply fascinating. Now, I don't know anything at all about the author, although it is clear from the writing and from his biography that he has considerable experience in this field. In many ways, the book is a love letter to more traditional cinematography approaches along with a focus on how these can be applied in our much more digital modern world. The book is certainly information-dense, so it might not be something that anyone sits down and reads in a few sittings. That's a good thing though as I imagine that this book is one that people would come back to time and time again for more information.

This is a great resource to use if you want to become a cinematographer because of all the content that is on the pages. Not only does it tell you pretty much everything you need to know about cameras, video formats, lighting, makeup, and other necessary aspects of film, but it also gives you some prime examples of each aspect. Everything is broken down in an easy to understand way, so even if you are just starting out, you won't feel like it's too complicated to figure out. There is a bit of history in this book as well, which is just as interesting. My favorite part was the explanation of facial expressions and how lighting can change everything, even in black and white movies. I would recommend reading this if you are into photography, taking videos, or really anything that is artistic, as it could help you out immensely.

The Death and Rebirth of Cinema is a valuable guide to digital filmmaking. Written by the guru himself Harry Mathias, the book tackles all aspects of cinematography. Mathias vast experience in cinematography helps him fuse the historical part of cinematography and the future in a well elegant manner. This is a comprehensive guide on employing digital - age film artistry. He expertly covers important aspects such as lens selection, lighting, color timing, exposure and also post production planning. The book is a rich resource for students of cinema and also for those in the field of cinematography. It is a powerful champion for the rebirth of cinema. It accurately champions the

return of the art of cinema storytelling which is lacking in today's technology-laden film industry. I totally agree with Mathias that cinema can only be reborn if we employ the art of communicating our powerful stories utilizing dramatic images. This is a brilliant book that is well researched and very helpful in understanding the revolution taking place in the world of cinematography.

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