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Columbia Pictures Tribute

A Cinemascope Classic: David Lean Directs

Lawrence of Arabia 7:30

Produced as the first film spectacular for adults, *Lawrence of Arabia* makes no attempt to unravel the enigma of T. E. Lawrence (played by Peter O'Toole); rather, it thrives on it. "I cannot make out whether you're bloody bad mannered or just half witted," a British general says to him; "I have the same problem myself," Lawrence replies. The film was criticized for being a study of Lawrence, the desert warrior, to the detriment of Lawrence, the writer and diplomat. But in a certain way, director David Lean leaves the story of this odd figure of history—a man of mysterious moods and passions who, when sent by British intelligence to observe the Arab revolt against the Turks during World War I, became personally enmeshed in the struggle—to the magnificent visual sense of cinematographer Freddie Young. He brings out the exquisite fragility and the pitiless constancy of the desert in images that seem framed by the sun's shimmering, hazy heat: that hooded figure on camelback riding toward the camera might be a mirage.

• Directed by David Lean. Written by Robert Bolt. Photographed by F. A. (Freddie) Young. With Peter O'Toole, Alec Guinness, Anthony Quinn, Jack Hawkins, Omar Sharif. (1962, 221 mins, 35mm, Color, 'Scope, Print from Columbia Classics)