

# A conversation with Joseph McBride about his study of Hollywood film director George Cukor: “There are many flawed people in his films, but Cukor understands human imperfection”—Part 2

David Walsh  
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*This is the second part of an interview with Joseph McBride, author of George Cukor’s People. The first part of the interview and a comment on the book were posted January 8.*

David Walsh: You’ve entitled your book *George Cukor’s People*, which is an intriguing title. You go on to say that you are attempting an “experiment in film criticism.” You write: “This book, then, is an experiment in how to study a director primarily through his work with his actors. That approach gets to the heart of Cukor’s craft and should enable us to understand his artistic personality more precisely.”

Could you elaborate on that?

Joseph McBride: Yes, I’ll quote the epigraph to the book. Katharine Hepburn commented, “You never had to put a label on the bottle, because it was unmistakable. All the people in your pictures are as goddamned good as they can possibly be, and that’s your stamp.”

That’s where I got the idea to call it *George Cukor’s People*, because he was a great humanist who loved people. He was generous, much as [French director] Jean Renoir was generous to his actors. There are few outright villains in films by Renoir and Cukor, people who are awful, unredeemable. One of the few is Marie-Antoinette [Lise Delamare] in Renoir’s film about the French Revolution, *La Marseillaise* [1938]. You couldn’t make her at all sympathetic. But even the king, Louis XVI, in *La Marseillaise*, which I think is the greatest historical film ever made, is a rather likable fellow. Kind of inept and muddled and, you know, a fool, and played by the director’s brother Pierre.

One thing that comes through in all of Cukor’s films is his concern with unconventional relationships. Just having a husband and wife be equal, as in *Adam’s Rib* [1949], with Tracy and Hepburn, written by Ruth Gordon and Garson Kanin, was unusual. Hepburn and Tracy are lawyers on opposite sides of the courtroom. He is prosecuting Judy Holliday for shooting her husband, who is a philanderer. Hepburn defends her. It’s quite funny, witty. Tracy and Hepburn are both strong, equal characters, they have a lot of respect for each other, they’re good at their professions.

*Little Women* [1933] is an interesting case. Hepburn had wanted to make that film, but Cukor hadn’t read the novel by Louisa May Alcott and thought it was a children’s book. He read the book and he was impressed that it is about a strong-willed young woman who struggles to become a writer in a society that doesn’t necessarily welcome women writers. She’s Alcott’s alter ego. She rebels against her family, even though she’s devoted to her family.

So many women in Cukor’s films are independent, as in *Travels with*

*My Aunt* [1972], with Maggie Smith, based on the Graham Greene novel. Hepburn actually wrote the screenplay for that film, without credit. The Writers Guild wouldn’t give her credit, but the credited writer, Jay Presson Allen, told Cukor biographer Pat McGilligan that Hepburn wrote everything in that film except for one speech. Hepburn was going to be in that film, but she had problems with the awful MGM boss Jim Aubrey, so Maggie Smith played the role. Aunt Augusta is this wildly flamboyant, criminal woman who is sexually adventurous even in her old age. She has a black lover [Lou Gossett], a much younger man. She travels around with him.

*Travels with My Aunt* is about her educating her sexually repressed son, who doesn’t realize he is her secret son. A wonderful performance by Alec McCowen. Again, it’s a Pygmalion-Galatea situation, but the woman is the Pygmalion figure. Cukor loves characters who are adventurous and daring.

There are many alcoholics in his films. James Mason gives a great performance in *A Star is Born* as an alcoholic movie star who destroys himself while he elevates the career of his wife, played by Judy Garland. I mentioned Lowell Sherman in *What Price Hollywood?* Why was Cukor fascinated by alcoholics, when he was not one himself? He was close to John Barrymore, a great actor who had many problems caused by his drinking.

But I think it’s more a metaphor for what Dan Callahan, a critic who has written well on film acting, calls Cukor’s “favorite theme: the glory of alcoholic, lunatic or sexual abandonment and breakdown, the sheer sensuality of it, and, at the end, its high price.” All people have some self-destructive traits, it’s part of life. You either keep them in control or you don’t. Sometimes they can overwhelm you, and sometimes they can be part of the liberating thing to help you break away from the traditional, staid life.

There are all kinds of Cukor films in which people rebel in one way or another. He’s fascinated by dangerous, on-the-edge behavior. His characters are “on the margin of so many things,” to borrow what Renoir said about his characters. They both liked behavior that is a blend of disparate traits.

And they both allow actors a lot of freedom within certain constraints. One thing Cukor insisted on was adherence to the text. He wouldn’t let actors just wing it too much. Occasionally, Tracy, for example, who was in six Cukor films, would modify a line to make it more the way he would say something and twist it around a bit. But he didn’t just make up a lot of

the dialogue.

I was always impressed with this: Cukor would actually stop shooting if he needed a few lines, for example, and phone Ruth Gordon and Garson Kanin at their home in Connecticut and say, “We need a few lines in this scene.” Then half an hour later, they’d call back with the lines.

I once asked Howard Hawks whether he liked improvisation by the actors. He scoffed, “What the hell do they think a director *does*?” He was looser with his scripts. But I asked Hawks, “Most of your movies, even the oldest ones, look very fresh and modern today. Why so you think that is?” He said, “Most of them were well written. That’s why they last.” A shrewd remark. The great directors from the studio system had a strong respect for writers.

Cukor would direct with the pages for that day’s shooting rolled up in his hand. By the end of the day, they’d be all mangled and full of sweat and everything.

DW: But a concern and a sympathy for actors also seem to me part of a more general sympathy and interest in human beings and human behavior, and it’s multifaceted character—changeable, adaptable, flexible, malleable. You get that sense from his films of a humanistic tolerance toward human behavior.

JM: Indeed. He didn’t stereotype people. That makes me think of Spencer Tracy in *The Actress*, a film that isn’t talked about much, but is a marvelous little film. It’s based on Ruth Gordon’s autobiographical play *Years Ago*, about how she became an actress. But it’s also about her father, who was a former sailor stuck working in a factory in Massachusetts. He was somewhat frustrated at home with his wife and daughter. He was crawling and huffing around this little house, and they reproduced it well in the film.

As Cukor said, at first you think he’s merely a gruff, cranky guy. The clichéd response in that kind of situation is that when the daughter says, I want to be an actress, the father is tyrannical and tries to stop the person, which is actually what would happen in many cases. There’s a shocking story about Katharine Hepburn, whose father, Thomas Hepburn, was a noted doctor in Hartford, Connecticut. She told him she was going to become an actress, and he slapped her in the face. But she went ahead and did it anyway.

Cukor said that usually, back then, if you told your parents you were going into the theater, it was like saying, “Well, Mom and Dad, I’m going to become a pusher.”

But this fellow in *The Actress*, Clinton Jones—Ruth Gordon Jones was her actual name, and the first line in the film is that she doesn’t like the name Jones—but Mr. Jones becomes the central character and is surprisingly supportive of his daughter.

There’s this wonderful close-up Tracy did when she says, “I want to go on the stage.” Tracy didn’t talk much about his intentions, and Cukor respected that. He knew that Tracy worked hard at home on his scenes for the next day, and he didn’t like to talk about them on the set, but Cukor spoke to Tracy after he did this wonderful close-up, looking at his daughter with his kind but concerned face. Cukor told him, “That was lovely.” And Tracy said, “Well, I remember when I told my father that I wanted to be an actor and he looked at me, this skinny kid with big ears, and he said, ‘Oh that poor little son of a bitch; he’s going to go through an awful lot.’”

So that went through Tracy’s head. But it was an act of kindness. He supports his daughter. He gives her his prized possession, which is a beautiful spyglass, and tells her to go up to New York and sell it for a hundred dollars. It a wonderful gift. What a great performance.

Tracy has a three-and-a-half-minute-long take when he’s revealing things about his life, which his wife and daughter don’t know about, about how he was abused as a kid. It’s a stunning scene. The camera is moving in and out and doing all kinds of stuff, which is tricky because if the camera doesn’t frame it right, you have to do it again. But Cukor

worked with the greatest technicians, and that was the cinematographer Harold Rosson.

At one point, Tracy leaves the frame and goes into a side room and he’s making a sandwich, then he comes back into the kitchen and sits and eats the sandwich while he keeps talking. Clinton Jones is revealing that he had a kind of career in theater when he was young. He was a stagehand and had a fascination for the theater. His wife and daughter didn’t even know this.

There’s a wonderful comment I found from Richard Burton, when he was on *The Dick Cavett Show*. Burton happened to be there that day on the set of *The Actress*. Cukor was considering doing a film with Burton, but as it turned out, they didn’t work together.

Burton said it was a wonderfully written scene in *The Actress*, and he was curious to see how Tracy did it. Burton said that Tracy “started munching a piece of bread, I think it was, as the speech started. [*Mimics his action*] And he spoke the speech chewing all the time. At one time he left the room, and so for [what seemed to Burton] a good third of the speech he wasn’t onscreen. And he walked back into the room still chewing. And it was devastating. Devastating. ... And it was extraordinary because it was the exact opposite of what I *thought* he would do with it.” It’s unusual for an actor to leave the frame and the director to allow to that happen, but it makes the scene feel real.

My father, Raymond McBride, interviewed Cary Grant for the *Milwaukee Journal* and asked him which actor he liked best, and Grant replied, “Spencer Tracy. We all think he’s the best.” My dad asked, “Why?” Grant gave him a demonstration. He picked up a glass of water, and he started drinking it while he was talking. A very simple demonstration. But, he said, Tracy taught us how to do things like that and make it seem natural. It’s harder than it seems, and even harder is talking and eating a sandwich, and talking to your wife and daughter about your life, and getting up and walking around. Amazing scene, so human.

DW: It’s a very moving film. But that scene you mention is also doubly moving because of the content of his story, the cruelty and injustice of his upbringing—while he’s doing these casual things. There is this combination of a casual, practical man, but with very deep feelings.

JM: He reveals an anger and depth in him that his wife and daughter know nothing about. Cukor had a great understanding of ordinary people’s lives, as well as extraordinary people’s lives. Some of the characters in his films are famous, such as Greta Garbo’s courtesan Marguerite Gautier in *Camille*. James Mason and Judy Garland are stars in *A Star is Born*. But *The Model and The Marriage Broker* [1951] is a delightful, small-scale movie, the kind they don’t make anymore. I love the fact that it stars Thelma Ritter, one of the greatest character actresses in Hollywood. She had more nominations for best supporting actress than anybody else has ever had, six, but she never won. The best people don’t win Oscars generally.

Ritter gets to play the main character here, a lonely lady who’s a marriage broker. She’s funny and touching, in a beautiful script written by some of Billy Wilder’s writers, Charles Brackett, Walter Reisch and Richard L. Breen. The nominal star is Jeanne Crain, one of these dull, pretty actors. Cukor said she was a “flat tire.” The film is a festival of great character actors. Zero Mostel, right before he was blacklisted, and Nancy Kulp, whom I always love, an eccentric, funny, sweet actress Cukor discovered. She was a publicist at MGM. And Dennie Moore, who was in *Sylvia Scarlett* and *The Women*.

DW: You can’t imagine such a film being made today. Even the title, *The Model and the Marriage Broker*, who would dare make a film with that title today?

JM: It’s kind of a cumbersome title. *The Actress* is an inadequate title, because it’s really about her father. It was filmed under the title *Fame and Fortune*, which isn’t a good title either.

DW: Let me raise the point that Andrew Sarris makes in his book *The*

*American Cinema*. You make it in your book too, on Cukor's interest in theater, performance and acting and so forth. One element of that, as you said, is being Jewish, the son of immigrants, gay, and the need to play a part in potentially uncomfortable or threatening conditions, with the aspect of masquerade, of performing.

But it seems to me what he also presents very strikingly, very movingly, are pictures of small communities, communities where people have a heightened experience. He is looking for something beyond the mundane, the conventional, the banal. Certain kinds of communal, collective experiences that have the intensity of a film or theater production. Those kinds of collaborations, sometimes brief but very powerful. I think that element of intoxication with that kind of experience is there.

JM: The love of offbeat communities, theatrical troupes, etc. We could talk about *Justine* [1969], a film I find fascinating. It's a *film maudit*, a "cursed" or "damned film." Jean Cocteau came up with that phrase. It's a film with problems, sometimes big problems.

*Justine* is based on the Lawrence Durrell four-part cycle of novels [*The Alexandria Quartet*, 1957-60] that are almost impossible to make into a film. It was made in the waning days of the studio system, and Joseph Strick started as director. He was a terrible director. He was fired when he was on location, and they brought it back to Hollywood.

Cukor was assigned to this picture with one week's notice, and he made a pretty good movie out of it. It is very sumptuous visually. With Leon Shamroy, one of the greatest Hollywood cameramen, and some terrific art directors, they recreated Alexandria, Egypt, in 1936, in the studio.

The cast is motley, because Cukor inherited it, but he had some good people. Dirk Bogarde and Anna Karina are standouts. Cukor loved both of them and worked well together with them. The film's vision of Alexandria is a small, hothouse community. It has political themes that he wasn't particularly interested in, dealing with gunrunning and Zionism and various big subjects that aren't adequately dealt with in the film.

Cukor also felt that Anouk Aimée, the star, was a "blank, boring wall." She wouldn't respond to direction very well. Aimée tried to quit the film at one point. The studio had to threaten to sue her to keep her. You can't just walk out on a film. She actually is a mesmerizing camera subject. She's not a great actress, but she's fascinating to look at, and Cukor manages to use her well.

So here's a director coming in at short notice picking up the shards of a shattered production, but it is the kind of little community you mentioned. You have Michael York playing a role similar to the one he later played in *Cabaret* [1972]; here too he is this young, somewhat naive observer, he's the Durrell surrogate figure. He's a schoolteacher and writer observing these decadent or tragic characters. Bogarde is a doomed British diplomat who commits suicide when he realizes he is being duped in the political plot. Anna Karina is touching as a kept woman, a prostitute and belly dancer. Another wonderful performance.

Cukor excels with groups, not just one or two people. It's the whole world that surrounds the people. One of the joys of classic Hollywood is the tremendous wealth of great character actors they brought in. We love seeing these people over and over again. They do variations, in a Cukor or a Ford film, on their personas.

DW: What about Cukor's limitations or weaknesses or failings? Does he pull his punches in some ways? Did he feel the need to maintain a certain low profile, politically or otherwise, because of his sexual orientation?

JM: Yes, he did not seek personal publicity much. Cukor is not a household name, like, for example, Hitchcock or Ford, who has become a well-known figure again thanks to the efforts of various writers, including myself. Cukor was never a household name or brand, and even today, few people recognize his name. Part of that was his versatility. He made so many different kinds of films. With a Hitchcock film, there are certain expectations.

Cukor didn't encourage publicity about himself until his later years. I mentioned he had a publicist when I interviewed him the first time in the '70s. He wanted publicity by that time, but he was largely one of those anonymous craftsmen in the '30s and '40s. Part of that was because he was queer and didn't want to talk about his personal life. Magazine writers, fan magazine writers, were always asking: Who are you dating?, etc., etc. He found it hard to talk about that because he was discreet.

Gavin Lambert, who became a good friend of mine, was a marvelous writer of novels, short stories, biographies and screenplays. He was a British expatriate and lived in Hollywood. He did a wonderful interview book, *On Cukor* [1972], which is witty and smart and insightful. It's a little frustrating, though, because there are definite limitations, and they don't talk much about anything personal. Also, by the way, the language in that book is sanitized. I found when I interviewed Cukor, especially when I did the interview with Todd McCarthy, that he had a very bawdy streak, and his language was quite hilariously profane. People thought of him as this elegant gentleman, which he was, but he also had a fascination with the decadent side, the louche side of human life. I think this was part of his artistic strength.

Angela Lansbury, who made her film debut with a sensationally good performance in his film *Gaslight* [1944], said he had "a wonderful gamey quality about him, a wonderful lasciviousness." That comes across especially in his later work, after the Production Code collapses, in *Travels with My Aunt*, *Justine*, *Rich and Famous*, etc. He was very raunchy in our interview. Gavin told me, "You guys should have cleaned up his language." I said, "We wanted to report faithfully how he talks." I found his way of talking revealing of the complexity and range and depth of his personality.

In Lambert's book *Mainly About Lindsay Anderson* [2000], which recounts in part his longtime friendship with that British director, Gavin writes that Cukor wanted him to write his biography, "but I declined when he set very definite limits on what he would reveal about his personal life. Was it so important to tell everything? he asked. Not in the tabloid sense, I said, but can you separate an artist's sexuality from his creativity? 'It's so good of you to consider me an artist,' George said with an ambiguous smile, and an edge to his voice that I recognized as his way of closing the subject."

Cukor couldn't be that overtly revealing. He had lived in the closet. But he peeked out of the closet in his *Advocate* interview in 1982. He ends *Rich and Famous*, and thus his career, with Jacqueline Bisset and Candice Bergen kissing. They have a beautiful kiss on New Year's Eve in front of a fireplace. Cukor is mischievously using the coded visual language of Hollywood. Back in the day, a couple would be kissing, and the camera would pan over to the fireplace, and then the shot would fade out. That was supposed to indicate they had sex.

So these two ladies are drinking champagne, and they kiss. I said to Cukor, "There's something teasing about the women kissing, because you wonder ..." He said, "Are they lesbians? That's meant to be." He's venturing back into that terrain he explored in *Sylvia Scarlett*.

Cukor had an intriguing coarseness, but he dealt with it in an intelligent, elegant way. Politically, he has limitations. He was a liberal Democrat and liberal-minded in his social attitudes, and in his work you can see that. I noticed when I went to his wonderful home above the Sunset Strip, that he had an extraordinary wall of pictures of actors he worked with, who signed memorable inscriptions. Katharine Hepburn signed hers, "George — Everything. Kate." He also had, in his library, on a table, a beautiful, large 1963 Christmas card from Jacqueline Kennedy expressing her thanks. I hadn't realized he was close to the Kennedys. But he largely kept out of partisan politics.

*Bhowani Junction* [1956] deals with a fraught political situation, the independence of India from the British after World War II, and the split between India and Pakistan, the turmoil, the partition in 1947. It's based

on a fairly good novel by John Masters, a former British army officer who served with the Indian army during the war. The novel is more sophisticated politically than the film. Cukor doesn't seem particularly interested in the nuances in politics, and he caricatures the Communists. This was made in Pakistan during the 1950s but under Hollywood strictures, and it's a Cold War film. That aspect of the film doesn't work well.

MGM recut it and put in a heavy-handed narration explaining the political background, etc. But Cukor's interest is in the main character played by Ava Gardner, who's a supposedly Anglo-Indian character. Today people point out that Gardner wasn't Indian, but she had rather exotic looks. She is good in the film, it's one of her finer performances.

She's wooed by three different men, who represent different strata of Indian life. There's an Indian, there's an Anglo-Indian, and then there's a British army officer. Cukor is mostly interested in the relationships she has with them. Stewart Granger is not a very good actor, but he plays a British officer who comes to understand and sympathize to some extent with the Indians; yet the film is somewhat disappointing from that point of view. Cukor doesn't deal very explicitly with social problems. It's not his forte.

But Cukor is always aware of the social context and accurate about social mores and behavior. He loved doing research. He said he discovered the joys of research when he did *Little Women*. He did a lot of research into New England life during the Civil War. He placed great stock in having the visual settings accurate, the clothing and the dress, and mannerisms and the speech, etc., but he's not the most sophisticated political filmmaker. However, you can get a sense of his sympathies with outsiders, unconventional people, which *is* political.

Cukor was an outsider in some ways, but he was also somebody who wanted to be an insider. There's a revealing exchange about rich people in Lambert's interview book. Cukor is talking about *Holiday*, Philip Barry's terrific 1928 play adapted for the screen in 1938. Cukor directed, and the screenplay is by two leftist writers, Donald Ogden Stewart, who was a member of the Communist Party when he wrote the script, and Sidney Buchman, who became a member of the Communist Party later that year. Both were later blacklisted.

In *Holiday*, Cary Grant is a young man who disdains money to some extent and wants to be a dropout. The film is about a rich family he is going to marry into, and he can't stand their values. Katharine Hepburn is a rebellious young woman in the family who also doesn't like their materialism. So it's a critique of materialism, but it's vague about what the alternative is.

They talk about the fact that there are new ideas in the world, and Grant wants to explore them. The father of the family doesn't like these new ideas. The most explicit element the writers work in, and it's a bit surprising, are a couple of cousins played by Henry Daniell, a villain in several Cukor films, and Binnie Barnes, as Seton and Laura Cram. They're very right-wing. At one point, Edward Everett Horton and Jean Dixon, who play college professors, liberal people, give the Crams the fascist salute in a mocking way.

Cukor enjoys subversive people and behavior. One of the right-wing cousins suggests that if a different kind of government existed in the US this or that kind of thing wouldn't be happening. Someone asks, What country are you referring to? Obviously, Nazi Germany is on their minds. The film as a whole, however, has that vagueness that permeates Hollywood films about politics.

Even Frank Capra's *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* [1939], which Sidney Buchman wrote when he was a member of the Communist Party, has more than a little vagueness. I asked Tom Pryor, my editor at *Daily Variety*, who had been the *New York Times* Hollywood correspondent and knew Buchman well, "How could a Communist write *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*?" Tom said, "Well, he was an *American* Communist."

Actually, in the late 1930s, the Communist Party in America declared that "Communism is twentieth century Americanism." They believed that the best way to encourage Americans to fight fascism was to strengthen support for the Bill of Rights.

DW: I'm very familiar with that history, yes. And how disastrous it was.

JM: My point was that Cukor worked compatibly with Stewart, who was a leftist, the head of the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League. He was a Communist, and Cukor wasn't bothered by that. Cukor did not fight the blacklist, except in the case of Judy Holliday, who was wonderful in five Cukor films. She had trouble with the blacklist, she was graylisted and hauled before a congressional committee, and her film career was somewhat blighted. But Cukor kept hiring her in the '50s. Harry Cohn, the head of Columbia, was a monster in some ways, but he was flexible about the blacklist, as some of the moguls were, and he kept supporting Cukor's hiring Holliday.

But anybody who worked in Hollywood in the '50s, as I learned in my Capra research, was compromised, because the only way not to be compromised was to leave the industry or be blacklisted. If you wanted to work in Hollywood, you had to tolerate the blacklist whether you liked it or not. Cukor didn't go out of his way to oppose it politically, except in the case of Holliday.

DW: Was he in attendance at the famous 1950 meeting of the Screen Directors Guild meeting at which Ford and Wilder opposed the loyalty oath?

JM: I've read the transcript, and it doesn't refer to Cukor, he didn't speak at the meeting. I don't know if he was there or not. It was a meeting of the senior directors of the guild, there were almost 300 people there. I don't know what Cukor's position was. He didn't sign the petition calling for the meeting. Twenty-five brave members of the Screen Directors Guild signed a petition calling for the special meeting, including Billy Wilder and William Wyler, who were immigrants. It took a lot of guts for immigrants to oppose blacklisting.

I think Cukor tried to keep his head down, to keep out of overt political controversies in his time. It's a mark against him to some extent.

DW: It is a mark against him. But also the more complicated question is, how did it have an impact on his art?

JM: Hollywood in the '50s was a dark time in terms of the blacklist, with about 300 people not being allowed to work, and there were restrictions on what you could say. They also made these stupid anti-communist films. But a lot of Hollywood films of the period dealt with betrayal, treachery, disloyalty toward friends. That became an obsessive theme at the time, and I'm sure it was a reflection of the internecine battles that were going on, where friends were betraying friends, etc.

You could argue that Cukor films dealt with treacherous human relationships throughout his career. He usually took the side of the unconventional, the outsiders in society. That's a political stance, implicitly.

Anyway, back to what I was speaking about before: When Lambert asked Cukor what he thought of rich people, he said he found them a "great comfort." Lambert was obviously not as enthralled by rich people, diplomatically telling the director he felt that way about "Only some of them," but Cukor was attracted to wealthy people, people who had high status in society.

Cukor was welcomed by the highest strata of Hollywood society. He held two kinds of parties. Pat McGilligan writes about that in his biography. Cukor had his A-list parties and he was friendly with the great stars and producers, studio heads. Louis B. Mayer didn't like him very much, but Samuel Goldwyn did. Cukor was friendly with famous writers and artists. Somerset Maugham, Cole Porter and people like that.

But on Sundays, he would have parties for his gay friends. These were people who were mostly not well-known. Some of them were well-

known. It was all discreet. But he had two sets of friends. He kept a balance between them in his life, but it was tenuous. He was attracted to being an insider, but he was by nature an outsider. He was both.

Cukor “contained multitudes,” in Whitman’s phrase. There are all sorts of interesting contradictions and nuances in the characters and situations in his movies, and that’s why I title the book *George Cukor’s People*.

DW: It’s a fitting title.

JM: He had a group of friends, and his characters are his friends. He loved most of the people in his films. There are many flawed people in his films, but Cukor understands human imperfection. So that’s one reason I wanted to approach it through the people in his work, those he embraces, people who are shunned by the conventional world. That’s a great strength, I think.

*Concluded*



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