

TEENAGE FLICKS

Week 6: Indie Kids - The independents take on the teen

Black Representation

'There can be little doubt that comic representation of African-Americans has been used as a way to aid the legitimization of racial inequalities. Early American film inherited a set of racist caricatures from forms such as Vaudeville, the minstrel show and the dominant culture at large...'

(Leob 1975)

Early Black Representation

- *The Wooing and Wedding of a Coon (1907)*
- *The Pickaninnies (1908)*
- *Rastus in Zululand (1910)*
- *The Sambo Series (1909-1911)*
- *How Rastus Got His Turkey (1910)*
- *Chicken Thief (1910 or 1911)*

The Hays Code

'...the Code also held up the strong sense of racial apartheid and paranoia of the times by expressly stating that miscegenation, or mixing of the races, was to be portrayed as in no way desirable...Notably though, the taboo against miscegenation, whether explicitly articulated as in the original Hays Code or more implicitly just understood and practiced, has remained in force over the long continuum of dominant cinema's reign.'

Ed Guerrero (Fever in the Racial Jungle)

Blaxploitation Films of the 70s

'Hollywood courted an urban black audience in this period as part of its efforts to escape its economic difficulties. When stability returned to the studios in the latter part of the decade they sought to keep this without alienating white viewers.'

Geoff King

80s Representation

'Black star performers (in this era) were kept in "protective custody", by being paired with white co-stars, or removed from any on-screen presence within a broader black community. It is in this guise, as comic sidekick or transplanted into an all-white milieu that they have enjoyed their greatest box office success'

Geoff King

Boyz N the Hood (1991)

John Singleton

- Directed by John Singleton
 - Produced by Steve Nicolaidis
 - Written by John Singleton
 - Cinematography by Charles Mills
 - Edited by Bruce Cannon
 - Music by
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- Singleton wrote the film based on his own experiences
 - His application for film school required him to pitch three ideas for scripts
 - One of the ideas he pitched was *Summer of '84* which later became *Boyz N the Hood*
 - He was initially very protective of the completed script, fearing the idea would be diluted if it was given to film makers who didn't understand the kind of world he was talking about

- Greenlit by Columbia
- With Singleton as director
- The story begins in 1984
- After young Tre gets into a fight at school, his mother Reva sends him away to live with his father, Furious (Fishburne), reasoning he needs a strong male influence in his life.
- When he arrives to take up residence with his father, he reunites with old school friends
- The second act begins seven years later
- Deals with gun violence
- Teenage pregnancy
- Inequality
- Race
- Highly critical of the current system
- Explores the repercussions of ghettoization and gentrification
- It's powerful yet it's entertaining
- It could be accused of being 'heavy handed' but given the time the film was made and the context of where the US as a country was, it couldn't afford to be as subtle as other productions

Historical Context

- The Rodney King Case
- The LA Riots
- OJ Simpson

Dazed and Confused (1993)

Richard Linklater

- Directed by Richard Linklater
- Produced by Richard Linklater, Sean Daniel and James Jacks
- Written by Richard Linklater
- Cinematography by Lee Daniel
- Edited by Sandra Adair
- The action takes place over a twenty-four-hour period – the last day of school 1976
- Whereas a similar film, *Over the Edge* has a big incident at the heart of the story, *Dazed and Confused* focusses more on smaller incidents, the minutiae
- We see the evening playout through the focus of an ensemble cast
- We are drawn into the mindset of numerous individuals who all belong to gangs, groups cliques or sub groups
- Unlike other teen dramas, it doesn't carry a 'big message'
- The film seems to reflect the character's resignation to the eventual stresses and inequalities of the wider world
- To cope they squeeze in as much fun as they can while they are able
- They enjoy or look forward to enjoying and taking advantage of their temporary placement at the top of the hierarchy within the high school setting
- They celebrate their own naivety and revel in the stupidity of being young
- There is rebellion but it can only ever be short lasting

'[Linklater is a] sly and formidable talent, bringing an anthropologist's eye to this spectacularly funny celebration of the rites of stupidity. His shitfaced American Graffiti is the ultimate party movie – loud, crude, socially irresponsible and totally irresistible'

Peter Travers

'Dazed succeeds on its own terms and reflects American culture so well, it becomes part of it'

Desson Howe

Kids (1995)

Larry Clark

- Directed by Larry Clark
- Produced by Christine Vachon, Gus Van Sant and Cary Woods
- Written by Harmony Korine
- Cinematography by Eric Edwards
- Edited by Christopher Tellefsen
- Music by Lou Barlow

- Larry Clark stated that he wanted to make the Great American Teenage Movie in the same sense as others wanted to write Great American Novel.

'I wanted to present the way kids see things, but without all this baggage, this morality that these old middle aged Hollywood guys bring to it. Kids don't think that way...they're living in the moment not thinking about anything beyond that and that's what I wanted to catch.'

Larry Clark

- Gus Van Sant was linked as producer, however this was more to do with securing funding, once sufficient money had been raised Van Sant stepped aside and Cary Woods took over
- Harvey Weinstein of Miramax was weary of allowing the film to be funded, it's parent company being Disney
- However, after Woods showed him a cut of the film Miramax paid 3.5 million dollars for the worldwide distribution rights
- Harmony Korine supposedly wrote the screenplay when he was nineteen
- The film is presented in quasi-documentary style
- The cast is made up of teenagers from New York with no previous acting experience
- It was scripted throughout
- The only improvisation happens during the final moments of the film
- It was hugely controversial
- Shows children/teenagers engaging in illegal/or adult activities
- Underage sex
- Drug use
- Sexual assault
- HIV
- Some critics labeled the film exploitative
- The film, which cost \$1.5 million to produce, grossed \$7.4 million in the North American box office and \$20 million worldwide.

'...wake-up call to the modern world.'

Janet Maslin

'Kids fascinated me as a film precisely because when you heard about it, it seemed like the perfect embodiment of the kind of postmodern, notions of journeying and dislocation and fragmentation and yet when you go to see it, it has simply such a conservative take on gender, on race, on the politics of HIV'

Gloria Jean Watkins (Bell Hooks)