

SPIKE LEE

Biography

As a writer-director, actor, producer, author and educator, Spike Lee has revolutionized the role of black talent in cinema. Widely regarded as one of today's premier American filmmakers, Lee is a forerunner in the do it yourself school of independent film. His most recent work, *When The Levees Broke*, a groundbreaking documentary focusing on the plight of Americans stranded in New Orleans after hurricane Katrina, has garnered rave critical review and is considered by many to be the definitive account of that catastrophic event. Just prior to *Levees* he completed his 19th feature film *Inside Man* starring Denzel Washington, Jodie Foster and Clive Owen. Mr. Lee first established his unique perspective in 1986 with the independently financed *She's Gotta Have It*. Recent critical and box office successes have included such films as *The 25th Hour*, *The Original Kings of Comedy*, *Bamboozled* and *Summer of Sam*. Lee's films, *Girl 6*, *Get on The Bus*, *Do The Right Thing*, *She Hate Me* and *Clockers* display his ability to showcase a series of outspoken and provocative socio-political critiques that challenge cultural assumptions not only about race but also class and gender identity. Mr. Lee is currently developing dramatic projects for network television as well as completing early prep for his next feature film.

In 1986, his debut film, the independently produced comedy, *She's Gotta Have It*, earned him the Prix de Jeunesse Award at the Cannes Film festival and set him at the forefront of the Black New Wave in American Cinema.

School Daze, his second feature, although not highly profitable, helped launch the careers of several young Black actors. Spike's timely 1989 film, *Do The Right Thing*, garnered an Academy Award nomination for Best Original Screenplay and Best Film & Director awards from the Los Angeles Film Critics Association. Lee's *Jungle Fever*, *Mo' Better Blues*, *Clockers* and *Crooklyn*—were also critically well received.

Born in Atlanta, Georgia, and raised in Brooklyn, Spike returned to the south to attend Morehouse College. After graduation, he returned to Brooklyn to continue his education at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts in Manhattan where he received his Master of Fine Arts Degree in film production. Lee then founded 40 Acres and a Mule Filmworks based in the Fort Greene section of Brooklyn, where he has resided since childhood.

In addition to his achievements in feature films, Spike Lee has produced and directed numerous music videos for such diverse artists as Miles Davis, Chaka Khan, Tracy Chapman, Anita Baker, Public Enemy, Bruce Hornsby and Michael Jackson. His other music videos include work for the late Phylliss Hyman, Naughty by Nature, and Arrested Development.

Lee's commercial work began in 1988 with his Nike Air Jordan campaign. Collaborating with basketball great Michael Jordan on seven commercials, Lee resurrected his popular character, Mars Blackmon from *She's Gotta Have It*. He has also completed a PSA for UNCF which also features Michael Jordan called, "Two Michaels." Lee is also well-known for his Levi's Button-Fly 501, AT&T, and ESPN television commercials. Other commercial ventures include TV spots for Philips, Nike, American Express, Snapple and Taco Bell, just to name a few. Spike has also directed several Art Spot Shorts for MTV and a short film featuring Branford Marsalis and Diahnne Abbott for *Saturday Night Live*. Spike is also diversely involved in documentaries and sports programs having completed the Emmy and Oscar nominated documentary, *4 Little Girls*, for HBO and receiving an Emmy Award for his piece on Georgetown's John Thompson for HBO/Real Sports. Additionally, Spike has authored six books on the making of his films; the fifth book, *Five For Five*, served as a pictorial reflection of his first five features. Most recently he has authored a new book entitled *Best Seat In The House* with Ralph Wiley.

Ever moving into new areas, Spike Lee has combined his extensive creative experience into yet another venture: partnering with DDB Needham, he has created Spike/DDB—a full service advertising agency—that will concentrate on the urban/ethnic market.

