

Recent American Film

Dec. 12, 2005

- Michel Gondry, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004)
- 1980s/1990s: rise of independent film
- New voices: African American film (Spike Lee)
- Increasing use of CGI (computer-generated imagery)
- Digital video

American Independent Film: 1970s & 1980s

- Increasing cost of filmmaking in the 1980s
- Big-budget blockbusters and sequels
- Conservatism as to content
- Lower-budget filmmaking as an alternative
 - John Waters, *Pink Flamingos* (1972)
 - David Lynch, *Eraserhead* (1977)
 - John Sayles, *Return of the Secaucus 7* (1980)
 - Spike Lee, *She's Gotta Have It* (1986)
 - David Lynch, *Blue Velvet* (1986)
 - Steven Soderberg, *sex, lies, & videotape* (1989)
 - Spike Lee, *Do the Right Thing* (1989)

American Independent Film Since 1990

- Increasing prominence of independent films & directors
- Blurring of boundaries between “independent” and “studio” films
- Sundance Film Festival
- Quentin Tarantino, *Pulp Fiction* (1994)
- Daniel Myrick & Eduardo Sánchez, *The Blair Witch Project* (1999)
- The case of Miramax
 - Founded by Harvey & Bob Weinstein, 1979
 - Bought by Disney, 1993
 - Dispute over Michael Moore’s *Fahrenheit 9/11*, 2004
 - Departure of Weinstein Brothers, 2005

Eternal Sunshine (1)

- Screenplay by Charlie Kaufman (other films: *Being John Malkovich*, *Adaptation*, etc.)
- Direction by Michel Gondry (background in music videos)
- Straddles the line between independent and mainstream filmmaking
 - Quirky, unconventional script & direction
 - But uses big stars (Jim Carrey, Kate Winslett)
- Genre: romantic comedy
- ...But rejects conventional storytelling

Eternal Sunshine (2)

- Nonlinear narration (time as a labyrinth)
- Blurred boundaries
 - Subjective vs. objective (what's real, and what's only in Joel's mind?)
 - Present time vs. memory
 - Erasure of memories
 - Visual effects (disappearing images)
 - Repetitions
- Climax and conclusion (“Okay”)
- Similarity/differences from 1930s screwball comedy

Digital Filmmaking

- Nonlinear editing: computer replaces editing table
- Computer-generated imagery (CGI)
 - Replaces mattes, etc. for backgrounds
 - Integrated with live action (e.g. *Jurassic Park*)
 - Allows 'impossible' shots (e.g. *Fight Club*)
 - More realistic animation (e.g. *Toy Story*)
- Digital video
 - Greatly lowers the cost of filmmaking
 - Allows for extremely small & lightweight cameras
 - Greatly improved visual quality in recent years
- Digital projection?