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# Spike Lee: Interviews (Conversations With Filmmakers (Paperback))



## Synopsis

Since his first feature movie, *She's Gotta Have It* (1986), gave him critical and commercial success, Spike Lee has challenged audiences with one controversial film after another, sparking debates about race, sex, American politics and film production, and garnering award nominations along the way. *Spike Lee: Interviews* collects the best interviews and profiles of America's most prominent African American filmmaker. The collection features interviews with such luminaries as Charlie Rose, Elvis Mitchell, Michael Sragow, and actor Delroy Lindo. Lee has made a broad range of movies, including documentaries (*4 Little Girls*), musicals (*School Daze*), crime dramas (*Clockers*), biopics (*Malcolm X*). An early advocate of digital video, he used the technology to film both of his 2000 releases, *The Original Kings of Comedy* and *Bamboozled*. Reactions to *Do the Right Thing* (1989) and *Jungle Fever* (1990) propelled Lee into a constant presence in the public eye as media currency. He directed commercials for Nike, Levi's, and the U.S. Navy, directed music videos, published seven books, and conducted many interviews explaining and clarifying his views. As Lee puts it, "I've been blessed with the opportunity to express the views of black people who otherwise don't have access to power and media. I have to take advantage of that while I'm still bankable." Articulate and deeply passionate, Lee reveals a degree of subtlety and wit that is often lost in sound bites and headlines about him. The range of his interests is as diverse as the subjects of, and approaches to, his films.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Filmmaker Lee's focus on race has rather obscured the fact that in 15 years he has amassed a diverse body of work that encompasses small-scale dramas, ambitious biopics, documentaries, and concert films, not to mention commercials, music videos, and seven books. That variety is reflected in the 22 interviews in this volume. Race is at the forefront of most of the pieces, but Lee also touches on subjects ranging from cutting-edge digital-video technology to his beloved Knicks. The chronological presentation shows Lee mellowing somewhat over the years--he was only 29 when he burst on the scene with *She's Gotta Have It* (1986)--but he remains outspoken and controversial; promoting his most recent film, *Bamboozled*, he blasts the demeaning roles contemporary black actors choose to portray. Lee possibly has the highest profile of any director today, thanks to his acting gigs, notably in Nike commercials reprising his Mars Blackmon character, and talk-show appearances (three of which are transcribed here). Libraries may see greater interest in this than in similar books on other filmmakers. Gordon Flagg

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"I've been blessed with the opportunity to express the views of black people... I have to take advantage of that while I'm still bankable." -Spike Lee

This book gave me more insight into the man behind some of my favorite films of all-time. There are a lot of his films I have not seen yet, but after reading the many interviews and getting more out of Lee than ever, I'm motivated to own all of his films. It was cool to see how he comes up with his scripts, some of the challenges he faced in bringing them to life, and some of the criticizing he gets constantly about him, and not his work. He seems to be very aware of who he is and is also aware of the fact he cannot do this alone. He gives props to people throughout the interviews, from the woman who plays Nola in *"She's Gotta Have It"* to Ernest Dickerson, to Jada Pinkett Smith, to John Singleton, and so on. The one thing I gained more than anything though is he really makes people think when you watch his movies and when you hear or read what he has to say. Love him or hate him, you have to respect him. I recommend this to anyone who is a fan of his work and to people who may not know much about him other than what is seen in the media.

Spike Lee is Spike Lee. He holds no punches. He tells it like he sees it. And he doesn't care about the feelings of journalist. They have a job to do, and sometimes they get it right and other times they don't. Often, they miss the point on Spikes work. Spike doesn't give a s\*\*\*. He tells 'em like he sees

it. To Thy Own Self Be True. Spike is also a hero when it comes to work he's done to include African American filmmakers and trades people in the industry. He forced the unions to do that. RESPECT.

Shelton Lee is the most controversial film maker of his time because his work defies convention and upsets the conventional values of Hollywood. The spotlight has shone on Spike Lee since his "She's Gotta Have It" exploded on the screen. Spike Lee is a film maker par excellence and in this book we get an opportunity to hear his voice dealing with the entire corpus of his work since 2001. Spike Lee Interviews is a collection of interviews dating from 1986 through 2001. They are originally reprinted in the form in which they appeared; hardcopy, television and on line. In them we get to hear the ideas, opinions and reflections that Lee has about his craft, the criticism of his work and the need to confront the racist myths prevalent in the film industry. His words are sharp, biting and reflective. In perusing this book you will see the development of Lee as a film maker and astute businessman. He refuses to co-opt his integrity with Hollywood depictions of Blacks and yet he is able to use Hollywood to get some of his pictures made. Lee also uses unusual ideas and film techniques that many of his peers won't touch. He is not afraid to be unconventional in his story telling nor in his use of new technological forms. I enjoyed his repartee with the interviewers regarding his controversial image. Spike says his critics need to look at his work rather than him. He doesn't mind talking about his beloved Knicks but moves beyond the game and tells about the exploitation of players and the system. He admits his mistakes in portraying Black women as one dimensional. In reading this book you will get a multidimensional view of a film maker who has opened a new chapter in African American cinematography. Lee picks up the ball where others left off and challenges the whole idea of what it means to make a film. You will enjoy his ideas and have a deeper appreciation of his work.

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