



BIG SCREEN CLASSICS

Do the Right Thing

Do the Right Thing

Director: Spike Lee

©: Universal City Studios, Inc.

a 40 Acres and a Mule Filmworks production

Producer: Spike Lee

Co-producer: Monty Ross

Line Producer: Jon Kilik

Production Supervisor: Preston Holmes

40 Acres Production Co-ordinator: Susan D. Fowler

Production Office Co-ordinator: Lillian Pyles

Unit Manager: R.W. Dixon

Location Manager: Brent Owens

1st Assistant Director: Randy Fletcher

2nd Assistant Director: Nandi Bowe

Script Supervisor: Joe Gonzalez

Casting: Robi Reed

Screenplay: Spike Lee

Director of Photography: Ernest Dickerson

Camera Operator: John Newby

Still Photography: David Lee

Special Effects: Steve Kirshoff

Do The Right Thing Logo by: Art Sims,

11:24 Design & Advertising

Editor: Barry Alexander Brown

Production Designer: Wynn Thomas

Costumes: Ruth Carter

Make-up: Matiki Anoff

Hair: Larry Cherry

Main/End Titles Designed and Produced by:

Balsmeyer & Everett Inc

Music: Bill Lee

Music Performed by:

The Natural Spiritual Orchestra

Choreography ('Fight the Power'): Rosie Perez,

Otis Sallid

Sound Design: Skip Lievsay

Re-recording Mixer: Tom Fleischman

Stunt Co-ordinator: Eddie Smith

Cast:

Danny Aiello (*Sal*)

Ossie Davis (*Da Mayor*)

Ruby Dee (*Mother Sister*)

Richard Edson (*Vito*)

Giancarlo Esposito (*Buggin' Out*)

Spike Lee (*Mookie*)

Bill Nunn (*Radio Raheem*)

John Turturro (*Pino*)

Paul Benjamin (*ML*)

Frankie Faison (*Coconut Sid*)

Robin Harris (*Sweet Dick Willie*)

Joie Lee (*Jade*)

Miguel Sandoval (*Officer Ponte*)

Rick Aiello (*Officer Long*)

John Savage (*Clifton*)

Sam Jackson (*Mister Señor Love Daddy*)

Rosie Perez (*Tina*)

Roger Guenveur Smith (*Smiley*)

Steve White (*Ahmad*)

Martin Lawrence (*Cee*)

Leonard Thomas (*Punchy*)

Christa Rivers (*Ella*)

Frank Vincent (*Charlie*)

Luis Ramos (*Stevie*)

Richard Habersham (*Eddie*)

Gwen McGee (*Louise*)

Steve Park (*Sonny*)

Ginny Yang (*Kim*)

Sherwin Park (*Korean child*)

Shawn Elliott (*Puerto Rican ice man*)

Diva Osorio (*Carmen*)

Chris Delaney, Angel Ramirez, Sixto Ramos,

Nelson Vasquez (*Stevie's friends*)

Travell Lee Toulson (*Hector*)

During the hottest day of the year, Mookie (Lee) travels around his predominantly black Brooklyn neighbourhood making deliveries for the local pizzeria run by Italian American Sal (Aiello). As the temperature rises, so do the simmering racial tensions in the community. Expertly crafted, exploding with his distinctive visual style and humour, Spike Lee's cinematic sucker-punch is a landmark of American cinema that remains just as powerful and profoundly relevant as the day it debuted.

Kimberley Sheehan, bfi.org.uk

Spike Lee's third feature, *Do the Right Thing*, remains a genuine one-off. A vivid, unabashedly theatrical snapshot of one blisteringly hot day in the life of a multicultural Brooklyn block, it was an impassioned response to simmering racial tensions in New York City by its then 32-year-old auteur. From the superb performances by a vast ensemble cast to Ernest Dickerson's searing cinematography; from its barbed, lyrical screenplay to the lushly versatile jazz score by the director's father Bill Lee, it resounds as a singular artistic triumph.

Despite an Oscar nomination for Best Original Screenplay, Lee's urgent dispatch was ignored by the Academy in the Best Picture category, which was won instead by the reassuringly tame race-relations drama *Driving Miss Daisy*. Yet *Do the Right Thing*'s influence looms large across popular culture on an international scale: it's a clear forerunner for urban dramas like *La Haine* (1995) and *City of God* (2002); it's been affectionately parodied on *Sesame Street*; and even the Obamas claim they saw it on their first date. Moreover, many of the issues it raises are still pertinent: Ryan Coogler's Sundance-winning *Fruitvale Station*, for example, echoes Lee's film in its focus on the police killing of a young black urban American male.

Steve McQueen, director/writer: The first time I saw *Do the Right Thing*, when it was over, I didn't speak for a while. I was just trying to take it all in. It was a knockout – almost like being in a boxing ring. Sometimes it was brutal, and sometimes beautiful; an attack, done with style, anger and compassion. In terms of giving a snapshot of a New York community, the only thing that comes close are those films from the 30s and 40s like *Angels with Dirty Faces*.

It brings back great memories, but also painful ones, and that combination is so powerful. Great art has a resonance in the past, present and future, and *Do the Right Thing* is just that. When it came out, the echoes with the UK political situation were loud and clear. In England, there was police brutality and unemployment, and it resonated with me in a direct way. I love the bit when John Savage's character – the white guy wearing the Larry Bird jersey, carrying his bicycle – steps on the new Air Jordans that Buggin' Out is wearing, and this sparks a heated conversation about gentrification. It reminds me of what England was like at the time, and it also illustrated the importance of trainers back then!

There are many iconic moments: the to-camera 'love and hate' speech by Radio Raheem stands out, as does the conversation between pizza-shop owner Sal and his racist son Pino, who says he feels sick of being in the neighbourhood. Through the window of the pizzeria you can see the autistic character Smiley milling around, and the way Lee builds up the tension is amazing; it's ingrained in my mind. But my most powerful memory is right at

Joel Nagle (*sergeant*)
David E. Weinberg (*plainclothes detective*)
Yattee Brown, Mecca Brunson, Shawn Stainback,
Soquana Wallace (*Double Dutch girls*)
USA 1989©
120 mins
Digital 4K

BIG SCREEN CLASSICS

Do the Right Thing

Sat 28 Oct 20:40; Fri 17 Nov 18:10

The Queen of Spades

Sun 29 Oct 12:20; Tue 31 Oct 14:40; Wed 8 Nov
18:20 (+ intro by Josephine Botting, BFI National
Archive Curator); Thu 16 Nov 20:40

Casablanca

Mon 30 Oct 14:30; Sat 18 Nov 11:40

French Cancan

Wed 1 Nov 14:30; Thu 9 Nov 20:30

Blood and Sand

Wed 1 Nov 18:10 (+ intro); Sat 18 Nov 20:30

Orlando

Thu 2 Nov 20:50; Fri 10 Nov 14:30; Wed 29 Nov
18:20 (+ intro by writer, curator and researcher
Jenny Chamarette)

The Grand Budapest Hotel

Fri 3 Nov 20:50; Sat 11 Nov 20:40; Fri 24 Nov 18:15

The Age of Innocence

Sat 4 Nov 14:20; Mon 13 Nov 17:50; Tue 28 Nov
20:20

Blackmail

Sun 5 Nov 12:00

The Private Life of Henry VIII

Tue 7 Nov 20:50; Mon 27 Nov 14:40

Phantom Thread

Fri 10 Nov 10:30; Thu 23 Nov 20:30

A Midsummer Night's Dream

Sun 12 Nov 12:00

La Ronde

Tue 14 Nov 20:45; Sun 19 Nov 12:00; Thu 30 Nov
18:20

Black Orpheus

Orfeu Negro
Wed 15 Nov 18:00 (+ intro by journalist and
broadcaster Kevin Le Gendre)

The Tempest

Sat 18 Nov 13:00; Wed 22 Nov 18:20 (+ intro by
Claire Smith, BFI National Archive Senior Curator)

Pandora and the Flying Dutchman

Mon 20 Nov 20:30

Wings of Desire

Der Himmel über Berlin

Tue 21 Nov 14:30; Sat 25 Nov 20:25

An American in Paris

Thu 23 Nov 18:00; Sun 26 Nov 11:30

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the start: you see the Universal logo – the image of the world turning – and there's this lazy saxophone melody over it ['Lift Every Voice and Sing', the so-called 'Negro National Anthem']; it's as though Universal's logo becomes part of the fabric of the piece, and it feels like the setting for an old fable that's been told and retold. There's the 40 Acres and a Mule [Lee's production company] symbol, and then we go into the stunning credit sequence with Rosie Perez dancing to Public Enemy's 'Fight the Power'. It's just beautiful. I was knocked out before the film even started.

Chaz Ebert, writer/broadcaster: My husband Roger and I had our first date in September 1989, but we didn't discuss *Do the Right Thing*, even though it meant so much to him. He didn't assume just because I was black that I wanted to discuss Spike's movies. At some point we did talk about it, though, because it made an incredible impression on Roger – he even threatened never to go back to the Cannes Film Festival because it didn't win a prize [it lost out to *sex, lies and videotape* for the Palme d'Or]. Spike wrote a letter to Roger that said, 'Thanks for sticking up for me. I give you permission to go back to the Cannes Film Festival.'

One of the things Roger found so strong about the film was his feeling that Spike did a movie about race in America that didn't take sides. Usually, such movies have an agenda. In 1989, from an African-American point of view, we were very excited to see the movie. Lee had burst on to the scene: this new voice to advocate for urban black Americans. We were also irritated because some social commentators said there was going to be this big race riot because of it. And we said: 'Why would a movie start a race riot?' It was incomprehensible to us that people would think that way.

I also remember leaving the cinema after those two closing quotes on the screen, from Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. Some people said, 'Did you see the juxtaposition of those quotes? He had the Malcolm X one last – "I don't even call it violence when it's self-defence, I call it intelligence" – so does that mean he was advocating violence?' We said: 'No, he had both on the screen to leave it up to you to decide which was the most valid for the state of race relations at the time.'

Destiny Ekaragha, director/writer: I grew up on an estate in New Cross in London, but it didn't feel like we were in the 'ghetto' – we were just a bunch of kids that would play out in the summer. For me, *Do the Right Thing*, which I first saw in the 90s in my early teens, captured exactly that feeling, with its colour and vibrant characters like Mister Señor Love Daddy in his budget radio station. One of my favourite lines ever is when he says, 'Today's weather is... HOT!' He ain't messing around with degrees Fahrenheit or anything like that.

It remains so important because it touches on issues of race and class – and people's perceptions of those things – like no other film before or after. It was the first film I saw which broke narrative and had people talking directly to camera. It was laying bare what different racial groups said about each other. It said: 'Make no mistake, we are living amidst racism – it's as thick as the humidity in the air.' Today, there are people pretending that racism doesn't exist, that we're in a 'post-racial' era – but that's the most stupid term I've ever heard. If people don't acknowledge that racism is still here, then we're going to go backwards. And that's why *Do the Right Thing* resonates today: it uses open dialogue and conversation to bring these issues to the surface.

Introduction by Ashley Clark, *Sight and Sound*, August 2014