

## Title:

Spike Lee: Top Films and Unforgettable Controversies

## Word Count:

586

## Summary:

The 20 year anniversary of Spike Lee's film debut and the release of his new documentary is a great opportunity to review some of his most notable career moments.

## Keywords:

Spike Lee, Shes Gotta Have It, independent movie, Malcolm X, Denzel Washington, movies, entertainment

## Article Body:

Spike Lee is one of the most influential and provocative American moviemakers. Recently, he celebrated the 20 year anniversary for the release of his remarkable debut film Shes Gotta Have It. His films are groundbreaking in their controversial approach towards social and political issues and offer different perspective on race, class and gender issues in contemporary America.

Spike Lee was born as Shelton Jackson Lee in 1957 in Atlanta, Georgia to a jazz musician and an art teacher. When Lee was a young child, the family relocated to Brooklyn, which was used as a background for many of Spike Lee's movies. Lee's talent was recognized while he was still a film student in NYU. His thesis film Joes Bed Stuy Barbershop: We Cut Heads won 1983 Student Academy Award for best director.

Spike Lee's debut movie Shes Gotta Have It was released in 1986. The movie was shot in 12 days in a budget of 175,000 dollars. The film was written, produced and directed by Spike Lee. Shes Gotta Have It tells the story of Nora Darling, a young, independent African American graphic designer who cannot commit to any of her three lovers. Tracy Camilla Jones played the role of Nora Darling. Tommy Redmond Hicks and John Canada Terrell along with Lee himself played the three men in Noras life.

Shes Gotta Have It was a landmark film in its presentation of African American characters in an American movie and part of the explosion of 80s independent movie industry. The African American community embraced the movie, which displayed a non stereotypical group of young, intelligent black American people.

The film won the Prix de Jeunesse at the Cannes film festival for the best new film by a newcomer.

The 1992 biographic epic *Malcolm X* is considered by many as Lee's best film. The 195 minutes movie depicts the story of the African American activist Malcolm X, from his early childhood to his assassination. Lee uses the Malcolm X story to confront the audience with the racial discrimination and violence that black people went through during the 1950s and 1960s in America.

Spike Lee's name was associated with many controversies. He was often accused of anti-Semitism and racism for portraying Jews and Italians in his films a stereotypical manner. His 2001 television miniseries about one of the Black Panthers founders, Huey P. Newton, stirred another controversy, which helped establish Lee's image as a provocative and radical figure in the American film industry.

Lee's latest project is the documentary *When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts*, which tells the story of New Orleans post and pre hurricane Katrina. The four hours documentary is about the New Orleans culture, the damage caused by hurricane Katrina and the recovery efforts. Lee does not spare his critic on the government inadequate reaction to the destruction.

## 5 Top Movies Directed by Spike Lee

*Do The Right Thing*: this 1989 comic drama shows what happens in Brookline when the interracial tension heats up during the hottest day of the year. Starring: Spike Lee, Danny Aiello, John Turturro

*Mo' Better Blues*: Denzel Washington as a jazz trumpeter who makes all the wrong decisions regarding his musical career and relationships.

*Jungle Fever* tells a pessimistic interracial love story between an African American man and an Italian American woman.

*Girl 6* looks at the life of a young black actress who prefers working as a phone girl than being abused by movie directors

*25th Hour* is dedicated to the last 24 hours in the life of a New York drug dealer before his jail term begins.