



TREASURES FROM THE YALE FILM ARCHIVE

AN ONGOING SERIES OF CLASSIC AND CONTEMPORARY FILMS PRESENTED IN 35MM BY THE YALE FILM STUDY CENTER

WEDNESDAY
MAY 18, 2016

7:00PM • WHITNEY
HUMANITIES CENTER

BOYZ N THE HOOD

PRESENTED WITH SUPPORT FROM
PAUL L. JOSKOW '70 M.PHIL., '72 PH.D.



Doughboy: "Either they don't know, don't show, or don't care about what's going on in the hood!"

John Singleton knew, cared, and showed. An African American born (in 1968) and raised in South Central Los Angeles, he felt an urgency to present the world of his youth: "My biggest influence in making the film was the fact that none of the movies we saw growing up had any characters who were like us." While in the USC screenwriting program, he wrote a script about the passage of three African-American boys from childhood to adolescence in the "hood," dominated by aimlessness, hostile police, drugs, gangs, and murders. Singleton convinced Columbia Pictures to provide a \$6 million budget and allow him to direct, even though he hadn't made even a student film. *BOYZ N THE HOOD* earned over \$60 million, and Singleton received Oscar nominations for Original Screenplay and Director, making him, at age 24, the youngest Director nominee ever, as well as the first African American to achieve that honor.



Singleton doesn't waste a second. The familiar majestic Columbia Pictures logo is disrupted by sounds of street language, conflict, and guns cocking. As the title "BOYZ N THE HOOD" zooms toward us, there are gunshots and screeching tires. Title cards inform us of the high murder rate among black males, while we hear "They shot my brother" and police helicopters whirring (an omnipresent noise throughout). In the first shot, the camera moves toward a STOP sign: simultaneously a command to stop the killings and an expression of the hood's dead-end entrapment. Four children, including the central character Trey, walk through garbage-filled streets and talk nonchalantly about shootings. Another meaningful sign, "Wrong Way," leads them to an alley, where they find a bullet hole-riddled poster "Four More Years Reagan Bush" (it is 1984), police tape, and a pool of dried blood. Dissolve to the blood-red lining of a coffin in a child's classroom drawing, then to other drawings: a patrol car; a police helicopter with a searchlight (an image pervading the film). The children's representations of their realities render irrelevant the white teacher's droning lesson about Thanksgiving. Wisecracking Trey is invited to address the class, and he tells them about the significance of Africa in their heritage: immediately we see that he is both knowledgeable and contentious.

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY **JOHN SINGLETON**
(1991) 112 MINS.

PRODUCED BY **COLUMBIA PICTURES**

STARRING **LAURENCE FISHBURNE, CUBA GOODING JR., ICE CUBE, MORRIS CHESTNUT, ANGELA BASSETT, NIA LONG, AND TYRA FERRELL**

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Trey's lecture foreshadows a scene about midpoint in the film. It is seven years later, and Trey's father, Furious Styles (the film's role model), delivers an impromptu sermon in a Compton street. Commenting on yet another sign, "Cash for Your Home," Furious tells the residents that their drug-dealing and violence lower the value of their neighborhood, leading to a gentrification that will further destroy them. The two lectures are as close as the film comes to didacticism: in large part, Singleton's messages—especially the possibility of African Americans overcoming their challenges and the importance of fathers in enabling responsible manhood—emerge naturally, through the vividly presented lives of an ensemble of memorable characters.

BOYZ N THE HOOD features Ice Cube and Morris Chestnut in their screen debuts, Cuba Gooding Jr. and Angela Bassett in their first major roles, and Laurence Fishburne cementing his stardom as Furious. But it's primarily John Singleton's show. As Armond White wrote in 1991: "The name (Furious Styles) tells you what drives Singleton's art: a sense of commitment and an interest in technical display. He turns the typical coming-of-age drama into an expression of the contemporary social pressures affecting young black American males, while also showing what sparks their imaginative lives. To realize how unusual this is for modern Hollywood, one need only contrast *BOYZ N THE HOOD* with the 80s Brat Pack films: in the former, black teens see life in terms of survival; in the latter, white teens see it in terms of fun. Singleton is the most successful of the new directors at translating the swing and heat of hip-hop culture into cinematic language."

DID YOU KNOW: ONLY THREE BLACK FILMMAKERS (ALL MEN) HAVE BEEN NOMINATED FOR OSCARS AS BEST DIRECTOR: JOHN SINGLETON, LEE DANIELS (PRECIOUS, 2009), AND STEVE MCQUEEN (12 YEARS A SLAVE, 2012). NONE WON.

NEXT UP: "FAILURE IS NOT AN OPTION!" SAYS GENE KRANZ (ED HARRIS) AS HE LEADS THE MISSION CONTROL TEAM TO BRING HOME THREE ASTRONAUTS IN A CRIPPLED SPACECRAFT IN RON HOWARD'S CLASSIC APOLLO 13 (1995). IT SCREENS IN GLORIOUS 35MM ON WEDNESDAY, JUNE 22, AT 7:00 P.M.