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FILM ON THE SQUARE

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Clockers



USA 1995

Universal called, Scorsese had decided to do *Casino*, "Was I interested?" [in *Clockers*] I said maybe, read the novel, read the different drafts Richard Price had written, talked to him, Robert De Niro and Scorsese, thought some more, then decided I could do it. I'm glad I did. – *Spike Lee*

With *Clockers* you're tackling a tough social problem. At what point did you feel you were beginning to illuminate it?

SL: I hoped to illuminate it from the beginning. Because I think myself and the black and white audience alike have become fatigued with the whole gangsta-hip-hop, urban-drug genre film. We just felt that if we could not say something that hasn't been said in the previous 15 to 18 films, there's really no need to make this one. We also felt that we had to have some hope at the end. In so many of the films in this genre, there's no hope at the end at all. For us to go out and make a film and say "This is what's happening in the 'hood" – it's not a revelation. Every day on the news at six or 11, people are seeing some young black men, handcuffs behind their backs, their heads being pushed down into the back of a police car. So I really feel that as artists – true artists – there comes a time when it's not just showing the way it is. Sometimes you have to elevate that and say: "What is the out?"

Delroy Lindo's character is a drug dealer, yet we can see how he would seem positive to young people. That's tricky.

SL: It's very complex. Delroy wanted it to be complex. This guy is selling drugs, but, at the same time, he makes sure that all those little kids in his store do their homework, obey their mother, go to church. But once they get old enough, he's going to try to recruit them. So it's very sinister. You know, he's trying to teach them a work ethic: Save your money – "Why are you buying ten pairs of sneakers? You only got one pair of feet?" – *Spike Lee interviewed by Anna Deavere Smith, Premiere (October 1995)*

◆ **SPIKE LEE** Born 20 March 1957, Atlanta, USA. In 1982 Shelton Jackson – Spike – Lee was awarded and MFA in Film Production from New York University. Throughout his subsequent career, Lee has distinguished himself as a passionate, opinionated and innovative filmmaker. His filmography reveals an artist who takes chances and is more interested in presenting a character's journey than neatly serving up good guys and bad guys, role models or tidy resolutions. In *She's Gotta Have It*, his feature debut, he



gave a funny yet perceptive view of a woman who had three men because one simply couldn't meet her needs; in *Mo' Better Blues*, he used the rhythms and riffs of jazz in his own imagery, achieving a fusion of style and content; in *Jungle Fever*, he examined the complex nature of interracial relationships and sexual mythology. Lee has actively chosen his projects on the basis of the potential they offer for artistic growth. Constantly striving to enlarge his creative vocabulary, he has worked in advertising and music videos, as well as film. Through his own production company he has fostered the emergence of other black filmmakers and actors. In less than a decade Lee has made the leap from independent upstart to important cultural figure.

◆ CREDITS

Dir: Spike Lee. Exec. prod: Rosalie Swedlin, Monty Ross. Prod: Martin Scorsese, Spike Lee, Jon Kilik. Scr: Richard Price, Spike Lee, based on the novel by Richard Price. Phot. (colour): Malik Hassan Sayeed. Ed: Sam Pollard. Prod. des: Andrew McAlpine. Cost. des: Ruth Carter. Original score: Terence Blanchard. Sd: Skip Lievsay. rt: 128 mins.

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◆ CAST

Harvey Keitel (Rocco Klein), John Turturro (Larry Mazilli), Delroy Lindo (Rodney), Mekhi Phifer (Strike), Isaiah Washington (Victor), Keith David (Andre the Giant), Pee Wee Love (Tyrone), Regina Taylor (Iris Jeeter).

◆ FILMOGRAPHY

1986 *She's Gotta Have It*
1988 *School Daze*
1989 *Do the Right Thing*
1990 *Mo' Better Blues*
1991 *Jungle Fever*
1992 *Malcolm X*
1994 *Crooklyn*
1995 *Clockers*
1996 *Girl 6*