



Cinema of Outsiders: The Rise of American Independent Film

Emanuel Levy

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A Los Angeles Times Bestseller

The most important development in American culture of the last two decades is the emergence of independent cinema as a viable alternative to Hollywood. Indeed, while Hollywood's studios devote much of their time and energy to churning out big-budget, star-studded event movies, a renegade independent cinema that challenges mainstream fare continues to flourish with strong critical support and loyal audiences.

Cinema of Outsiders is the first and only comprehensive chronicle of contemporary independent movies from the late 1970s up to the present. From the hip, audacious early works of maverick David Lynch, Jim Jarmusch, and Spike Lee, to the contemporary Oscar-winning success of indie dynamos, such as the Coen brothers (*Fargo*), Quentin Tarantino (*Pulp Fiction*), and Billy Bob Thornton (*Sling Blade*), Levy describes in a lucid and accessible manner the innovation and diversity of American indies in theme, sensibility, and style.

Documenting the socio-economic, political and artistic forces that led to the rise of American independent film, **Cinema of Outsiders** depicts the pivotal role of indie guru Robert Redford and his Sundance Film Festival in creating a showcase for indies, the function of film schools in supplying talent, and the continuous tension between indies and Hollywood as two distinct industries with their own structure, finance, talent and audience.

Levy describes the major cycles in the indie film movement: regional cinema, the New York school of film, African-American, Asian American, gay and lesbian, and movies made by women. Based on exhaustive research of over 1,000 movies made between 1977 and 1999, Levy evaluates some 200 quintessential indies, including *Choose Me*, *Stranger Than Paradise*, *Blood Simple*, *Blue Velvet*, *Desperately Seeking Susan*, *Slacker*, *Poison*, *Reservoir Dogs*, *Gas Food Lodging*, *Menace II Society*, *Clerks*, *In the Company of Men*, *Chasing Amy*, *The Apostle*, *The Opposite of Sex*, and *Happiness*.

Cinema of Outsiders reveals the artistic and political impact of bold and provocative independent movies in displaying the cinema of "outsiders"-the cinema of the "other America."

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