

Yo! Spike's got a new joint!

by Azed Majeed

HEY! HEY! HEY! HEY! HEY!!!!
LISTEN UP, Y'ALL: SPIKE'S GOT A NEW JOINT.

IS IT COOL? yep.
IS IT FUNKY? yep.
IS IT FUN? yep.
IS IT FULL OF NEAT-O FILM SHIT
LIKE DISJUNCTIVE EDITING AND
EXTENSIVE USE OF A LOUMA CRANE??
yep.

IS A GREAT FILM?? well . . .
If there's one person an aspiring filmmaker can look up to, it's good ol' Spike Lee. The man has proven that through hard work, perseverance and smarts anyone can get a film made.

Anybody out there entertaining the notion of becoming a filmmaker must first read *Spike's Gotta Have It*, the companion book to his first independent feature, *She's Gotta Have It*. After constantly hearing that filmmaking is an almost impossible enterprise, I became jittery, wiggly and dizzy when I read this eye-opening book. (Interestingly enough, I felt the same sensations after watching an episode of *Who's the Boss*.)

"Please, baby, please baby, baby, baby please."

Spike is not just a man who makes films; he is a barometer for what is hip-hop, down, nasty, bustin' and straight out cool. I should know. On a recent trip to Nueva York, me, my friend Peter (also a film student) and my girlfriend Tina (not a film student, but a valid person in her own right) braved the NYC subway system to get from safe, Woody Allenesque Manhattan to violent, race riot torn Spikelynesque Brooklyn.

Why?? That's what we asked ourselves on the steamy, expectorated upon subway platform. We were on a pilgrimage that all of Spike's fans must one day make to the new temple of groovy, Spike's Joint. For those of you squares who have not been educated to the fact, this is a store recently opened by the man himself to sell artifacts, relics and, most importantly, t-shirts associated with his films.

Upon arriving, I went into a frenzy: "Holy shit, look at the sign! Coolschool, mon . . . nice store . . . nice neighbourhood . . . wow! Authentic *Do the Right Thing* t-shirt . . . how much? . . . who cares? Grab as many as we can carry . . . books, buttons, posters . . . hey, how do I look in this Forty Acres and a Mule baseball cap? . . . I'll take it . . . final bill . . . gulp! . . . oh, well, forget about that fifth course this year. This is indicative



Spike Lee's *Mo' Better Blues* doesn't truly capture what makes jazz musicians great artists, but, chill out — Lee is still an amazing filmmaker. Denzel Washington shares a moment with his trumpet (above).

of how one behaves around anything associated with Spike Lee.

Spike is no ordinary filmmaker. He has singlehandedly inspired an appreciation of cinema among the masses, formerly an area reserved exclusively for overweight film critics. It is to his credit that Spike's films deal with heavy subjects without alienating certain factions within society.

Spike is no poseur. He doesn't attack with an intellectual hammer; his ideas are conveyed viscerally. From the beginning of his career, Spike has maintained a level of wisdom which, presented in a colloquial manner, reflects the essence of reality accurately, if not conventionally.

Spike's first film, *She's Gotta Have It*, told the story of Nola Darling, a free-willed woman who alternately slept with three different men. As in all his films, Spike upset the viewer's expectations in many ways. For example, Nola's character would fit into the "slut" stereotype, but Spike effectively and subtly presents her as well-adjusted and misunderstood, especially by you male dogs. Ya dig? Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of this film is that Spike produced, directed, wrote and starred in it, and that his budget was \$175,000. Peanuts, mon.

Spike's second film, *School Daze*, while flawed, contained some interesting ideas on Black pride and unity. Also, the ending was a killer. WAKE UP!!! I love that ending. I could have done without some of the musical numbers, but, hey . . .

Do the Right Thing, Spike's greatest Joint to date, confronted the issue of racism without trivializing it. The film did not give any easy solutions . . . 'cos there ain't any. The film's strength lay in its ambiguity. For chrissakes, the audience has to do some work, ya know. Additional strong points: the usual shenanigan from Spike and the gang (despite the serious subject, this is one funny film), the usual amazing cinematography by Ernest Dickerson, and the unusually awesome soundtrack . . . FIGHT THE POWER!

Now, Spike has released *Mo' Better Blues*. The film focusses on jazz musician Bleek Gilliam (Denzel Washington), his

relationships with two women, his rivalry with the sax player in his band and his lifelong friendship with Giant, his band's diminutive manager, played by Spike Lee.

The plot is not altogether original; in fact, it is very reminiscent of *Prince's Purple Rain*. Don't get the wrong idea; this film is much better than *Purple Rain* — I mean, I like Prince, but he ain't no Bobby De Niro.

Still, *Mo' Better Blues* fails to portray the jazz lifestyle convincingly. These jazz players don't indulge in drugs, they live in huge, beautiful apartments and they play to a packed house every night. This would be news to Charlie Parker, Billie Holiday, Mingus, Monk or countless others who were not strangers to the horrors of drug addiction, poverty and racism.

As usual, Spike is attempting to subvert a stereotype; in this case, it is the stereotype of the tragic black musician as portrayed in such films as *Bird* and *Round Midnight*. However, this reversal doesn't work for this particular story.

By making Bleek fit into the "I'm just a regular guy" mold, he works against the character's unique genius. Part of what made *Bird* such a great film was the constant focus on how enigmatic Charlie Parker was. We regular chumps do not see the world through the same eyes as people like *Bird*.

Oh, one mo' thing: the ending is pretty lame.

NOW, FOR SOME POSITIVE REMARKS: *Mo' Better Blues* is highly entertaining. The film is beautiful to look at, thanks in no small part to Spike's main man cameraman Ernest Dickerson. ERNEST, YES!!! There are also some brilliantly edited sequences, and, as with all of Spike's Joints, there is a generous dose of humour.

You can't get this on TV, SO GET THE HELL OUT THERE AND SEE THIS MOVIE!! You'll laugh, you'll cry, you'll eat a large bag of popcorn with some synthetic butter substitute and hate yourself for it, and, sho-nuff, you'll like this movie, ya dig?

Oh, by the way, who the hell is this Darkman, anyway?



Excalibur film reviewer Azed Majeed and his friend Peter share an attitude outside Spike Lee Mecca, Spike's Joint.

MICRO YORK

Serving York University Administration, Faculty, Staff and Students
Owned by York University and Operated by Computer and Communication Services
Free Delivery within York Main Campus

<p>Main Store</p> <p>104A Steacie Science Library 736-5274 - FAX: 736-5662</p> <p>Store Hours Mon. to Thurs. 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Friday 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.</p>	<p>Satellite Store</p> <p>122P Central Square 736-5274 - FAX: 736-5662</p> <p>Store Hours for September 4 to 28 Mon. to Thurs. 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Friday 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.</p>
---	---

Sale prices are valid until Oct 29/90 or while supplies last. Items must be picked up no later than Oct 31/90. Items sold on a first-come, first-served basis. Prices subject to change without notice.

The IBM PS/1, a new kind of personal computer that brings it all home: ease of use, power and value

Featuring

- ◆ 80286 microprocessor
- ◆ 10MHz clock speed
- ◆ 1-1.44MB, 3.5" disk drive
- ◆ Photo VGA Colour Display
- ◆ Real time clock
- ◆ PS/1 Computer system tutorial
- ◆ Microsoft Works V2.0 (which includes word processing, spreadsheet, database and communications systems)

IBM PS/1 \$ 2,099

IBM Model 55

step into the power of an IBM computer

Strengths

- ◆ 80386SX microprocessor
- ◆ 16MHz clock speed
- ◆ 2MB of memory
- ◆ 1-1.44MB, 3.5"
- ◆ 60MB Hard Disk

Monitor Extra

IBM Personal Laser

- ◆ 5 Page Per Minute
- ◆ HP LaserJet Emulation
- ◆ HP Plotter Emulation

\$ 1,399

Options

Font Cartridge starting at	\$ 176
Toner Cartridge	\$ 175
PostScript Cartridge	\$ 473
1MB Memory Upgrade	\$ 399

\$ 3,850

IBM is registered trade-mark and Personal System/1 and PS/1 are trade-marks of International Business Machine Corporation, © Copyright IBM Canada Ltd., 1990.