

CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN CINEMA

Session Five

Indiewood

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Agenda

16:15 – 17:45

Rushmore (1998)

17:45 – 18:00

Break

18:00 – 19:15

Indiewood & Specialty Cinema



US (and International?) Indie Culture

New suggests that an Indie culture has developed in the US

Based on its belief that it is distinction from a perceived mainstream, based on a taste for ...

1. Autonomy –free-thinking, leftist-individualism that characterizes lifestyle and consumer choices
2. Authenticity – not compromised by mass-market forces

This is an elitest position that distinguishes members from a supposedly conformist, unimaginative, undiscerning mass

Student Questions

How does *Rushmore* address the Indie sensibility of the members of Indie culture?

To what extent does *Rushmore* balance its use of Hollywood conventions with markers of distinction – of a cool, hip, sense of prestige?

To what extent is Max Fischer a “typical” Hollywood protagonist?

To what extent is this “typical” Hollywood storytelling?

How would you describe the tone of the film?

Agenda

Indiewood as industrial reorganization

Indiewood as product differentiation

Reading individual Indiewood films

Branding Indiewood films

In institutional or corporate terms, what was Indiewood?

Heavyweights of Indiewood Cinema

The logo for Focus Features, featuring the word "FOCUS" in large yellow letters above "FEATURES" in smaller white letters, set against a background of blurred blue and yellow bokeh lights.

FOCUS
FEATURES

The logo for Sony Pictures Classics, consisting of the text "SONY PICTURES CLASSICS" in white, centered on a solid blue background with a thin white horizontal line above and below the text.

SONY PICTURES CLASSICS

The logo for Paramount Vantage, featuring the words "PARAMOUNT" and "VANTAGE" in white, outlined, block letters on a dark, textured background that looks like a film strip or a sign.

PARAMOUNT
VANTAGE

The logo for Warner Independent Pictures, featuring a stylized "W" icon on the left and the text "WARNER INDEPENDENT PICTURES" on the right, with "INDEPENDENT" in red and "WARNER" and "PICTURES" in black.

WARNER
INDEPENDENT
PICTURES

The logo for Fine Line Features, featuring a stylized "F" icon on the left and the text "FINE LINE FEATURES" on the right, all in black on a white background with horizontal lines above and below the text.

FINE LINE
FEATURES

The logo for Miramax, featuring the word "MIRAMAX" in large, bold, white letters above the word "FILMS" in smaller white letters, all on a black background with a thin white horizontal line above and below the text.

MIRAMAX
FILMS

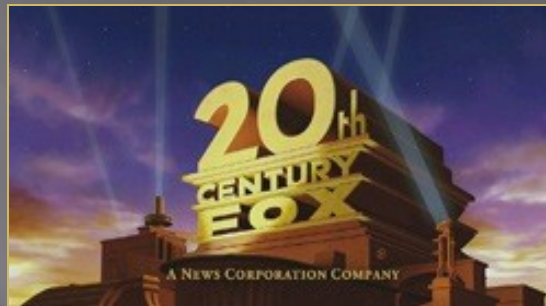
The logo for Fox Searchlight Pictures, featuring the words "FOX SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES" in large, bold, orange letters, set against a dark background with spotlights and a building facade. Below the main text, it says "A NEWS CORPORATION COMPANY" in smaller white letters.

FOX
SEARCHLIGHT
PICTURES
A NEWS CORPORATION COMPANY

The “big six” Conglomerate Parents



The MPAA Members (Hollywood)



What were some of the broader forces that led to the rise of Indiewood?

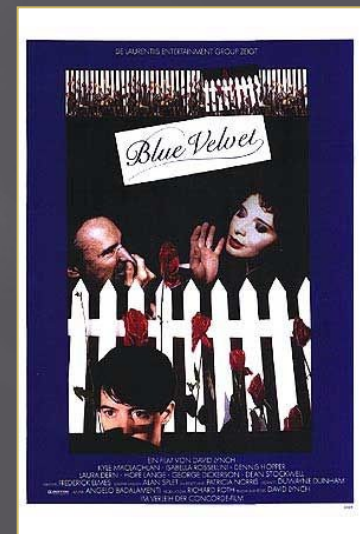
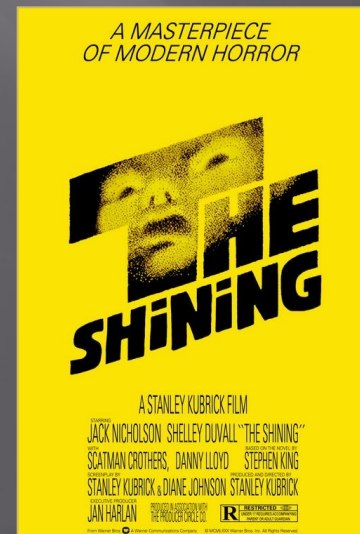
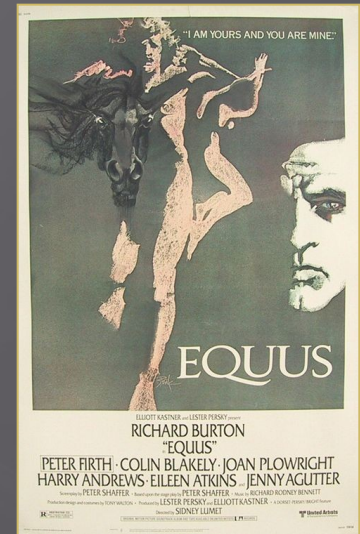
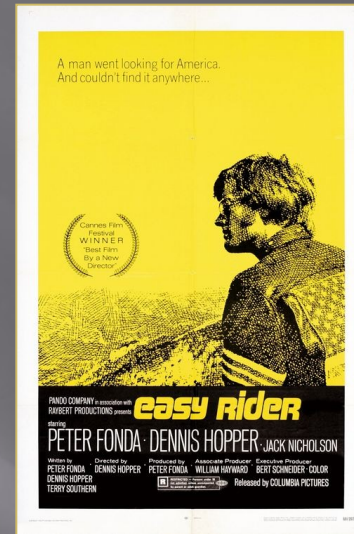
A New Renaissance

Hollywood had previously handled quality fare (it should be stressed)

Institutionalization of a new type of middle brow cinema

New systematic effort to court indie sensibility that was skeptical of Hollywood

Distanced from Hollywood via conglomerate indie divisions



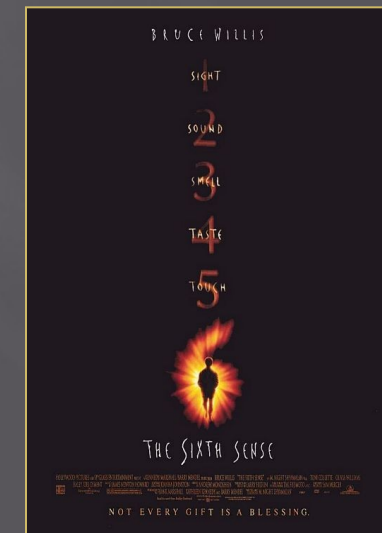
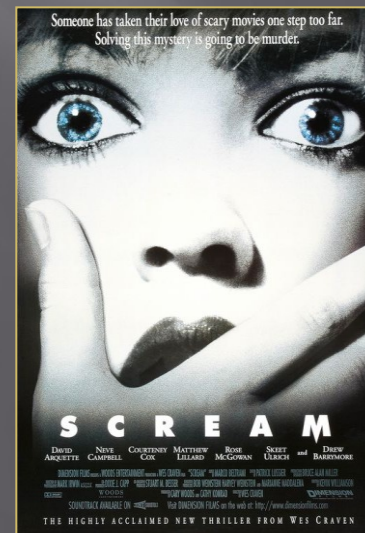
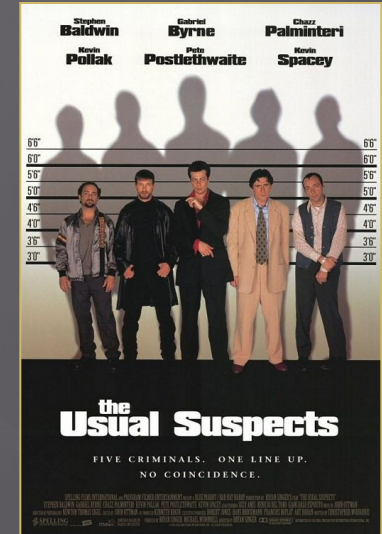
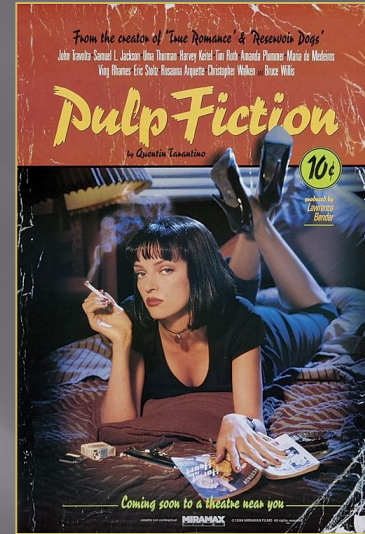
Signs of Indiewood's Potential

Rise of Miramax signals economic potential of fairly challenging fare

But, also highlights potential competition for the majors

Hit films show wide(ish) audience for Hollywood Art cinema

Complex narration becomes widely accepted and spawns hits



In general terms, what distinguished the Indiewood films from their contemporaries?

Indiewood Tendencies/Flourishes

Imagined Hollywood acts as foil:
various acts of differentiation

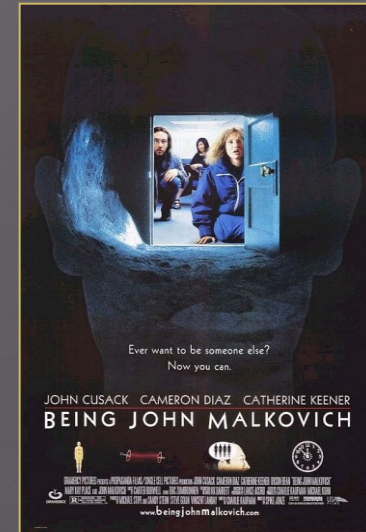
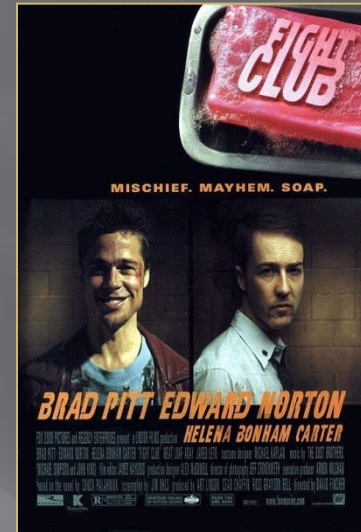
Complex or flawed protagonists

Looser/complex/subjective narration

Visual style beyond needs of story

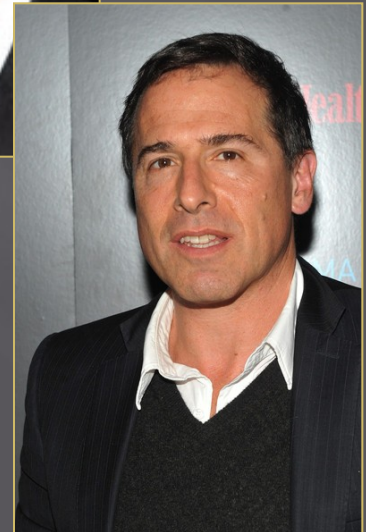
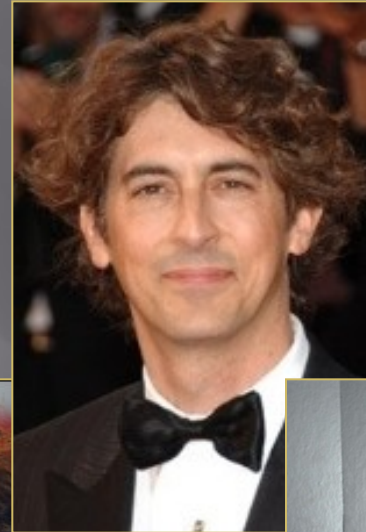
Ambiguous or undulating tone

Self-reflexivity = authorial presence



New American Auteurs

PT Anderson; Wes Anderson; Sophia
Coppola; Charlie Kauffman; Alexander
Payne; David O. Russell



Conventionality/Flattering to Deceive

Hollywood actors

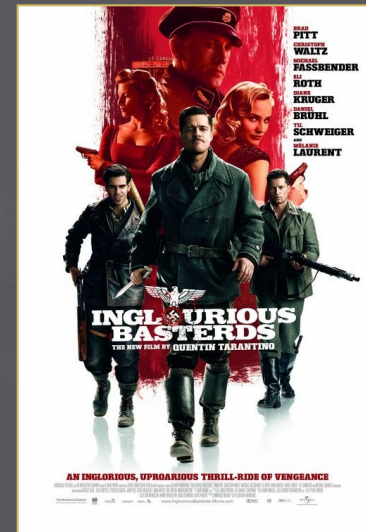
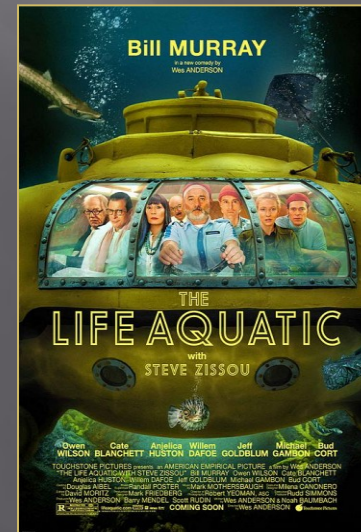
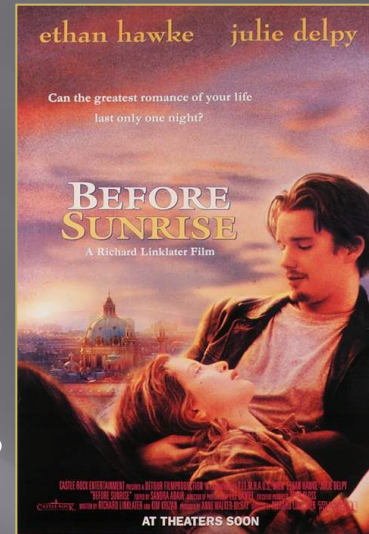
Still coherent narrative films

Create coherent (familiar) universes

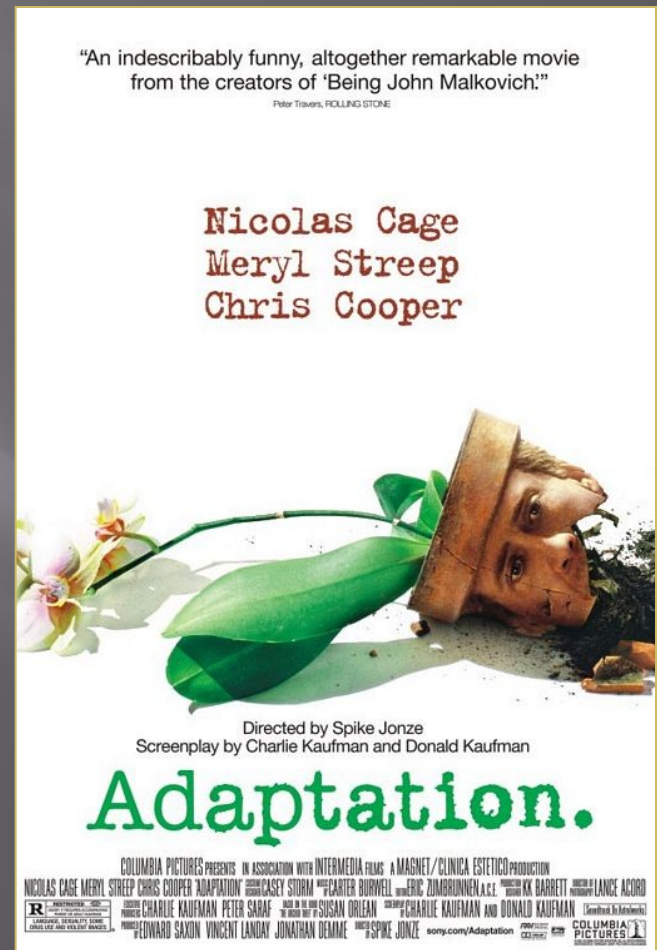
Style rarely overwhelms narration

Characters fairly goal-orientated

Use recognizable genre frameworks

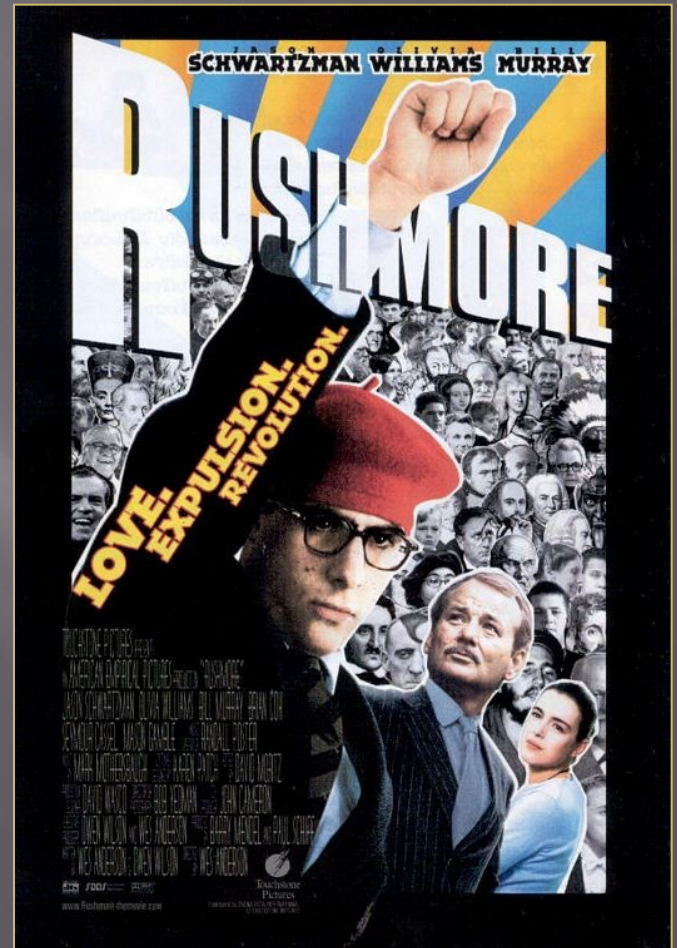


How does *Adaptation* comment on the industrial and aesthetic character of Indiewood Cinema?



Indiewood Movies

How does *Rushmore* reflect an Indiewood sensibility?



Questions

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Indiewood Branding

Adaptation Trailer

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0HtZ2M4e_AM

Magnolia Trailer

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QYTqhmzROko&feature=related>

Sideways Trailer

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YS9ocP6FNvM>

Juno Trailer

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K0SKf0K3bxg>

Lost in Translation Trailer

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sU0oZsqeG_s

Summary I: Indiewood Aesthetics

Emerges after New Line and Miramax become established as major independents

Refers to films that exhibit similarities to “Hollywood” fare and to independent films (independence of spirit)

Combines “conventional” content with “edgy”, “off beat” elements and “quirky” or “idiosyncratic” characters

Display more complex storytelling than Major studio films [even though Hollywood was continuing to deal in so-called Puzzle Films such as *The Sixth Sense* (1999)].

Summary II: Indiewood Economics

Conglomerate Hollywood's attempt to capture indie market that existed for challenging, off-beat films

Made marketable and enjoyable to middle-brow consumers by mobilizing aspects of art cinema

Expand potential audience by also mobilizing Hollywood content and stars – appeal to less “sophisticated” audience

Entertainment conglomerates maintain dominance over the American film market by capturing niche audiences and forcing smaller outfits out of business