The Rise of the Indies in America

1. Defining Indies
   * “Not produced within the system” (Peter Bogdanovich)--but what is the system?
   * Low-budget
   * No “name” stars, and not a star vehicle
   * Financing by individuals and non-film entities
   * Distribution and production companies are different
   * Distribution/exhibition by non-corporate entities (the film is “corrupted” when picked up commercially)
   * Not produced with commercial success as the goal
   * Written/directed/produced by the “unenfranchised”
   * A particular “vision” apparent
   * Auteur willing to risk it all for film
   * Groundbreaking; never been done before
   * The role of supposedly “non-commercial” film festivals in the determination of distribution

   * Overall: Can there be “levels of indie-ness”?

2. The Death of the Hollywood Studio System
   * The 1948 Paramount decision (no more vertical integration)
   * Blacklisting and HUAC
   * The growing dominance of TV, aided by the growth of suburbia and the failure of last-gasp gimmicks by moviemakers
   * 1941 Revenue Act--resulted in many artists-as-producers (by 1959, 70% of features were produced by independent companies)
3. Amateurization of media and public acceptance of “low quality” (e.g., YouTube)

4. Multistreaming of Media and the Individuation of Gatekeeping
  * 500 channels + Internet
  * A search for contact in an anonymous world--the cult of the indie film

5. Regional & Niche filmmaking—
  * Cleveland Film Society & the Cleveland International Film Festival
  * Independent Pictures & the Ohio Independent Film Festival
  * The Greater Cleveland Film Commission
  * Robert Banks, the starving artist—“X The Baby Cinema,” “Motion Picture Genocide”
  * “Script Doctor,” the “calling card” film of the Fields brothers
  * Cleveland State University

* Films shot in Cleveland include:
  - *Deer Hunter* (1978)
  - *The Fortune Cookie* (1966)
  - *Stranger Than Paradise* (1984)
  - *Telling Lies in America*” (1997)
  - For more, see Dr. N’s COM 493 2001 website
Social Role Images in Film

* For films, unlike television, few studies exist on the content or effects of viewing. However, it’s reasonable to expect viewing impacts, based on social learning theory, cultivation theory, and uses and gratifications theory.

* This is particularly true because of the durability of film images—movies are “forever.” We see outmoded images and old stereotypes every day as we flip channels.

* Images of the “unenfranchised” are particularly problematic:
  - Women (see below)
  - African-Americans (see below)
  - Native Americans (“The Only Good Indian. . .”)
  - other minorities
  - the elderly
  - professors?
  - etc.

* Women's images through U.S. film history:

  1. The sweetheart
     e.g., Mary Pickford, "America's sweetheart" of silent films, a powerful businesswoman behind the scenes
  2. The vamp
     e.g., Theda Bara
     e.g., Mae West, the walking double entendre of 1930's; challenged the Hays Office
3. The strong, independent (working) woman of 1930's and 1940's
e.g., Katharine Hepburn, Rosalind Russell roles
4. The martyred mother of 1940's
   e.g., Stella Dallas, Mildred Pierce
5. The Feminine Mystique of the 1950’s--back to the kitchen or into male fantasies (the blonde bombshell)
6. Contemporary diversity (?)--Even today, female performers are outnumbered in films and on TV, 3-to-1; behind the scenes, female directors and writers are finally beginning to have an impact (e.g., Penny Marshall, Allison Anders, Susan Seidelman, Jodie Foster)

* African-American images through U.S. film history:

1. Whites in blackface (e.g., D.W. Griffith’s Birth of a Nation, 1915)

2. Blacks featured in Hollywood movies during the Studio Era—a range of images, e.g.:
   - Stepin Fetchit, the stereotypic shuffling slave
   - Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, Shirley Temple's partner
   - Hattie McDaniel, the mammy with attitude
   - Paul Robeson, a multitalented dynamo
   - The Nicholas Brothers, dancers defying gravity
   - Lena Horne, from Stormy Weather ('43) to today
   - Dorothy Dandridge, Cleveland's own chanteuse
3. The "Race Films" of the 1920's and 1930's--Oscar Micheaux and others created films by, for and about African-Americans/a parallel industry

4. Sidney Poitier (1950's-on)

5. 1970's Blaxploitation films (e.g., *Superfly*, *Blacula*)

Animation

* *Gertie the Dinosaur* (1914) & Winsor McCay

* Cels vs. Stop-motion animation

* Stop-motion animation:
  * Ray Harryhausen (*Jason & the Argonauts*, etc.)
  * Aardman Animation (Peter Lord & David Sproxton + Nick Park; *Chicken Run*, 2000; *Wallace & Gromit in the Curse of the Were-Rabbit*, 2005)

* Full animation and Multiplaning (only the biggies—Disney, Don Bluth, DreamWorks, Japanese studios)

* Backlighting (e.g., *Beauty and the Beast*, 1991)


* Optical printer used to combine live action w/animation as early as 1920's (e.g., *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*, 1989)

* Japanese Anime --not only for kids! Cel animation at its best... e.g., *Akira* (1988); *Cowboy Bebop* (2001)

* Computerization of animation
  e.g., *The Secret of NIMH* (1982), many others to follow

vs.

* Computer animation (computer generated imagery, or CGI)—Pixar, DreamWorks

* Performance animation (using computers to generate CGI characters moving in "real time")

* With computer animation, we have a blurring of the line between animation and digital special effects
  - The majority of feature films released in the U.S. contain at least some CGI (with live action)
  - Even Studio Ghibli, which still uses hand-drawn cel animation, uses computer applications for highlights and sparkles, etc.