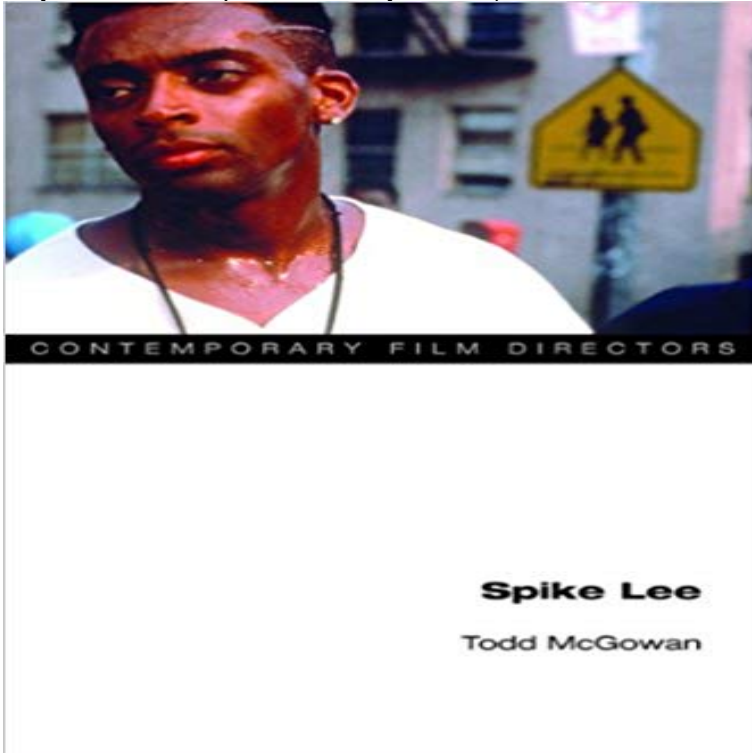


Spike Lee (Contemporary Film Directors)



Since the release of *Do the Right Thing* in 1989, Spike Lee has established himself as a cinematic icon. Lee's mostly independent films garner popular audiences while at the same time engaging in substantial political and social commentary. He is arguably the most accomplished African American filmmaker in cinematic history, and his breakthrough paved the way for the success of many other African Americans in film. In this first single-author scholarly examination of Spike Lee's oeuvre, Todd McGowan shows how Lee's films, from *Shes Gotta Have It* through *Red Hook Summer*, address crucial social issues such as racism, paranoia, and economic exploitation in a formally inventive manner. McGowan argues that Lee uses excess in his films to intervene in issues of philosophy, politics, and art. McGowan contends that it is impossible to watch a Spike Lee film in the way that one watches a typical Hollywood film. By forcing observers to recognize their unconscious enjoyment of violence, paranoia, racism, sexism, and oppression, Lee's films prod spectators to see differently and to confront their own excess. In the process, his films reveal what is at stake in desire, interpersonal relations, work, and artistic creation itself.

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