BAMcinématek presents *Behind the Mask: Bamboozled in Focus*, Oct 28—Nov 3, a nine-film reflection on Spike Lee’s ferocious satire, on the 15th anniversary of its release

Including Lee’s Hollywood inspirations for *Bamboozled*, a pair of documentaries by Marlon Riggs, and more

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Brooklyn, NY/Oct 1, 2015—From Wednesday, October 28, through Tuesday, November 3, BAMcinématek presents *Behind the Mask: Bamboozled in Focus*, a series of nine films which inspired—and have been inspired by—Spike Lee’s *Bamboozled*, which is celebrated on its 15th anniversary.

Lee’s *Bamboozled* (2000—Oct 28), a funny, ferocious, and frightening satire of race and the media was shunned by the paying public and mostly mauled by critics upon release. However, viewed today, in a fraught climate where the mediation of the black image in American society is at a crucial juncture, Lee’s vision seems both vital and extraordinarily prescient. When beat-down TV executive Pierre Delacroix (Damon Wayans) pitches a modern-day minstrel show to producers, he hopes he’ll be fired. Instead, the idea is deemed genius and the show becomes a hit—provoking Pierre to rethink his role as a cog in the corporation’s wheels. Proof that “no filmmaker knows better than Mr. Lee how laughter can be the surest avenue to painful and scary truths” (*The New York Times*), *Bamboozled* shows how easily and entirely the media reflects—and shapes—the racial imagination.

The series highlights a duet of documentaries by another filmmaker who dedicated his career to exploring onscreen representations of race: provocative activist and artist Marlon Riggs. *Ethnic Notions* (1986—Oct 29), Riggs’ Emmy-winning first feature, scrutinizes the roles black people have played historically in Hollywood. Shots of Mammies, Toms, Sambos, and other dehumanizing stereotypes flash across the screen—echoing *Bamboozled*’s closing credits, in which Lee provides a similarly overwhelming catalogue of disturbing footage. *Color Adjustment* (1992—Oct 29) takes for its subject “black” television, positing that though more people of color are seen on TV, the narratives they inhabit are still at odds with the complex racial realities in America. Winner of the Peabody Award and narrated by Ruby Dee, *Color Adjustment* reexamines such popular programs as *Amos ’n’ Andy, The Nat King Cole Show, The Jeffersons, Roots*, and *The Cosby Show*.

Two of Lee’s foremost Hollywood inspirations for *Bamboozled* also screen in the series: Elia Kazan’s *A Face in the Crowd* (1957—Nov 1) and Sidney Lumet’s *Network* (1976—Oct 30). The former, a witty, sharp satire deemed “the founding movie of postmodern times” by J. Hoberman (*The Village Voice*), features a searing screenplay by Budd Schulberg, to whom Lee dedicated his film. Starring a brilliant, vile-yet-charming Andy Griffith in his debut role as the iconic “Lonesome” Rhodes, Kazan’s film critiques the power of television personalities, the networks that enable them, and the mindless public who swallows it all up.

Lee has said that “if Kazan and Schulberg had not done *A Face in the Crowd*, Paddy Chayefsky would not have done *Network*. I mean, there’s a direct correlation between them... they had the crystal ball.” Chayefsky, one of the most successful writers to emerge from America’s Golden Age...
of Television, won one of the film’s four Oscars (the others being Best Actor for Peter Finch, Best Actress for Faye Dunaway, and Best Supporting Actress for Beatrice Straight). This darkly satirical film follows a depressed, loose-cannon anchor whose famous “I’m mad as hell, and I’m not going to take this anymore” speech served as a rallying cry against the exploitative tactics of television networks, and is explicitly referenced in Bamboozled.

Justin Simien’s much-discussed Sundance prize-winning first feature Dear White People (2014—Nov 3), the most recent film in the lineup, is “as smart and fearless a debut as I have seen from an American filmmaker in quite some time” (A. O. Scott, The New York Times). Set on a prestigious college campus, Dear White People follows four black students who have very different ways of reconciling experiences with everything from microaggressions to blackface while at school. Livin’ Large (1991—Nov 2), Michael Schultz’s wild farce, is likewise concerned with the manipulation of racial identity. A young, talented black reporter loses himself (“the more polished he became, the less he shined,” says the narrator) when the network he’s working for tries to dilute his blackness—even digitally changing his appearance to broadcast the illusion of thinner lips and lighter skin.

Behind the Mask also showcases a pair of challenging, acclaimed short films which echo Bamboozled’s sharp take on the vagaries of representation. Paired with Dear White People is abstract artist Howardena Pindell’s Free, White And 21 (1980—Nov 3), in which the director takes on a bullying white alter-ego, denouncing the performative expectations imposed on her as a black woman and scorching the exclusionary feminism of the 70s. LA Rebellion alum Julie Dash’s (Daughters of the Dust) Illusions (1982—Oct 29) screens with Ethnic Notions. A black feminist cinema classic, Dash’s short depicts the lives of two black women who keep secrets about their identity in order to make it in WWII Hollywood.

Curated by Ashley Clark, author of Facing Blackness: Media and Minstrelsy in Spike Lee’s Bamboozled, and programmer of this past spring’s Space is the Place: Afrofuturism on Film at BAMcinématek.

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Behind the Mask: Bamboozled in Focus Schedule

Wed, Oct 28
7:30pm*: Bamboozled

Thu, Oct 29
7pm: Ethnic Notions + Illusions
9:15pm: Color Adjustment

Fri, Oct 30
7, 9:30pm: Network

Sun, Nov 1
4, 6:45, 9:30pm: A Face in the Crowd

Mon, Nov 2
5, 7:15, 9:30pm: Livin’ Large

Tue, Nov 3
4:30, 7, 9:30pm: Dear White People + Free, White And 21

*Intro by curator Ashley Clark

Film Descriptions

Bamboozled (2000) 135min

"It's amazing Lee ever got to make another Hollywood movie after this," wrote pop culture website Vulture of the filmmaker's thematically bold and formally daring satire. Frustrated African-American TV executive Pierre Delacroix (a superbly off-kilter Wayans) creates a contemporary version of a minstrel show in order to purposefully get himself fired and expose the commissioning network as a racist, retrograde outfit. Instead, the show—which summons the ghosts of history by having its black stars wear blackface—becomes a smash hit, prompting widespread catastrophe and Delacroix's mental collapse. 35mm.

Wed, Oct 28 at 7:30pm

Color Adjustment (1992) 86min
Directed by Marlon Riggs.

Narrated by the great Ruby Dee, Color Adjustment is a stunning examination of the interplay between America's racial consciousness and network programming, tracing 40 years of race relations through the lens of primetime entertainment. Scrutinizing the racial myths and stereotypes perpetuated by television, director Riggs asks the viewer to consider favorites like Julia, Good Times, Roots, and The Cosby Show in a new way, with revelatory, thought-provoking results. Beta SP.

Thu, Oct 29 at 9:15pm

Dear White People (2014) 108min
Directed by Justin Simien. With Tyler James Williams, Tessa Thompson, Brandon P. Bell.

"It's like Spike Lee and Oprah had a pissed-off baby." With a plot in part inspired by real-life blackface parties occurring at US colleges, Justin Simien's complex, witty debut balances mordantly funny commentary on contemporary race and identity politics with an insightful take on the history of African-American cinematic representation. DCP. Screens with Free, White And 21.

Tue, Nov 3 at 4:30, 7, 9:30pm

Ethnic Notion (1986) 57min
Directed by Marlon Riggs.

This classic Emmy-winning documentary offers a factual, complementary addendum to Lee's incandescent imaginary vision in Bamboozled. Director Riggs (Tongues Untied) takes viewers on a disturbing tour through American history, tracing the deep-rooted, dehumanizing stereotypes that have fueled anti-black prejudice. Loyal Toms, carefree Sambos, faithful Mammies, grinning Coons, savage Brutes, and wide-eyed Pickaninnies all roll across the screen in a tumbling visual index, the horror of which is counterbalanced by Riggs' calm, sober style. DigiBeta. Screens with Illusions.

Thu, Oct 29 at 7pm

A Face in the Crowd (1957) 126min
Directed by Elia Kazan. With Andy Griffith, Patricia Neal, Anthony Franciosa.

Lee dedicated Bamboozled to Budd Schulberg, the writer of this scorchingly funny and remarkably prophetic media satire directed by Elia Kazan. "Lonesome" Rhodes, a boorish but charismatic jailbird (Griffith, in one of his greatest roles), makes the most of a lucky break to rise to televisual fame. On the way he jettisons what little integrity he has, becoming exceedingly rich and politically influential in the process. 35mm.

Sun, Nov 1 at 4, 6:45, 9:30pm

Free, White And 21 (1980) 12min
Directed by Howardena Pindell.

In this confrontational, personal, and political video, artist Howardena Pindell recounts the racism she encountered both as a child and an adult. Digital. Screens with Dear White People.

Tue, Nov 3 at 4:30, 7, 9:30pm

Illusions (1982) 34min
Directed by Julie Dash. With Lonette McKee, Rosanne Katon.

This haunting, deeply moving film, set in Hollywood during World War II, tells the story of Mignon Duprée (McKee), a studio executive passing for white, and Ester Jeeter (Katon), an African-American singer hired to dub the voice of a white movie star. Director Julie Dash (Daughters of the Dust) offers a gripping
critique of Hollywood's power to shape perceptions—and the illusion of racial identity itself. Screens with
Ethnic Notions.

Thu, Oct 29 at 7pm

**Livin’ Large** (1991) 96min
In Schultz’s perceptive, sorely underrated comedy, aspiring black TV anchorman Dexter Jackson (the
excellent Carson) wonders whether becoming successful also means “selling out.” As he climbs higher in
the corporate structure and leaves his working class roots behind, he is visited by increasingly horrifying
visions of his whiteface alter ego. 35mm.

Mon, Nov 2 at 5, 7:15, 9:30pm

**Network** (1976) 121min
*Directed by Sidney Lumet. With Peter Finch, Faye Dunaway, Robert Duvall.*
Of the many sharp cinematic references peppering *Bamboozled*, among the most striking are its nods to
Lumet’s furious and freewheeling satire about the runaway influence of television on the general public.
Peter Finch posthumously won an Academy Award for portraying Howard Beale, the fraying, manic
newscaster cynically used by ruthless executive Diane Christensen (Dunaway, who also won an Oscar)
to garner ratings. Digital.

Fri, Oct 30 at 7, 9:30pm

**About BAMcinématek**
The four-screen BAM Rose Cinemas (BRC) opened in 1998 to offer Brooklyn audiences alternative and independent
films that might not play in the borough otherwise, making BAM the only performing arts center in the country with two
mainstage theaters and a multiplex cinema. In July 1999, beginning with a series celebrating the work of Spike Lee,
BAMcinématek was born as Brooklyn’s only daily, year-round repertory film program. BAMcinématek presents new and rarely seen contemporary films, classics, work by local artists, and festivals of films from around the world, often with special appearances by directors, actors, and other guests. BAMcinématek has not only presented major retrospectives by major filmmakers such as Michelangelo Antonioni, Manoel de Oliveira, Shohei Imamura, Vincente Minnelli (winning a National Film Critics’ Circle Award prize for the retrospective), Kaneto Shindo, Luchino Visconti, and William Friedkin, but it has also introduced New York audiences to contemporary artists such as Pedro Costa and Apichatpong Weerasethakul. In addition, BAMcinématek programmed the first US retrospectives of directors Arnaud Desplechin, Nicolas Winding Refn, Hong Sang-soo, and Andrzej Zulawski. From 2006 to 2008, BAMcinématek partnered with the Sundance Institute and in June 2009 launched BAMcinemaFest, a 16-day festival of new independent films and repertory favorites with 15 NY feature film premieres; the seventh annual BAMcinemaFest ran from June 17—28, 2015.

**Credits**
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**General Information**
BAM Howard Gilman Opera House, BAM Rose Cinemas, and BAMcafé are located in the Peter Jay Sharp building at 30 Lafayette Avenue (between St Felix Street and Ashland Place) in the Fort Greene neighborhood of Brooklyn. BAM Harvey Theater is located two blocks from the main building at 651 Fulton Street (between Ashland and Rockwell Places). Both locations house Greenlight Bookstore at BAM kiosks. BAM Fisher, located at 321 Ashland Place, is the newest addition to the BAM campus and houses the Judith and Alan Fishman Space and Rita K. Hillman Studio. BAM Rose Cinemas is Brooklyn’s only movie house dedicated to first-run independent and foreign film and repertory programming. BAMcafé, operated by Great Performances, offers a bar menu and dinner entrées prior to BAM Howard Gilman Opera House evening performances. BAMcafé also features an eclectic mix of spoken word and live music for BAMcafé Live on Friday and Saturday nights with a bar menu available starting at 6pm.

Subway: 2, 3, 4, 5, Q, B to Atlantic Avenue – Barclays Center (2, 3, 4, 5 to Nevins St for Harvey Theater)
D, N, R to Pacific Street; G to Fulton Street; C to Lafayette Avenue
Train: Long Island Railroad to Atlantic Terminal – Barclays Center
Bus: B25, B26, B41, B45, B52, B63, B67 all stop within three blocks of BAM
Car: Commercial parking lots are located adjacent to BAM

For ticket information, call BAM Ticket Services at 718.636.4100, or visit BAM.org.