

Celluloid Indians: A History of Native Americans in Film



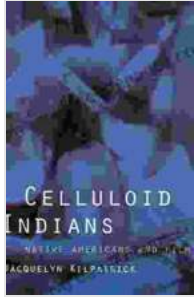
Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film by L.J. Shen

★★★★☆ 4.1 out of 5

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The Early Years: From Noble Savages to Bloodthirsty Warriors

Native Americans have been a part of American cinema since the very beginning. Some of the earliest films, such as *The Great Train Robbery* (1903) and *The Battle of Little Big Horn* (1909), featured Native Americans as noble savages or bloodthirsty warriors, respectively.

These early portrayals were often inaccurate and stereotypical, and they laid the foundation for the way that Native Americans would be represented in film for decades to come.





The Western Genre: Cowboys and Indians

The Western genre, which emerged in the 1910s, was one of the most popular genres of film in the United States for decades. Westerns typically featured cowboys and Indians as the main protagonists and antagonists, respectively, and they often perpetuated the same harmful stereotypes that had been established in earlier films.

Native Americans were often portrayed as one-dimensional characters who were either noble savages or bloodthirsty warriors. They were rarely given any agency or complexity, and their cultures and traditions were often reduced to a few simple tropes.



The Revisionist Western: A More Nuanced Approach

In the 1960s and 1970s, a new wave of filmmakers emerged who began to challenge the traditional stereotypes of Native Americans in film. Westerns such as *Little Big Man* (1970) and *A Man Called Horse* (1970) offered a more nuanced and realistic portrayal of Native American life.

These films featured Native American characters who were complex and flawed, and they explored the real-life struggles that Native Americans faced as they were forced to adapt to the changing world around them.



Contemporary Native American Cinema: Indigenous Voices

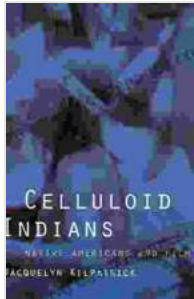
In recent years, there has been a growing movement of Native American filmmakers who are using film to tell their own stories. These films offer a

unique and authentic perspective on Native American life and culture, and they challenge the stereotypes that have been perpetuated by Hollywood for decades.

Some of the most acclaimed Native American films of recent years include *Smoke Signals* (1998), *Skins* (2002), and *Winter in the Blood* (2013). These films have received critical acclaim for their realistic portrayals of Native American life and their powerful storytelling.



The history of Native Americans in film is a complex and often problematic one. For decades, Native Americans were portrayed in stereotypical and inaccurate ways, and they were rarely given a voice in how they were represented. However, in recent years, there has been a growing movement of Native American filmmakers who are using film to tell their own stories and challenge the stereotypes that have been perpetuated by Hollywood for decades. These films offer a unique and authentic perspective on Native American life and culture, and they are an important part of the ongoing struggle for Native American rights.



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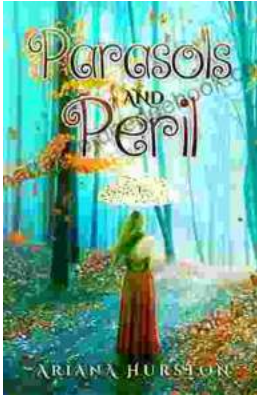
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