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## DVD Review: *Black Hollywood: Blaxploitation And Advancing An Independent Black Cinema*



Author: [Glen Boyd](#) — Published: [May 24, 2009 at 1:22 am](#)

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Originally released in 1984, *Black Hollywood: Blaxploitation And Advancing An Independent Black Cinema* is an often fascinating documentary focusing on the history of black filmmakers and actors attempting to break through the color barrier in Hollywood.

What makes this DVD so fascinating -- especially when viewed now through the time tunnel of the present day -- is just how far we have actually come, yet how very far we still have to go.

There is an eerily prophetic sense you get when watching veteran actors like Jim Brown in the interviews here talk about the breakthroughs made by Micheal Jackson in music for example. In this segment, Brown proposes that the film industry should adopt a similar model as the record industry of that time -- where careers of musicians like Jackson were built from the ground up on black radio, and by black owned labels like Motown. As prophetic as Brown sounds here, he obviously could never have imagined the way that the internet would turn such models upside down just a few short years down the road.

Far more interesting is the way this documentary goes deep into the history of black cinema, and how pioneers from Dorothy Dandridge to Sidney Poitier to Richard Pryor paved the way for the (at least comparatively speaking) more color blind images of African-Americans we see portrayed in cinema today.

As a white man who has always enjoyed African-American culture -- both in movies, and especially in music -- I have to admit that this documentary opened my eyes up quite a bit. Interspersed between interviews with people like Brown, comedian Paul Mooney, actress Alfre Woodard, and a rare interview with Lorenzo Tucker (who, as Hollywood's first black leading man was fashioned as the "Black Valentino"), is a fascinating history of how blacks were portrayed in cinema through a series of historical film clips.

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**Black Hollywood: Blaxploitation and Advancing An Independent Black Cinema**

**Release date:** 2009-05-19

**Running time:** 75 minutes

**Publisher:** Screen Edge