



**BIG SCREEN CLASSICS**

# Boyz N the Hood

*+ pre-recorded intro by film critic Leila Latif (Wednesday 4 August only)*

With so much of John Singleton's film raging against the curtailing of life, it was painful to read of his sudden, recent death, aged just 51. His first feature is still powerful and relevant as it follows Tre (Cuba Gooding Jr.) in his mission to leave LA's Crenshaw ghetto. Charting the despair and tit-for-tat reality of gang life, it also gave Ice Cube a belter of a role as Doughboy, and a place on the soundtrack. Laurence Fishburne and Angela Bassett also make their mark as Tre's parents, fully committed to a future for which they must fight.

**bfi.org.uk**

*'One out of every twenty-one Black American males will be murdered in their lifetime. Most will die at the hands of another Black male.'*

These two stark statements trigger John Singleton's 1991 feature debut *Boyz N the Hood*. A hugely personal account of the type of gang violence that continues to blight so many urban communities, and was so prevalent during the then-film school graduate's own upbringing in the South Central Los Angeles 'hood, Singleton's achievement provided not only catharsis for himself but a film that resonated around the world.

Despite several incidents of violence during early US screenings – clearly unprompted by the film's clear-eyed yet compassionate outlook – *Boyz N the Hood* became one of the most acclaimed and the most profitable film of that year, garnering dual Oscar nominations for Singleton as writer and director (the youngest filmmaker to do so since Orson Welles). And it clearly, alongside Spike Lee's growing body of work and the same year's *New Jack City*, *Straight Out of Brooklyn* and *Daughters of the Dust*, helped usher in the 1990s resurgence in black filmmaking.

While the film doesn't have the bravura, in-your-face stylings of Lee's 1989 *Do the Right Thing* – a film that galvanised Singleton himself to tell his story – *Boyz N the Hood* very consciously eschews more extravagant techniques to focus on its story. Which shouldn't suggest that it's lacking in its own cinematic ambitions. Indeed, it's incredibly impressive that Singleton, who had never made anything longer than Super 8 shorts before this, was able to express himself and his world so evocatively and with such sophistication first time out.

**Leigh Singer, bfi.org.uk, 27 October 2016**

John Singleton describes his impressive directorial debut as a film about 'boys becoming men', which pleads for 'African American men to take more responsibility for raising their children, especially the boys'. Certainly, the theme of paternal strength is a key element in Singleton's polemical narrative, in which each character's chances of survival are defined by the presence or absence of a sturdy father figure. 'I can't teach him how to be a man' declares Reva Styles as she hands her unruly child over to the character building custody of his father, Furious. 'That's your job'. This same obsession with an absence of guiding paternal power also underwrites Singleton's analysis of the inter-black rivalry which renders the 'hood dwellers impotent in

their struggle for better living conditions. Just as Doughboy and Ricky are separated by the ghosts of their divided fathers, so the 'hood dwellers turn upon each other because they have no common cultural leadership. Similarly, despite his brash pronouncements to the contrary, the adolescent Tre is revealed mid-way through the film to harbour a deep-seated fear of intercourse stemming from his terror of becoming a father – which he views as the ultimate burden.

Within this framework, Furious Styles serves not only as a father to Tre, but also as a prototype leader who will conduct his people out of the wilderness. His apparently unprovoked and prosaic address to the local citizens, wherein he lectures on the evils of white 'gentrification', may seem to jar with the harsh naturalism adopted elsewhere. But thematically it is entirely consistent; Furious is the voice of salvation, the absent father returning to restore order to the cultural chaos.

Directed with bold certainty by Singleton, *Boyz N the Hood* thus emerges less as a portrayal of the rigours of urban life than a romantic elegy to the stable, patriarchal family unit. The film clearly addresses itself to young audiences, or more specifically young *male* audiences. Singleton (it seems) is preaching not only to the fathers who currently fail their offspring, but to the children themselves, urging them to become the better fathers of the future.

**Mark Kermode, *Sight and Sound*, November 1991**

Furious Styles is the name of the role model/father figure in John Singleton's *Boyz N the Hood*. The name tells you what drives Singleton's art: a sense of commitment and an interest in technical display. He turns the typical coming-of-age drama into an expression of the contemporary social pressures affecting young black American males, while also showing what sparks their imaginative lives. To realise how unusual this is for modern Hollywood, one need only contrast *Boyz N the Hood* with the 80s Brat Pack films: in the former, black teens see life in terms of survival; in the latter, white teens see it in terms of fun.

Singleton is the most successful of the new directors at translating the swing and heat of hip-hop culture into cinematic language. Set in the culture of gang war and hardcore rap of strife-ridden South Central Los Angeles, *Boyz N the Hood* follows four males from their pre-teen years to post-adolescence. One of the stars is Ice Cube (a former member of the rap group NWA), whose manner, both folksy and surly, is a key to the film's matter-of-fact view of suffering. Singleton turns the sexual confession of lead character Tre (Cuba Gooding Jr), a 'nice boy', into a leering, hyped-up fantasy; the scene of older boys intimidating younger boys becomes a primal male myth, both intense and pathetic.

***Sight & Sound*, August 1991**

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**BOYZ N THE HOOD**

*Directed by:* John Singleton  
©: Columbia Pictures Industries, Inc.  
*Presented by:* Columbia Pictures  
*A Columbia Pictures release*  
*Produced by:* Steve Nicolaides  
*Production Associate:* Kendrick J. Wallace  
*Production Accountant:* Katha Jones  
*Production Co-ordinator:* Linda Allan-Folsom  
*Unit Production Manager:* Steve Nicolaides  
*Location Manager:* Ernest Kojo Lewis  
*1st Assistant Director:* Don Wilkerson  
*Script Supervisor:* Dawn Gilliam  
*Casting by:* Jaki Brown  
*Screenplay:* John Singleton  
*Director of Photography:* Charles Mills  
*Camera Operator:* Tony Gaudioz  
*1st Assistant Camera:* Robert A. Torres  
*Key Grip:* Chuck Wells  
*Still Photographer:* D. Stevens  
*Special Effects:* Special Effects Unlimited  
*Edited by:* Bruce Cannon  
*Art Director:* Bruce Bellamy  
*Set Decorator:* Kathryn Peters  
*Property Master:* Willie J. Thompson  
*Men's Wardrobe:* Darryle Johnson  
*Women's Wardrobe:* Shirlene Williams  
*Make-up:* Marietta A. Carter  
*Hairstylist:* Sterfon Demings  
*Titles/Opticals by:* Cinema Research Corporation  
*Original Music Score by:* Stanley Clarke  
*Music Supervisor:* Raoul Roach  
*Music Editor:* Jamie Gelb  
*Sound Mixer:* Veda Campbell  
*Boom Operator:* Michael Anthony Patillo  
*Re-recording Mixers:* Paul Massey, Don DiGirolamo, Bob Glass  
*Supervising Sound Editor:* Patrick Drummond  
*Drive-by Sequence/Beats:* DJ Pooh  
*Stunt Co-ordinator:* Bob Minor

**Cast**

Larry Fishburne (*Furious Styles*)  
Ice Cube (*Doughboy Baker*)  
Cuba Gooding Jr (*Tre Styles*)  
Nia Long (*Brandi*)  
Morris Chestnut (*Ricky Baker*)  
Tyra Ferrell (*Mrs Baker*)  
Angela Bassett (*Reva Styles*)  
Meta King (*Brandi's mom*)  
Whitman Mayo (*the old man*)  
Hudhail Al-Amir (*Scholastic Aptitude Test man*)  
Lloyd Avery II (*knucklehead 2*)  
Mia Bell (*female club member*)  
Lexie Bigham (*Mad Dog*)  
Kenneth A. Brown (*little Chris*)  
Nicole Brown (*Brandi aged 10*)  
Ceal (*Sheryl*)  
Darneicea Corley (*Keisha*)  
John Cothran Jr (*Lewis Crump*)  
Na' Blonka Durden (*Trina*)  
Ousaun Elam (*utility stunt 1*)  
Susan Falcon (*Mrs Olaf*)  
Jesse Ferguson (*Officer Coffey*)  
Dedrick D. Gobert (*Dooky*)  
Redge Green (*Chris*)  
Kareen J. Grimes (*ice cream truck kid*)  
Tammy Hanson (*Rosa*)  
Valentino Harrison (*Bobby age 10*)  
Desi Arnez Hines III (*Tre age 10*)  
Baha Jackson (*Doughboy age 10*)  
Dee Dee Jacobs (*Renee*)  
Kirk Kinder (*Officer Graham*)  
Regina King (*Shalika*)  
Leaneal Lane (*gangster 2*)  
Donovan McCrary (*Ricky age 10*)  
Don Nelson (*gangster 1*)  
Jimmy Lee Newman (*kid*)  
Malcolm Norrington (*knucklehead 1*)  
Alysia M. Rogers (*Shanice*)  
Esther Scott (*Tisha's grandmother*)  
Leonette Scott (*Tisha*)  
Vonte Sweet (*Ric Rock*)  
Baldwin C. Sykes (*Monster*)  
Raymond D. Turner (*Ferris*)  
Yolanda Whittaker (*Yo-Yo*)  
Gerard Williams (*utility stunt 2*)

USA 1991©  
112 mins

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**BIG SCREEN CLASSICS****Thelma and Louise**

Sun 1 Aug 18:00; Sat 14 Aug 20:35; Sat 28 Aug 20:20

**Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice**

Mon 2 Aug 20:40; Fri 13 Aug 20:45; Wed 18 Aug 17:50 (+ pre-recorded intro by Julie Lobalzo Wright, University of Warwick); Mon 23 Aug 14:30

**Bright Star**

Tue 3 Aug 20:30; Fri 27 Aug 17:50; Mon 30 Aug 18:10

**Boyz N the Hood**

Wed 4 Aug 17:45 (+ pre-recorded intro by film critic Leila Latif);  
Mon 9 Aug 20:50

**Les Demoiselles de Rochefort (The Young Ladies of Rochefort)**

Thu 5 Aug 17:50; Thu 26 Aug 17:40

**The Big Lebowski**

Fri 6 Aug 20:45; Mon 16 Aug 20:50; Wed 25 Aug 14:15

**Only Angels Have Wings**

Sat 7 Aug 12:00; Tue 24 Aug 14:15; Tue 31 Aug 20:30

**A Farewell to Arms**

Sun 8 Aug 12:20; Fri 20 Aug 14:30; Wed 25 Aug 18:00  
(+ pre-recorded intro by Geoff Andrew, Programmer-at-large)

**Matewan**

Tue 10 Aug 14:15; Sun 15 Aug 18:20; Sat 21 Aug 12:20

**Cutter's Way**

Wed 11 Aug 17:50 (+ pre-recorded intro by Geoff Andrew, Programmer-at-large); Tue 17 Aug 14:30; Fri 20 Aug 20:50; Fri 27 Aug 20:50

**The New World**

Thu 12 Aug 14:30; Sun 22 Aug 12:00

**Big Wednesday**

Thu 19 Aug 17:50; Sun 29 Aug 18:10

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Programme notes and credits compiled by the BFI Documentation Unit

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