

ABSTRACT

Film as an Alternative Medium: the portrayal of Jamaica's street culture in local film productions

Arline Michele James

This paper classifies indigenous Jamaican film productions as an alternative medium. Traditionally within most societies, the media including the film medium reflect and perpetuate dominant hegemony. Contrary to this, locally produced Jamaican movies popularize the street culture of Jamaica by representing in film, the lives and experiences of the masses - the counterculture in the society. As a medium, local films are an alternative not only to mainstream media but also to films on Jamaica produced by foreigners and those merely shot on site in Jamaica which tend for the most part to depict the social reality of the dominant culture. In a society divided by the "haves" and the "have-nots", these local film productions generate controversy among those whose ideological preferences they fail to promote. Although the re-presentation of street culture in local films mirrors the social ethos of the time, one of the two Jamaicas opts for the portrayal of a more pleasant image of the country, at the expense of perpetuating a distorted social reality of Jamaica in film. The ideological processes at work both on and off the screen are clearly visible as each group fights for hegemonic dominance. Local film therefore becomes a battleground for competing or contradictory positions. Those in opposition to dominant hegemony who choose to de-construct their social reality to re-construct it in ways which are beneficial to them present a clear challenge to Marxist doctrine on ideology.