

ABSTRACT

Caribbean Cinema: Cultural Articulations, Historical Formation, and Film Practices.

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Film has been integral to the economic, social and cultural development of the Caribbean. The image of the Caribbean has been shaped by film and there have been hundreds of foreign films that have been filmed in or are about the Caribbean. The foreign producers simply exploited the region's natural beauty and tropical scenery and the use of the Caribbean to depict any exotic location continues to the present. The Caribbean functions as a visual backdrop for films about such themes as voodoo, pirates or drug trafficking.

The Caribbean's main association with film has been that of consumers of foreign, mainly Hollywood films. Caribbean people have been avid followers of such films and a number of Caribbean writers have commented on the response by Caribbean audiences

to going to the cinema and/or have included references to films in their work. Film has also captured the local imagination and has been featured in such popular cultural expressions as calypso, carnival and the steelband in Trinidad and Tobago.

Film screenings were held in the Caribbean within a little more than a year after the emergence of film in 1895 and soon led to the development of cinemas throughout the region. There were a few pioneering local film directors, especially in Cuba and Puerto Rico, although few in the English speaking Caribbean. However, there were a number of actors who have made significant contributions to the international film industry.

The journey to self-representation has been a long one. It was only in the period of the 1950s to 1970s, that the Caribbean has begun to produce films on a more consistent basis; first documentaries made mainly by Government Film Units and later independently produced feature films. These have helped to reflect an emerging Caribbean film aesthetic and the potential for a Caribbean film industry.

Keywords: Bruce Rodney Paddington; Caribbean cultural heritage; Caribbean film; the visual arts; the performing arts; personalia Caribbeana.