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A Response to Melvin Van Peebles’ *Classified X*

Melvin Van Peebles’ *Classified X* was an eye-opening experience for me. It is every bit of harsh as it is true: black people have always faced discrimination and ridicule in the American film industry. Not just in the age of Jim Crow either, it goes all the way to the turn of the millennia and even to this very day. Peebles makes it known that the archetypes that black actors had to fulfill changed depending on the era, even at times of great racial conflict and civil protest, with the blaxploitation movie era starting as a result of Peebles’ own film made during the racial tensions of the 70s (*Classified X* 45:00-46:45). It’s honestly revolting how studio executives took advantage of such an important time to churn out box office success, even looking at it from a business perspective it’s dehumanizing and ineffective in the long run.

What really sticks with me is the fact that Peebles states that this appropriation still exists today. There have been numerous controversies concerning black actors being harassed or taken advantage of by studios, take for example the abuse of Warner Bros. to Ray Fisher during the production of Justice League (Nebens). This problem still persists today, and Van Peebles had identified this problem so long ago but even after his passing it still lives on. *Classified X* is more than a documentary I would recommend, I would urge anyone going into film to watch it.

Works Cited

Nebens, Richard. “Justice League's Ray Fisher Calls out Warner Bros.. Exec after They Lose Their Job.” *The Direct*, The Direct, 31 Aug. 2022, https://thedirect.com/article/justice-league-ray-fisher-warner-bros-executive.

Peebles, Melvin Van. *Classified X*. La Sept ARTE, 1998.