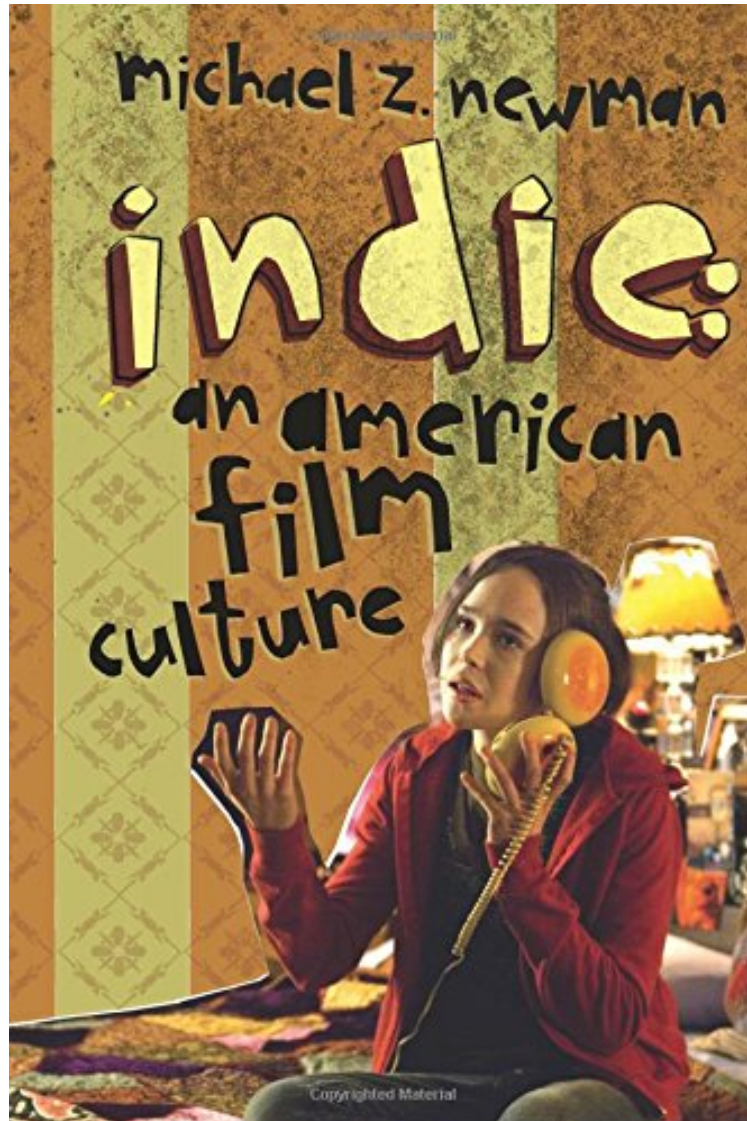


## Indie: An American Film Culture (Film and Culture Series)

Michael Z. Newman Ph.D.

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#1216442 in Books Columbia University Press 2011-04-04Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 8.90 x .70 x 6.00l, .83 #File Name: 0231144652304 pagesColumbia University Press | File size: 22.Mb

**Michael Z. Newman Ph.D. :** **Indie: An American Film Culture (Film and Culture Series)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Indie: An American Film Culture (Film and Culture Series):

America's independent films often seem to defy classification. Their strategies of storytelling and representation range from raw, no-budget projects to more polished releases of Hollywood's "specialty" divisions. Yet understanding

American indies involves more than just considering films. Filmmakers, distributors, exhibitors, festivals, critics, and audiences all shape the art's identity, which is always understood in relation to the Hollywood mainstream. By locating the American indie film in the historical context of the "Sundance-Miramax" era (the mid-1980s to the end of the 2000s), Michael Z. Newman considers indie cinema as an alternative American film culture. His work isolates patterns of character and realism, formal play, and oppositionality and the functions of the festivals, art houses, and critical media promoting them. He also accounts for the power of audiences to identify indie films in distinction to mainstream Hollywood and to seek socially emblematic characters and playful form in their narratives. Analyzing films such as *Welcome to the Dollhouse* (1996), *Lost in Translation* (2003), *Pulp Fiction* (1994), and *Juno* (2007), along with the work of Nicole Holofcener, Jim Jarmusch, John Sayles, Steven Soderbergh, and the Coen brothers, Newman investigates the conventions that cast indies as culturally legitimate works of art. He binds these diverse works together within a cluster of distinct viewing strategies and invites a reevaluation of the difference of independent cinema and its relationship to class and taste culture.

Indie makes a significant contribution to the literature on American independent cinema, one that is likely to reshape debates and discussions for several years to come. By broadening the definition of independent cinema beyond simple industrial formulations, Newman charts the contours of 'indie' as a particular taste culture involving particular structures of distribution, consumption, and critical reception. By showing how companies built a niche audience of upscale consumers by targeting their "indie" sensibilities, Newman's book beautifully captures the multidimensional quality of American independent cinema in the nineties and 'naughts': its formal play, multicultural appeal, and 'branding' as off-Hollywood product. (Jeff Smith, University of Wisconsin, author of *The Sounds of Commerce: Marketing Popular Film Music*) Quirky, 'outside the zombie mainstream,' authentic, alternative, playful, self-conscious: these are terms used to define 'indie' cinema. In this insightful and cogent book, Michael Z. Newman gathers together a set of American films produced since the mid-1980s and considers them as a social art world: films created in a network of festivals and critical praise that collectively make particular viewing requests to elite movie-goers. As an intelligent approach to grappling with this complex phenomenon, Newman's argument is highly successful. (Janet Staiger, University of Texas, Austin, and author of *Media Reception Studies*) Michael Z. Newman captures the very essence of American independent cinema during the 'Miramax-Sundance' years. Through an emphasis on the viewing strategies that independent films invite their audiences to utilize, his study delves into the core of what makes this type of cinema distinct while also revealing the connective tissue behind the culture that produces and consumes it. Thorough and extremely engaging, *Indie* is a most welcome addition to the study of American independent film. (Yannis Tzioumakis, author of *American Independent Cinema: An Introduction*)...this concrete, objective study makes an important contribution to the ongoing conversation. Highly recommended. (Choice) About the Author Michael Z. Newman is an assistant professor of media studies in the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He blogs at [zigzagger.blogspot.com](http://zigzagger.blogspot.com).