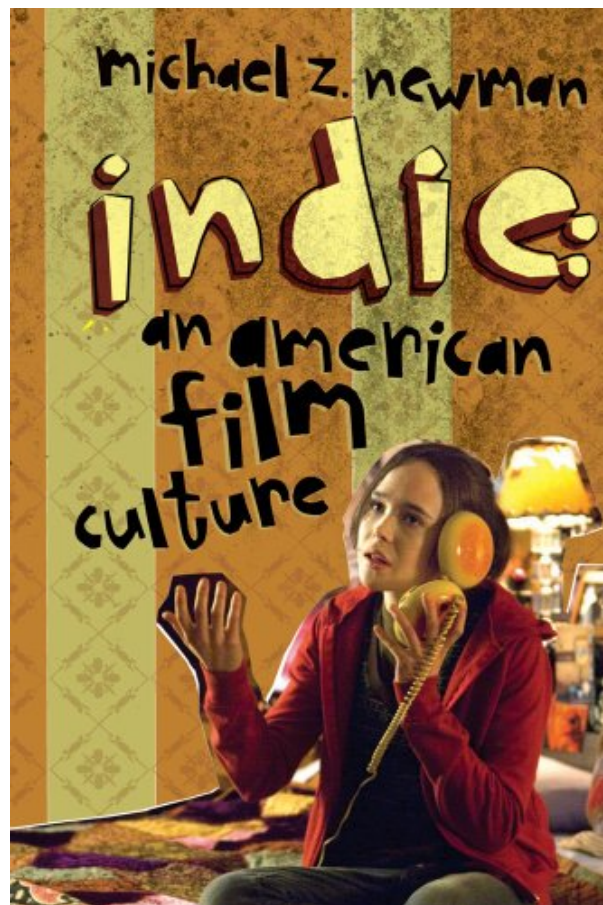
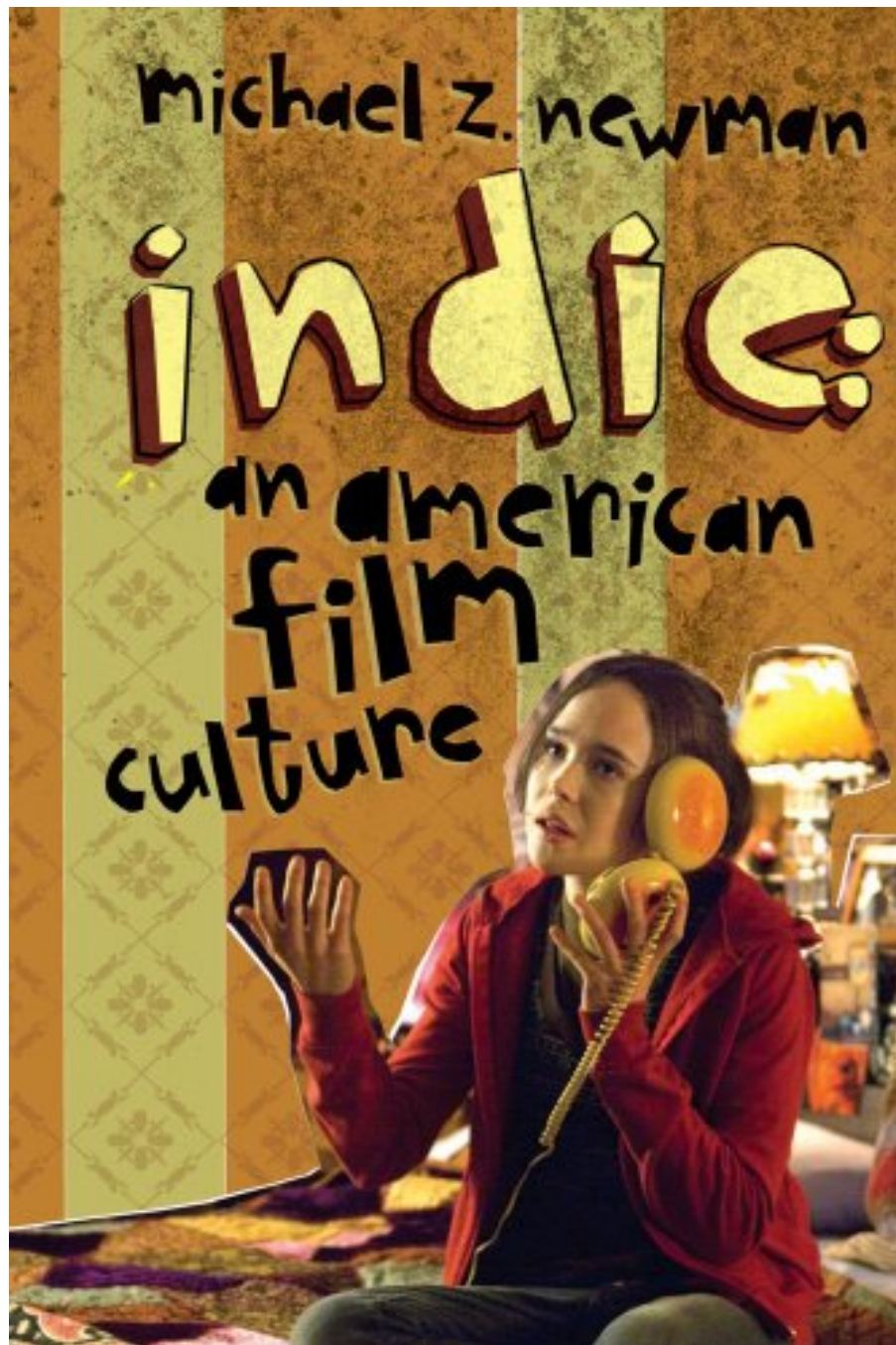


**INDIE: AN AMERICAN FILM CULTURE
(FILM AND CULTURE SERIES) BY MICHAEL
Z. NEWMAN**



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Review

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*)

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(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 zigzigger.blogspot.com.

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From *Stranger than Paradise* (1984) to *Synecdoche, New York* (2008), America's independent films often seem to defy classification. Their strategies of storytelling and representation vary widely, and they range from raw, no-budget productions to the more polished releases of Hollywood's "specialty" divisions. Understanding American indies involves more than just considering films. Filmmakers, distributors, exhibitors, festivals, critics, and audiences play a role in the art's identity, which is always understood in relation to the Hollywood mainstream.

By locating the American indie 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 in these films and the function of festivals, art houses, and critical media in promoting them. He accounts for the power of audiences to distinguish indie films from 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 and sustain these films' appeal. In doing so, he not only binds these diverse works together within a cluster of distinct viewing strategies but also invites readers to reevaluate the difference of independent cinema, as well as its relationship to class and taste culture.

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