D.W Griffith

By 1908, Griffith had entered the fledgling world of moviemaking. He did acting work for the New York City film companies Edison and Biograph and went on to become a director of hundreds of shorts for the latter company, working with actors like Lionel Barrymore, Mary Pickford and the Gish sisters. He started to develop two-reel works and eventually made the four-reel film *Judith of Bethulia*. ("Four-reel" meant the movie could play for an hour.) At Biograph, Griffith was highly innovative with his filmmaking techniques, utilizing **cross-cutting, close-ups and fade outs to distinctive effect, cultivating a deeper emotional Milieu.**

**Directing 'Birth of a Nation'**

By 1914, Griffith had left the company and worked as a director and head of production with Reliance-Majestic. He independently directed ***Birth of a Nation***, released in 1915 and telling the story of the Civil War and Reconstruction era. Adapted from the book *The Clansmen*, the work was seen as the **first U.S. blockbuster** and has been lauded for its pioneering storytelling forms, greatly influencing modern moviemaking and shaping ideas around audience cultivation.

**Racist Themes**

*Nation*, however, was **blatantly racist and distorted history**, with its demeaning depictions of African Americans and a storyline that positioned the creation of the **Ku Klux Klan** as a means of vengeance over a woman's death. The film earned much criticism from a variety of avenues, including the NAACP, and riots broke out during showings. Over the decades, *Nation* has continued to spur outrage and dialogue.

*http://www.biography.com/people/dw-griffith-9321016*