

Grier, Pam (1949-) Encyclopedia Article

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In the early to mid-1970s, American actress Pam Grier emerged as a tough heroine in the genre of "blaxploitation" films. With Hollywood's history of relegating African Americans to demeaning roles and women to love interests or other support positions, Grier quickly stood out as a groundbreaker. Though she got her start in "B" movies such as *The Big Bird Cage* and *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls* in 1969, Grier soon rose to stardom playing grass roots vigilantes in *Coffy* (1972) and *Foxy Brown* (1974). Many critics faulted her films for their violence, sensationalism, and reliance on her attractive physique, but also recognized them as vanguard vehicles for portraying blacks as smart and self-sufficient, as well as giving women an important place as strong, confident, and active players. The rise in women's rights and civil rights at the time probably played a factor in the success of Grier's films.

Further Reading:

Smith, Jessie Carney, editor. *Notable Black American Women, Book II*. Detroit, Gale Research, 1996.

Speace, Geri. "Pam Grier." *Newsmakers 1998, Issue 3*. Detroit, Gale Research, 1998.