

'09 ATLFF - 10 Questions with Jim Dziura of NUMBER ONE WITH A BULLET

There are two scenes in Number One with a Bullet that encapsulate so much about the role guns and hip hop play in America culture. One is a series of shots set to classical music with various ages, races and sexes at shooting ranges firing everything from small caliber weapons to "cannons" that have the power to literally demolish cars in seconds. Everyone is smiling and having not just a good time, but a great time. The other is also near the opening, with B-Real of Cypress Hill. As he's leaving a gun shop, the other store patrons, most who look to be in their 20s--and wouldn't have been old enough to even know who B-Real was when Cypress Hill dropped their first album in 1991--approach him with a reverence that few folks who weren't raised in hip hop could fathom. Number One walks a very thin tight-rope with aplomb as it explores, with both sobriety and humor, the interplay between one of America's most influential art forms and America's gun culture.

- 1) If you could describe your film using only 3 words, what would they be? 1. Harrowing, enlightening, loud
- 2) Where do you see your film in 5 years? 2. It will be out on DVD probably within the year. The idea for the movie is so good (taking rappers who have been shot back to the scenes of the crimes) that there has been talk about a sequel.
- 3) Have you ever been to Atlanta? If so what's your favorite place to visit? If not, where would you like to visit? 3. I drove through Atlanta a couple years ago when I was helping Doug Pray make his truck driver film BIG RIG. I wish we could have stopped and I am eager to go back and truly visit. I will say that the skyline at night is beautiful.
- 4) What motivated you to make this film? 4. It was a foreign world to me- gangster rap, urban culture, gun violence, etc. So I was really excited to explore all of that. I was also attracted to the danger of the movie and the subject matter. And I love making movies.
- 5) If you premiered your film somewhere else, what was the one part of the film you were most nervous about audiences to reacting to? 5. Not one part, really. I think there is a fair amount of humor in the movie, which is an odd thing to consider, given the subject matter-, and I'm always curious to see whether audiences are receptive to that. I think sometimes when you go into a movie like this, you brace yourself against some of the heavier material you expect to encounter and it makes it hard to see the lighter moments. B Real has some great lines.
- 6) What's the one thing about your film you're most proud of? 6. We really immersed ourselves in the environments in which we were shooting, so the movie feels like it has a real identity. It feels like it is operating on the street level, whether that's in Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Denver or any of the numerous places we shot in between. And that sense of identity, that "feel," can be a hard thing to hit. I'm proud of that. I'm also proud of the choices we made when we were shooting- we took risks and made decisions to take the camera into places that are sometimes difficult to gain access to. Because we were bold, we came away with some compelling scenes.
- 7) What do you want Atlanta audiences to takeaway from the film? 7. I would love for it to spark conversations. The best screenings are the ones where it pours out onto the street afterward and people stand around talking about the issues the film brings up. But I never wanted this movie to feel like it has a "message." I wanted the movie to present the evidence to the audience and let the audience do a little work to come up with their own responses to that evidence. That allows the the members of the audience to internalize what they have seen and "own" their opinions about the issues. I also feel like there are no "right" or "wrong" answers when it comes to these issues. It is impossible for me to argue in absolutisms when it comes to this stuff. I don't have "the answers." I would also love for the audience to come away with a keen appreciation for me and my team's ability to make compelling films. And to tell their friends.
- 8) Someone has to go to the bathroom during your film, and they have to miss part of your film. Do they miss the beginning, the middle or the end? 8. You come prepared... <http://www.stadiumpal.com/>
- 9) Who are the directors, filmmakers or artists that most influenced you or your film? 9. 3 personal filmmaker influences off the top of my head...Terry Gilliam, Errol Morris, Walter Murch.
- 10) Who is the unsung hero of your film and why? 10. Everybody loves Mr. Bigg, the six-foot-six rapper with a fake eye embedded with diamonds. I think 40 Glocc may be an unsung hero, at least for me, as a filmmaker. He is perhaps one of the easier characters to rush to judgment about. He is very unapologetic about his positions. I appreciate his honesty and I feel that it adds great depth to the movie. And he is very human, whether you agree with him or not.

Jim Dziura - director Number One with a Bullet