

David Talbert First Sunday Interview

Contributed by The Diva
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3BlackChicks Review™... First Sunday - The Interviews (The Diva)

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David Talbert
Director and Writer of
First Sunday (2008)

Question: So you are just doing everything – this is your second movie.

David Talbert : Well first

Question: Your student movie...

David Talbert : Well yeah yeah my student movie “A woman like that” I should be thrown in directors jail for that one. I shot the whole movie like a play and everything was a Master Shot. I didn’t know what the hell I was doing.

Question:You done, theater, you’ve written a book; you’ve done television. You are a renaissance guy.

David Talbert : I’m just a brotha trying to pay for my wife’s AMEX bill.

Question:Why now and why this film?

David Talbert : You know it was just the right time and the right project. Right cast. I wrote it 4 years ago. We were just waiting for the right people to come along. And Cube. Cube is like Don Corleone. He is the Godfather of Urban Comedy. So when he came on board I knew it was the right time.

Question:How much of an impact has Tyler Perry’s success had on your decision to move into doing movies?

David Talbert : You know Tyler is popping his collar. He is making it happen. This particular film was sold and sent up to Sony before “Diary of a Mad Black Woman” even came out. I did this December of ‘04 and I think Diary came out in February of ‘05. But he’s doing his thing. He is opening up a lot of doors kinda like Spike did for cinema and opening up the door for a lot of different stories to be told. So is Denzel Washington and F. Gary Gray and Tim Story. It’s a really good time for black directors to tell their stories and different kinds of stories. If you look at it, you’ve got American Gangster – even though it wasn’t a black director, This Christmas, The Great Debaters, Why’d I Get Married, and First Sunday. This is a very eclectic group of films.

Question:How challenging was this to write knowing that it was a movie and not one of your plays?

David Talbert : Well good characters are good characters. Whether be on stage of film and that's what I focus on – good characters. Are the characters interesting enough to make me want to pay attention? Because I'll check out of movie in 15 minutes and I'm like "Why are you kidding me???" and my wife is like "don't start. Just don't start." I know when it's not going to go well and I'm like "uh Oh I gotta get outta here." My goal is to make sure that nobody says, "I gotta get up outta here!" early in the film.

Question:When you have comedians like Cube and Katt and Tracy and they have their own take on what is funny – how do you give them their own space?

David Talbert : You Katt, Tracey, Rickey Smiley – you can't out funny these people. They're built to make you laugh so my job is to the lob them ball. I have to get the ball as close to the net as possible. I don't have to score. I just have get the ball as close as possible and let them slam dunk. And Katt adlibs better than the best of them. He has like a machine gun full of jokes and you tell him to pull the trigger. That last court scene? I had him do my lines then I said, you know, I'm just going set up the camera and just you just let you riff. I'm going to do all the off camera lines, but you just go. Katt said "The Easter Suit with a Halloween shirt line" and "Miscreants? We are African American!" "infected? I'm not infected and I have papers to prove it!" That was Katt Williams riffin' and we were on the floor laughing! And of course all of it made the movie.

Question:How was it filming in your home town of Baltimore?

David Talbert : I love Baltimore I went to college there and they were so kind as to give me my degree. because god knows I didn't earn it at Morgan State. I wanted it to feel like real people not like some Hollywood glossy film. I wanted it to feel like any neighborhood, USA and Baltimore is a working class town. Our production company did a really good job, making the scenes make you feel like you were there.

Question:Let's talk about the inclusion of Ms. New York. How did that come about?

David Talbert : My wife is a reality show JUNKIE. There are only a few things I get to watch "Oprah, HGTV, Design on a Dime, I love New York and The Flavor of Love." And I was like "Please My God! Will you turn this off! And she was like "Just watch it!" and after a few minutes... it's a train wreck! It's a train wreck! So when it came time to cast the client, she was like you have to get New York! Just call the casting director and make it happen. So we called the casting director and she called Tiffani – who is one of the sweetest girls you'll ever meet. She is a sweet heart and she flew down and she had the rum and coke inside of a little container. She was having a good time. She was lit. And she was so emotional and she was "oh my god thank you!"

Question:Cuz she was drunk!

David Talbert : Yeah she was, but when she comes on the screen and everyone is like "are you serious??"

Question:Did you consider giving her more to do?

David Talbert : Yeah I like her! She and my wife are friends. And I like her. She might show up in another movie. She might be in Second Sunday.

Question:How is the transition from Theater Director to Film Director? Is it vastly different?

David Talbert : Yes it is. Film is a director's medium and play are a writer's medium. I used to directing from a persinium – a master shot. But with Film it only matters what the camera sees. It doesn't matter what I see. I can look it and say, "man that was hot!" but if the camera didn't see it or it was out of focus then the shot is jacked up. Or if there is a hair in the gate. I learned all of that. I mean there are so many things that can jack up a shot! I'm like man I love that! And the n the guy says oh it was out of focus and didn't you want to got out and choke somebody. We had a great D.P. but it's a technical medium and a collaborative medium. At any given time, you have like 15 experts at their chosen field on a film set and you only have to be an expert at what you are an expert at.. And what I was good at was getting performances out and leaned on the other people to help me with the stuff I'm still learning.

Question:Can you talk about the women in the film and integrating their stories?

David Talbert : Well when you grow up in a black church, you know the pastor's daughter is always the finest one. I don't know how it works out that way, but the pastor's daughter is always the tastiest one in church. And then Malinda with her cute self, we cast her then we spent \$9,000 on that dress. It's Dolce and Gabbana.

David Talbert : That thing was on fire and we wanted to let her so shine. And when she took that jacket off we were like "Are you serious!??? Well all right.." Regina Hall is one of the funniest comedic actresses in Hollywood, but I wanted to giver her a dramatic turn. And Loretta Devine is like everyone's favorite aunt. You just want to hug her, or be hugged by her.

Olivia Cole- let me tell you something. Olivia Cole is a treasure. She lives in Mexico and she only comes into town 1 week a year to do auditions. What she gets she gets and what she doesn't oh well and her agent tells you she is here only for one week. We happened to be casting during her week in the country.

Question:Wow. Mexico? Did she say why?

David Talbert : Guadalajara to be exact. She just said she was over it. Over the business.

Question:For the record, explain what first Sunday is.

David Talbert : First Sunday is when you have the first communion and more people are in attendance so that's when you raise the most money. It's usually when you read all the reports and lets the congregation know how the church is doing. So first Sunday is a big deal. I wanted to have an authentic church service in that first church scene. You some of those church scenes with people doing black flips down the aisle. That's just not real. You know who does that? And it makes a mockery of the church experience. And I wanted to do an authentic scene of first Sunday with communion wine so Tracy and Cube could be drinking it and get drunk from it.

Question:The theme of a fatherless child runs throughout the movie, what was the inspiration for that? And how important do you think it is to show on screen, men who take responsibility?

David Talbert : Well I grew up in a single parented household. My mother raised me. And never had my father walked me to school or showed me that kind of affection. I think film is such a powerful medium and images are so very important and that was important to me. I wanted show a brotha from the hood who loves his son. Even though he might be on the wrong side of the law, if he does one thing right, he cares about his son. Walking him to school. Hugging him. Kissing him. Those are powerful images. I think it will resonate in the community and I think it's important to show those images. I mean all you ever hear about is deadbeat dads who are in jail or on drugs and such, but I wanted to show this positive side of this character who sometimes does wrong things.

Question:Do you think it makes a difference when pop culture reflects a positive attitude?

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David Talbert : es I do. I think it makes a difference when pop culture respects and shows different aspects. In any culture there are pluses and minuses. But so often we only see the minuses and we don't have anything to balance it. It's like going into Baskin Robin's and only having World Class Chocolate. And that's all they have and even if you hate World Class Chocolate, if you want Ice Cream that's what you have to have. What I'm trying to do is give you Strawberry Shortcake too. It touches lots of people. I get lots of responses from women and Fathers. They say it touched them. And I want my father to see it. Maybe he'll walk me to school. Do you think its too late?

Question:No. never too late.

David Talbert : That would be pitiful if he just showed up. He came to L.A> to spend a few days with me and me and my wife have these 10 speeds. And he and I were riding up and down the street. Isn't that pitiful? An Ashy 40 year old black man. He's as old as dirt 62 and we're riding 10 speeds up and down the street. but still you are never to old to wanna hang out with your father.

Question:What's next.?

David Talbert : I'm still basking in this, honestly. I'm still pinching myself. I'm still planning on going to every theater in Los Angeles when opens up and being ridiculous by buying a ticket to every show. Is that pitiful? I'm still gonna do it.

Question:Was it expensive getting the rights to the music?

David Talbert : Not if you write a check and Sony has big check books. And it was fortunate for me to be with a studio and specifically Clint Culpepper – the whitest unofficial black man or the blackest unofficial white man. But he is blacker than the average bear and he loves black film and he champions them and he put his money where his mouth is.

Question:Would you ever want to do this on the stage?

David Talbert : Nah this is cinema. Some stories are for cinema and some are for stage.

Question:Are you going to be taking something on the road soon?

David Talbert : At the end of the year.

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