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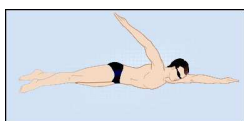
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We Fun director Matthew Robison
Bringing Atlanta Music to the spotlight

By Pine Magazine Staff
posted: Tuesday, 04 November 2008

When bands from a particular town become popular, the whole musical community benefits. Think R.E.M. and Athens, Nirvana and Seattle, Joy Division and Manchester. Not only is there a heightened awareness by touring bands and labels that the newly popular town is the place to watch but, most importantly, bands from that town are given the chance to showcase their own talent for a widening audience.

Here in Atlanta, we now have those benefits. With the swelling popularity of Mastodon, Deerhunter and the Black Lips has come more attention to our scene, an attention evidenced by the recently-filmed documentary, "We Fun." A formidable amount of bands are showcased, and there is a general excitement that, even if it is a snapshot of some of the city's current musical offerings that could soon change, our town is finally getting its due.

Now we'll admit, there's been some grumbling among a few bands that the acts were a bit cherry picked, and leans more towards the Die Slaughterhaus and Rob's House collectives. Compilation CD "We No Fun" somewhat embodies that thought that by including bands that weren't necessarily included in "We Fun." But director Matthew Robison feels otherwise, explaining in the below interview that the choice in bands wasn't as simple as a simple pick of the litter but instead a situation of shooting what they were shown.

But we still asked about the cherry picking anyway, something that might come across as bias. We promise we aren't; we just want to know what's the what. But even so, we realize -- as do many others -- the benefits of this film will likely outweigh any criticism from bands that weren't showcased. After all, wouldn't everyone benefit from the attention?

You'll have your chance to see the documentary soon. In the meantime, read the interview below.

Pine Magazine/Holly Lang: Tell us about We Fun. How'd the project come about?

We Fun/Matthew Robison: Chris Dortch (producer) approached me late last summer. A lot of the records he was into were coming out of Atlanta. Without much interest on my part, he got the ball rolling by contacting a lot of these bands. As he developed relationships, I slowly came around to shooting. At first we were hoping for a budget, but soon realized we were on our own. And we just kept shooting. So it came from Chris Dortch's imagination.

While it is true that we at first meant to make a comprehensive documentary, it became apparent that it would be impossible to tack on 'Atlanta, GA: Inside/Out'. While we still like to think of We Fun as a companion piece to Athens, even Bill Cody [Athens, GA: Inside/Out and We Fun producer] agreed that the city is too big. It would take a miniseries, which we'll be happy to do if someone wants to pay for it.

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PM: Have you done similar projects? What's your background in filmmaking?

WF: I've worked in production off and on for many years. I worked on 'Lock Up' (the prison show on MSNBC). I produced and directed a nature series, made several music videos for both major and independent labels, and I produced a documentary called Silver Jew with David Berman of the Silver Jews as its' subject.

PM: About how long did the movie take to make?

WF: We started shooting on Halloween 2007. We were still shooting two weeks ago, and we are editing as I write.

PM: What was the criteria for the bands you picked?

WF: I was asked to direct, not pick out bands. After shooting began, I concentrated on the story that was in front of me. Conflict and human relationships. It's a bit more complicated than simply "picking bands".

PM: There's been some criticism of you guys not including bands that are often overlooked and instead going for bands that are already popular and not really reflective of the Atlanta scene, and that those bands you picked were easy choices because their popularity will lend well to marketing the movie. What's your response to that?

WF: I'm unaware of such criticism. First, no one tells me what kind of movie to make. Filmmaking is storytelling. We followed a story, and we got a good one. It's a bit early for criticism given that the film is incomplete. Anyone criticizing art they haven't seen is not someone I care to know. I'm not responsible for a film someone else has in their imagination. Anyone saying that we made decisions based on marketing is a fool; they simply don't realize that there is almost NO money in documentary. We slept on floors and couches for an entire year of shooting, so I don't think I'm caught up too much in marketing. I was just chasing a story with a camera. We shot what we were shown. Here's a tip for bands who want more exposure: When a movie is shooting in your backyard, contact the filmmakers. There's a good chance they'll let you vent your disapproval for the camera if not feature you in some other way.

PM: Do you feel you did cherry pick some of the more popular, often talked about bands instead of more overlooked acts? Do you feel that you guys stayed within a certain clique or do you feel you chose bands that are outside the specific, small scene that includes bands like the Black Lips and Deerhunter?

WF: Just because an individual calls a certain zip code home doesn't mean that person is entitled to anything. Territorial talk about the "real Atlanta" is small-minded. A city is a changing landscape of ideas and people. We stopped to film in a certain part of the world and shot what we came in contact with. And if that means certain local bands took a backseat to someone like King Khan, I'm absolutely fine with that. The reason studies are made with information from a group of people rather than the entirety of humanity is because it is believed and often proved that trends affecting the group are very close to those affecting the whole. So to ask me to make a film featuring everybody with a little street cred is asking me to make a four-hour disaster flick with a lot of disembodied featurettes. Besides, isn't it a bit conformist to believe in territory and borders and the like? Defending one's 'musical turf'? I think the world is bigger than that. And on the other hand, isn't it somewhat inconsistent to call oneself 'punk' and then ask "Why don't people like me?" Because I can tell you that "criticism", if any, is coming from that camp. I will say that I know what it's like to be in a band and work for years only to see nepotism, novelty acts and the Next New Thing get more attention. I live in Nashville after all. In the case of "We Fun," I believe we captured a lot of amazing talent. And Fun.

PM: Do you feel Atlanta has a cohesive music scene?

WF: Many layers and much happening. Lots of people. So yes.

Tags: [We Fun](#), [Atlanta independent music](#), [Deerhunter](#), [Black Lips](#)

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