

Jay-Z Talks To Michael Gonzales



On October 2nd, I met with Jay-Z to discuss life, hip-hop and American Gangster for the cover of the second-annual 20 Interviews issue of STOP SMILING magazine. Below are excerpts from that interview.

ON RACISM IN GANGSTER MOVIES

SS: Black people love Italian gangster movies, but many of these films are blatant in their racism. One of the very first words Jack Nicholson says in Martin Scorsese's The Departed is "niggers." Why are people willing to overlook this?

JZ: There are certain things the audience hooks on to. Yes, the character might be racist, but he's still against the odds as he struggles against the world. However brief his rein might be, he's living the good life and that's what Black kids hone in on. They don't pay attention to the racism, because racism is everywhere. We've learned to look past that.

SS: What about the word using the word "nigger" in rhymes?

JZ: For me, it's all about the intention. I could call you an "apple tree," but if I say it with venom and hate, that is what it's about. It's not the word that has the power, it's the person. All of this came about because the Imus discussion turned into a hip-hop discussion. [read more](#)