

From Little X To Director X (Interview)



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Little X’s urban music visuals look like portable action films and gratifying musicals. Whether capturing Usher’s elaborate footwork or Nicki Minaj’s amorous kung fu dreams, X has been able to stick to the storyline and make a song something fun to hear and see. This year he announced a minor name change from Little X to Director X and an immediate focus on shooting commercials. He has a reticent temperament in regards to his exact moves preferring to take Sun Tzu’s advice to never let your enemy know your design. But he is ardent and accessible when he discusses the music video trade and the creative capacities of artists like Minaj. The director’s 10 plus years in the fickle entertainment business gives his words the authority of a media sage.

What’s the difference between Little X and Director X?

A name. I changed my costume. I had the red cape and now I got like a black one. My red and blue costume didn’t translate well into movies. Besides that everything’s the same, same super powers.

What should a good music video do for the artist and the viewer?

A good music video should really translate the song on one level. And then on another level it should translate the

artist. Take a really good video like Missy's "I Can't Stand The Rain." Here's an artist who especially at that time did not fit the mold on a bunch of different levels but the video and the song brought those together. People were like "OK it works" and just embraced her they embraced the music and it made a megastar out of Missy. Who's to say what that would've been if the video had gone a different way. Really out of the box thinking created that new megastar.

Is there anyone you have worked with that you have been able to translate?

"You Got It Bad" was a moment for Usher where the audience needed to understand him. I remember everything that went down and was going on at that moment. It was a pretty big deal it was a phenomenon.

How important is the dance element in urban music videos?

Dance is important you know especially the music that pervades now and if you're a dance artist you have to have dance. There's always something energizing about a person dancing.

What was your work experience with Nicki Minaj like?

Nicki is real creative. She's real creative and pushes for better work. That work that means something that connects more. She's not one to do the party video she's really looking to do something. She's a throwback to those artists like the Madonnas and the Michael Jacksons and Lenny Kravitz. There's an energy in their music videos especially early in their careers when their music videos weren't just something that someone came up with. They were big deals that they really focused on as much as they focused on their music. Not every artist focuses on their music videos like that.

[youtube]pSFyrrhKj1Q[/youtube]

Do you remember how you guys came up with the concept for the

video bringing Michael Jai into it?

I wrote the treatment with the fabric in mind she was very into the reference to martial arts and it just kind of spurred the development from there. She liked the idea of herself dying that's actually her saying oh she wants to die. Even that kind of thinking shows you that she's not normal it's not normal for an artist to say at the end I'm dead. Michael Jai White was just we needed somebody else who is a martial artist he is a serious serious martial artist it all just fits well. A leading man all the things needed in that kind of situation.

Do you see any kind of limitations in the urban music video? Things that you might see and say "I'm tired of seeing that?"

Yes. You will always have that. Every music video you have the guys that lead and you have the body of it when you look back you might think of music as being great. In the '50s the radio didn't all play just great James Brown music. We're all doing the same thing copying him when you turn on the show you watch Ed Sullivan a stream of people walk out looking like they're doing the same thing and that's what we have now a lot of same old videos.

Is there anyone out there that you haven't worked with but a vision for and would like to work with?

I like who's making good music and being creative. Who do I see doing that kind of creativity right now? will.i.am is another one thinking outside the box he always goes somewhere where he is aggressively pushing boundaries.

Does film interest you at all?

It does it does. Film is chance for me to speak with my voice. Usually I speak with my voice as much as I can with music videos. But at the end of the day it's still someone

elseâ€™s song itâ€™s someoneâ€™s concept of themselves. Itâ€™s someone else in there you have to deal with and promote so itâ€™s not fully my voice every time you see all my videos it might not be the thing Iâ€™m really looking to say but Iâ€™ve got to say what the song is saying first and represent the artist. With a movie thereâ€™s a chance there is an opportunity to speak with my own voice.

What is your vision for the video industry?

A real embrace of creativity, a real embrace of technology. You have your big videos your big official singles you have the opportunity to just go make a video make a song to practice and to rehearse. Thereâ€™s a lot of things that could be done within the video industry.

Whatâ€™s been your biggest accomplishment so far?

Nicki Minaj. It was the last video I did Iâ€™m a fan watching her grow on some hip-hop shit sheâ€™s a dope MC.

Well letâ€™s talk about Nicki for a minute. What do you think Nicki symbolizes or means for women in hip-hop? What do you think sheâ€™s bringing?

Sheâ€™s bringing creativity as a female MC whoâ€™s top of the game like itâ€™s undeniable now weâ€™re not just talking about a female MC thatâ€™s really good weâ€™re talking about a female MC that smashed Jay on the â€œMonsterâ€ record. She had the best verse on â€œMonstersâ€ she turns that â€œBottoms Upâ€ record the record starts with her that record with her and will.i.am thatâ€™s it. Itâ€™s not just a guest verse sheâ€™s really smashing records on some hip-hop shit sheâ€™s an ill MC itâ€™s not even that sheâ€™s female, female has not even come into the equation yet sheâ€™s an ill MC. Sheâ€™s smashing these dudes so the girls are coming now because the bar is so high.

So you think that now that Nickiâ€™s come through the door

maybe the companies will give bigger budgets to girl rappers or take more of them into consideration?

It's just natural for the competition to step-up. When you drive down the highway speeding super fast you might not notice everyone behind you starts speeding up. You have to get motivated to speed the fuck up she's flipping down the highway so whatever she's doing in her wake men women everyone is like "Let me start this." You're going to start hearing Nicki biters because what she's doing is prevalent enough like Drake ask type songs from other kids.

What is it about her that allowed her to come through so strongly because we've heard the criticisms that she's a gimmick with flavorful wigs selling sex?

She's attractive but we know that's not enough a million people sign and promote just sexy female rappers yet it doesn't hold hip-hop doesn't work like that. So maybe one day we'll get a supermodel rapper one day that's all those things. It's different if you're selling me clothes or selling me make-up but this is music people react very negatively if they smell a faker. But Nicki's not that she's attractive but on hip-hop. When it comes to the music looks are not everything. Lady Gaga is by no means the poster child of beauty but her music is dope the energy carries. Nicki does the same thing like the real hip-hop. She can really spit and now she's like remember a few years ago when Fat Joe just really clicked? She's having this moment right now.

When was the last time you saw a female MC have that moment?

We had a generation with Little Kim, Foxy Brown we had Eve I mean that whole generation Eve, Foxy, Kim and they're all dope MCs they're all homegrown and can get on any record with a dude and do their thing and Missy's a part of that Missy was never a street rapper. Kim had street Missy had this

wild creativity and it feels like Nicki is this combo era an evolution of all these new kids need to be better like the 2009 or 2011 Lexus or Mercedes. Like the new car with the new lights it's what we know but a little bit better. And Drake is what we know a little bit better so we got a street rapper that does crazy artistic shit.

Is that what the ladies rapping on the underground is missing?

Whatever works for you. You know in music you have to be true to yourself but at the same time you have to push your creativity how are you going to stand out? We've been through different cycles already the girls who try to be super gangsta the girls that are hyper sexual and now Nicki is the flavor that's happening for females she's doing it up she'll touch on money she'll touch on but she's really just wilding out kind of like a return to the old days remember Das EFX just poetry flip words around make it funky.

Having fun.

Yes having fun. We gotta get back to fun the world's hard there's enough reality out there.

Is that something that you think about when you shoot your videos? Offering your audience an escape?

Yeah definitely Director X is a fun generator.