

Q&A

JAKE GYLLENHAAL



SHOOT LATER. ASK QUESTIONS FIRST.

The star of **End Of Watch** talks mean streets, shaved heads and how to be convincing as a tough LA cop

Words by Matt Mueller

Jake Gyllenhaal has played tough on screen before – a Marine in *Jarhead*, an army helicopter pilot in *Source Code*. But his role as one of the Los Angeles Police Department’s finest, officer Brian Taylor, in *End Of Watch* is his most energetically hard-boiled yet. Patrolling the mean streets of south central LA with partner Mike (Michael Peña), the harsh, dangerous reality of this close duo’s profession makes every day a tense one for their on-screen partners (played by Anna Kendrick and Natalie Martinez). *End Of Watch* arrives baked through with authenticity, thanks partly to the documentary-style cinematography deployed by South Central-born writer-director David Ayer (*Training Day*) and the immersive preparation that Gyllenhaal and Peña underwent for their roles. *Film3Sixty* caught up

with Gyllenhaal at the Toronto International Film Festival, where *End Of Watch* had its international premiere.

What first attracted you to the role of the young officer in *End Of Watch*?

I knew that I was going to have to immerse myself in it because of the way we were shooting it, which is hyper-real with as little fiction in their behaviour as possible. I’m interested in the life experience that the research on a character brings me, and we spent five months preparing for a 22-day shoot.

What did that preparation entail?

Michael (Peña) and I went out on the streets on ride-alongs with real guys, and we also had fight training every morning and tactical

exercises with live ammunition. By the time we got to the set, we were prepared and it was really fun.

Was there a turning point where the journey became personal to you?

On my very first ride-along, somebody was murdered and we



were the second car on the scene. I did not expect that at all. It really opened my eyes to the kind of story we were trying to convey.

How did it make you feel shaving your head for the role?

It was (writer-director) David Ayer’s plan all along to have the character look that way. To be honest, it wasn’t anything I really thought about. We made this movie for the guys who do this job every day and I’m really proud of the authenticity of it. There are things that I see actors do in movies now that are so not the way a police officer would behave.

What have you taken away from *End Of Watch*?

It’s changed me and it’s changed my perception of law enforcement. I was born in Los Angeles, I grew up in an area that is nothing like the southeast side of LA and yet it’s only a mile and a half away. So it’s also transformed my idea of Los Angeles. It’s actually made me fall back in love with the city.

End Of Watch is released in UK cinemas on 23 November.



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