

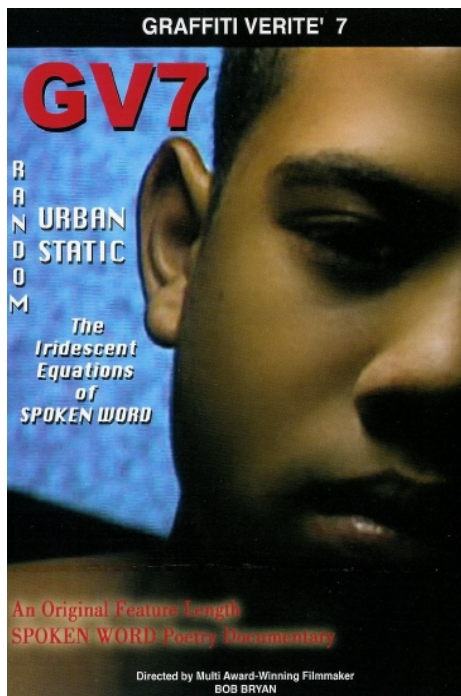
GRAFFITI VERITE' 7 (GV7) RANDOM URBAN STATIC

Iridescent Equations of SPOKEN WORD

UPC CODE #605 361 092 727

DVD Reviews

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Slam Poets Deliver Powerful Performances in Spoken Word Documentary

Graffiti Verite' 7: Random Urban Static

Unrated

Running time: 120 minutes

Studio: Bryan World Productions

Excellent (4 stars)

If you enjoy the strident, staccato cadence of commercial rap music but not its uniformly antisocial, macho content, then you'll probably find **GV7**, aka **Graffiti Verite' 7**, a refreshing alternative. Just when you're convinced hip-hop is dead as an art form, along comes this collection of powerful performances by 15 talented innovators as different from each other as they are entertaining in their own unique ways. Black, white, Latino, gay, straight, male and female, the only thing they have in common is a compelling ability to express themselves eloquently on the

subjects most meaningful to them. With the same raw intensity which the icons of BET videos celebrate misogyny, conspicuous consumption and black-on-black crime, these wordsmiths explore a variety of themes ranging from politics to privilege to sexual preference to self-esteem to racism to religion to AIDS to anorexia in a heartfelt and intimate fashion. Directed by Bob Bryan, **GV7** features both interviews and acappella readings by accomplished artists on the poetry circuit, such as two-time Grand Slam-winners [Bridget Gray](#) and [Sekou \(the misfit\)](#), along with the likes of L.A. champ [Mollie Angelheart](#) who warns,

"If you don't cut deep... you don't make a difference."

Highlights include [The Lindz](#), who deftly blends talk and song to produce a unique brand of soulful, blue-eyed lyricism, and [Tim'm T. West](#), who reflects in rhyme about what it's like to be gay, black, and HIV+. I found his contribution to be particularly of value since the AIDS epidemic is hitting the African-American community the hardest, yet the voices of the victims of the disease rarely get heard. Obviously, Tim'm is not one to allow any stigma to prevent him from sharing his feelings with the world.

Ready to be discovered is [Bridget](#), a charismatic beauty beloved by the camera with a look and attitude are tailor-made for movies. Nonetheless, each and every cast member holds his or her own, here, including [Nicolas Lopez](#), [Poetri](#), [Jessica Healy](#), [GaKnew Roxwel](#), [J. Walker](#), [Hunter Lee Hughes](#), [Vejea Jennings](#), [Eric](#)

[Haber](#), [Natalie Patterson](#) and [Rachel Kann](#).

A delightful indulgence in the lyric form likely to restore your faith in the Hip-Hop Generation.

- DVD Review by [Kam Williams](#)

A syndicated film and book critic who writes for 100+ publications around the U.S. and Canada.

GV7 Review by Nancy Shiffrin, PhD (c)

RANDOM URBAN STATIC: The Iridescent Equations of Spoken Word
An Original Feature Length Spoken Word Poetry Documentary
Running Time: 2 hours
DVD written and directed by Bob Bryan
Bryan World Productions POB 74033 Los Angeles, CA 90004

Words that pop! Words that crackle! Words that explode! Words that weep! Words that sing and chant the urban poet's agonies and dreams.

Spoken Word is an art form that harkens back to the oral and musical origins of poetry, the time before words were written down, the time when story-tellers spoke for the people and had to remember their lines.

Here are [15 performers, griots, prophets](#). It's not that they reject the page, only one, [Mollie Angelheart](#), claims not to read or write, and she has help writing down the words. It's that, as [Rachel Kann](#) points out, they came along as Rap and Hip Hop, which themselves derive in part from children's street games, from "*doin' the dozens*", from a black male culture which seeks to assert its power (sometimes ill-advisedly) in the face of extreme oppression and exploitation, came to dominate popular consciousness.

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In fact, [the DVD](#) shows most of the artists working with the page before they come to the mike. Because it contains a critique of the violence and sexism in Hip Hop, as well as analysis of the role of Hip Hop and Spoken Word poetry in the culture, [this DVD](#) is to be recommended as a classroom tool for writers and artists going into classrooms to share their visions and for classroom teachers who want to provoke a discussion.

These artists COMMUNICATE big-time.

"Black mens' strength and redemption lies in their vulnerability," [Tim'M T. West](#) asserts. Vulnerability black and white, male and female, regardless of is the power of this artistic effort. [West](#) talks about being educated, about degrees in Women's and Gender Studies, philosophy and modern thought, finally dropping out of Stanford's Ph.D. Program after finding out he's HIV positive. His epiphany, that he didn't want to write *"brilliant"* academic articles, that he wanted to write for his mother.

Ironically, using the Hip Hop rhythm, he asks for more rhythmic variety in the medium. In general, the men here convey their power through a kind of selflessness. [Sekou \(tha misfit\)](#) captures the looniness of infatuation with **7th Grade Girl**; other men talk about suicide, immigration, obsessive compulsive behavior, using art in the classroom and in counseling situations. They also speak positively about nature, the cosmos, collective and individual responsibility.

The late diarist, novelist and theorist of the creative life, [Anais Nin](#), observed that while men may have to lose their egos, even their self-hood for awhile to create, women must first construct a self. Thirty years later, that still seems to be the case.

The women here assert their power, through they are still fighting stereotypes of female beauty. [Natalie Patterson](#) talks about her **Fat Girl Jeans**; she and [Mollie Angelheart](#) do a wonderful collaborative piece about anorexia and bulimia, a wonderful way for them to resolve differences that arose between them. These women deal with their bodies. I love it (in another piece) when [Mollie](#) wonders whether her aborted baby will get another chance at existence. [The Lindz](#) cries out *"I'm not heart-broken"* when told of a life threatening cardiac condition. [Rachel Kann](#) interrogates standards of beauty. Her cosmetology will come from the cosmos. [Bridget Gray](#) asks the men to stop calling themselves *"niggah"* and *"boy"* and to stop calling her *"bitch and whore"*. Her **Letter to Hip Hop** expresses grief at the *"pimpin"* culture.

And [Mollie Angelheart](#) reminds us to *"choose love"*.

GV7 Review by Nancy Shiffrin, PhD

A poet, critic and teacher. She earned her MA studying with Anais Nin. She earned her PhD at The Union Institute studying Jewish-American Literature. Her work has won awards and honorable mentions from The Academy of American Poets, The Alice Jackson Foundation, The Poetry Society of America, The Pushcart Prizes, The Dora Teitelbaum Foundation.

WORLD CLASS POETRY
Poetry DVD Review by Poet,
Allen Taylor

Graffiti Verite' 7

Produced by
Bryan World Productions, LLC

Spoken Word is an often misunderstood art form. One viewing of **Graffiti Verite' 7** should clear up all misunderstanding for those who pay close attention.

More than just two hours of pure poetry, Bryan World Production's **Graffiti Verite' 7** is a hip-hopumentary of a world class order, a documentary that walks inside the universe of hip hop and Spoken Word and gets to the heart of it without pulling the soul out from underneath. With interviews and visual cues interspersed with the lines and verses of the featured poets themselves - sometimes in performance and sometimes during bouts of inspiration - Director Bob Bryan delivers a thoughtful and provocative look at Spoken Word as an art form, as well as, a lifestyle.

Focusing primarily on Los Angeles-based Spoken Word poets and their hip hop counterparts, **Graffiti Verite' 7** highlights the joys and disappointments of several poets that operate on this level, some of them National Poetry Slam winners, and brings the artists to viewers intelligently and vibrantly. The audience not only gets to the work of the poets as it is being created, but she also gets to know them personally through their own unique interests.

Poets featured in the two - hour film include:

[Mollie Angelheart](#), [Bridget Gray](#),

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[Common Ground, Eric Haber,](#)
[Jessica Healy, Hunter Lee Hughes,](#)
[Vejea Jennings, Rachel Kann, The](#)
[Lindz, Nicolas Lopez,](#)
[Natalie Patterson, Poetri, GaKnew](#)
[Roxwel, Sekou \(tha Misfit\), J.](#)
[Walker, Tim'm T. West](#)

Not all of the poetry shared in **Graffiti Verite' 7** is good. Some of it, like a lot of Spoken Word, is hackneyed and banal, but some of it is damn good, both as poetry and as performance. It's easy to see why the Slam winners were winners.

The real value in **Graffiti Verite' 7**, though, is not in the poetry but in the artists and the candid discussions they get into about their poetry, creation habits, and their lives. The artists share intimate details about themselves, including medical conditions, lifestyle choices, and even their own failures, as well as the poetry writing process and the reasons they write.

Bryan manages to hold his audience's interest through great camera angles, visual movement, background images and music, and a host of other multimedia effects. The film is professionally made and I highly recommend it for anyone, from the up-and-coming Spoken Word artist, the wannabe hip hop stars, rappers, and, yes, even academics.

In fact, I'd say that most academics should watch the film just to gain a better understanding of how Spoken Word artists use their time to craft their poems and put together their performances.

There is some strong language in the film and scenes unsuitable for minor audiences, but if you want

a real sincere look into the minds and lives of contemporary Spoken Word poets then there are few other places where you'll get that as straightforwardly.

Graffiti Verite' 7 isn't perfect, but as a documentary, it works. [Order your copy of Graffiti Verite' 7 by Bryan World Productions LLC today.](#)

Review by [Poet Allen Taylor](#)

[The Poet Behind World Class Poetry](#)
[AllenTaylor](#)

Real Good Rhymes

Spoken word. OK, some uninitiated folk, some folk who watch parodies of the same on Mad TV or Def Comedy Jam or perhaps see it performed badly at some coffee bar will snicker. But the **Graffiti Verite' 7** documentary [Random Static: The Iridescent Equations of Spoken Word](#) illustrates and expounds on the singular thesis that this art form is indeed bon mots. Poetry. Subject to the discipline and devotion of craft. Indeed, the only additional element is the performance mode of the poet. Performance implies a primary purpose of "for the people," rather than serving a brooding ego or exorcise personal demons.

Directed by filmmaker Bob Bryan, the focus here on the craft, rather than the personal quirks of poets [Natalie Patterson, Poetri, Sekou tha misfit, Hunter Lee Hughes, Vejea Jennings, Common Ground, Bridget Gray, Mollie Angelheart, J. Walker, Nick Lopez, Tim'm T. West, Rachel Kann, The Lindz and Eric Haber.](#)

Yes, their personalities and inspirations shine through, but the essence of craft is what Bryan captures, honestly and admirably. Craft in the poets sharing their philosophies on why they do what they: "People do not listen. They only hear static, the noise." Or how humor, irony become allegory for deeper problems, such as a jaded ode to the south's own caloric noose on the black man: Krispy Krema Doughnuts.

If you don't know anything about spoken word but the HBO versions, or think you know something about poetry but wish to know more, check out Bob Bryan's **Random Urban Static** -- and learn, understand what's been there all along. Devotion.

With music by Nebula One, produced by Loida Bryan, Miles Bryan and Nicholas Bryan.

- by [Christopher Chambers](#)

SPOKEN WORD ARTIST MARC MARCEL'S REVIEW OF RANDOM URBAN STATIC

Random Urban Static, is the perfect insight for one to grasp how the work from the artist comes about.

Poets are extremely cultured people, and to have many a group from different genres only makes it so that anyone can get at least one message from the film. Poets jobs are to inspire, and this documentary definitely captures the emotions of the [Spoken Word Artist](#), for the viewer to watch with goosebumps.

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Being that I know most of the artists personally, this was a great way for me to even know more about them, than they had previously shared. I almost feel as if I better understand them not only as artist, but as people.

So many times in the past I have met people who have never gone to a poetry venue, and want to know more about the culture and the artists. "What is it like being a poet?" they ask. This film ([GV7 RANDOM URBAN STATIC](#)) takes the words right out my mouth! For every time they ask me, "What is it like?" I wish I could just give them a copy of this film, and introduce them to our culture. Anyways, I do thank you for the doc, it was truly dope.

**Many Blessings,
Marc**

[Marc Marcel is an active Spoken Word Artist currently in development on a new TV Reality Show](#)

Graffiti Verite' 7 Review

Graffiti Verite' 7 takes us on a journey to experience spoken word artists in a different setting. Usually these artists are revered on the stage. This piece takes us into a more intimate place showing us [these artists](#) while they, write, rant, or simply talk about their experience.

This added an enhanced texture to relationship between the artist and the audience. **Graffiti Verite' 7** shows us the different aspects of spoken word not just as a form of poetry but as an avenue of emotion. Bob Bryan displays a plethora of personalities, lifestyles, and experiences that have a

common link—the need to express and connect with an audience.

We are introduced with intense words that emphasize the powerful grass roots effort of spoken word and its strong impact that it has on individuals as opposed to mass approach. The movie grows past it's monotonous start into deliberate visuals which accompany the performances.

The documentary shines best when highlighting the relationship between hip hop and spoken word. It implies a social consciousness in spoken word missing in commercial hip-hop. He also exposes spoken word as a safe haven to those opposed or excluded in hip-hop's hyper masculine image.

Although this is a niche film, it is easy to have a warm reception to the poets and their point-of-views, if you have the attention span to watch two hours of poetry.

- by **Sade Wilkins**
([tbtv-TotallyBlackTV.com](#))

Is Spoken Word rap, a song, or poetry? It's all these things.

This film written and directed by Bob Bryan is more a documentary of the Spoken Word than of its poets. The collective work of featured poets has a universal message. The spoken word is the voice. "Voice is your power, voice is who you are, your voice is a gift" says a young woman ([Poet Bridget Gray](#)) as the film begins, "don't let anyone take your voice."

Intellectually engaging, the film replaces the need to read the police roster of any newspaper, east or west, to learn of the

tragedies of American urban landscapes. Redefinitions of the social, political, and personal struggles of our lives reverberate with each poem. The featured poets describe the psyche as more than ranting, rhymes, and storytelling; there are tears, laughter, and frustrations that surface on route to wanting to be understood.

The film depicts the Spoken Word as activism at its best. It means to reach the hearts and minds of the audience because poets confront personal pain and healing is collective. Stay honest, one poet said. That is why the Spoken Word is performed. Its intent is to reach the others to heal the self. In the process, others are healed ([Poet Sekou, tha Misfit](#)).

I felt I would know all the Spoken Word poets now and forever. This universality was reflected in the pain of the poet with depression, the female poet who was raped by her brother, and the poet who just suffered for his whole class of African American youth whose lives are squandered by a society that ignored them, a society that cannot reach them so they remain useless members of their communities.

The recitations are brilliant sparking words which connect our thoughts. We are at one time or other suffering with depression, some addiction, lack of employability, being rejected, not fitting in with the others, being pimped posing as true love, and on and on.

There is no glamour in this suffering, its merely the reality of living.

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The film depicts the Spoken Word as urban art. Where else can one see rampant pain all on one street? Being from Brooklyn and living in LA for five years, I've accumulated a vision of humanity that is broad in scope. The Santa Monica homeless, the New York City homeless have a lot in common, they both live on this earth. The Spoken Word unites us in the league of humanity. If you reject it, get off the train! If you're not on this train, where exactly are you going?

This film is for widely read poets who will witness the fluidity of storytelling. Viewers who do not read poetry may just not get it. They may judge the film as a 'bunch of rappers.' This is not so. Poetry, rap, and songs are all the mosaic of the Spoken Word, decidedly an important genre which is beautifully represented in Bryan's film.

- **by Dr. Maria R. Burgio**
["Lessons of Survival: A Memoir";](#)

The Iridescent Equations of Spoken Word

- **Graffiti Verite' 7 DVD by Bob Bryan** produced a collage of impressions that represents contemporary spoken word artists; their lives, their ideas, and their art. Through a series of responses to informal interviews often in the poet's homes, or in parks, and café, and through open air informal and formal indoor stage performances of their quintessential craft, we learn about their voices and messages and their struggles and vulnerabilities as artists and human beings.

Spoken Word as opposed to page poetry is a literary artistic performance in which lyrical rhyming narratives are presented with a raw, honest intensity designed to move the audience to action.

[The poets on this DVD](#) all have some form of this agenda whether the form is self-exploration, political consciousness, empowerment, activism, or social and behavioural change. **Bryan's** ability to vary the presentation through close-ups and extreme close-up along with edited-in imagery to accompany the performances of the artists, carries the production by keeping it lively and fast-paced.

What comes through in this video is the pure authenticity of voice, the raw honesty of the poets' passions to communicate their messages. [Bridget Gray](#) says, "Voice is your power, who you are, your gift. Don't let anyone take away your voice." These are strong words for spoken word poets – a mantra to themselves but an uplifting message to anyone listening who is seeking empowerment.

[Mollie Angelheart](#) says, "Activism starts with act." The products, often political social messages rather than lyrical pretty word pieces are raw and reach out to the crowd as a plea for change.

[Natalie Patterson](#) talks about her honesty in her progression as a poet and about the issues she raises. [Poetri](#) comments on the need for poets to learn the art of listening to others, not just their own voices. He says, "If everybody was a poet, the world would be a better place because we'd all be listening to each other's hearts".

[Gaknew Roxwel](#) similarly comments on the authenticity of the writing combined with the authenticity in the delivery. [Rachel Kann](#) tells us that it is the charisma and the delivery of the performer that takes the message off the pages and brings it to life.

What is evident is that the poets do not just have messages; they live their messages and their messages are their poetry. [Vejea](#) talks about the need to have new messages or messages that are disguised within new material. He says that you have to "Trojan horse your ideas to get inside". What results is often raw honesty wrapped in a passion that is carefully packaged for maximum audience response.

Throughout the interviews we see that the process is not easy. The poet is often immediately vulnerable once he or she opens up to an audience. [Bridget Gray](#) talks about the fear of sharing yourself by the act of putting the "inside on the outside" when you speak the truth. [Vejea](#) mentions the risk that no one will listen to your "speech out" and fears they will hear just the static and the noise, not the message. [Sekou \(tha misfit\)](#) sees the poet as someone who is full of intensity with his or her emotions, and feels it is important to confront personal pain, stay honest and face personal demons and by doing so share and collectively heal. [Tim M' West](#), the most academic of the spoken word poets interviewed says, "Let's be vulnerable enough to talk about those struggles and adversities, so we can rise in the way we need to."

What is interesting from a teaching point of view is the educational aspect. [J. Walker](#) who

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is a counselor, poet, rapper and a healer, uses his art in the classroom to help students work through their own issues. [Mollie Angelheart](#) is interested in making a difference in the life of everyone who listens to her work. As a director, Bob Bryan is interested in showing his audience how all this art comes about. The poets are not there on a pedestal just performing. We see them struggling in the writing process; we see the writing, the re-writing, the revisions, the practicing, memorizing and finally the polished performance. The process is not easy. Poets work with pen and paper, notebooks tucked under their arms, sitting alone in cafes, at picnic tables in the park, wandering under trees reciting lines, capturing the rhythm and cadence of their verse, struggling to get it down in scribbles, struggling to get it right, to transform the ideas and words on the laptop, to add musical tracks using the latest computer software technology, utilizing the keyboard and making their own cd's.

[Mollie Angelheart](#) says that *"all parts of the mind are taking life on through speech, beliefs, acts and attitude"*. [Rachel Kann](#) in her interview speaks about everyone truly having a choice that could make one better by the way he or she sees life despite the negatives of the past. She gives advice to *"choose a path that allows you to grow"*. [Mollie](#) in her advice says, *"Each moment we have a choice to choose fear or love."* She chooses love.

This video is an excellent production that familiarizes you with the personal lives and ideas of the poets, lets you see the full performances of their best spoken word pieces, pieces that speak to

issues such as anorexia, obesity, bulimia, racism, date rape, drug addiction, personal relationships, maturation, foreign and domestic policy and so on. We see the poets at a grassroots level struggling with these issues, confronting their demons and turning it all into performance art with messages for change. It is a video you will want in your library to play again and again for inspiration or just to listen to the finely crafted performances.

[Ascent Aspirations Magazine](#)
- by David Fraser

Joshua Gage's take on GV7 RANDOM URBAN STATIC

GV7 Random Urban Static is a two hour DVD featuring fifteen performance oriented poets from the United States. Included in the mix are [two time national slam champion Sekou \(tha misfit\)](#), [LA Slam Masters Mollie Angelheart](#) and [Natalie Patterson, two time Grand Slam Champion Bridget Gray, and many others](#). Poets and their performances are cut with interviews that connect performance poetry to hip-hop, question the importance of race and sexuality in performance poetry, and discuss the reasons behind performance poetry. The performances range from the wild and outloud, with [Common Ground \(Angelheart and Patterson together\)](#) getting right in the viewers face, to the deeply personal, whether it be [The Lindz](#) weeping or [Nick Lopez's](#) nasal performance and introverted head turning, to the humor of Tony award winning [Poetri](#) and even the obscure and bizarre [Eric Haber](#).

What was interesting, and what makes Bob Bryan's film less of a production and more of an actual documentary was that there didn't seem to be a message across the poets. Each poet was represented as an individual, with their opinions, beliefs and experiences allowed to interact and contradict. The movie opened up a discussion and didn't try to pigeonhole any poet into a "performance" mold.

Where one poet insists upon the poem working on the page, another poet insists that performance poetry is entirely focused on performance to the point that she doesn't write her own work down ([Mollie Angelheart](#)). Where one champions directness and accessibility, another celebrates the bizarre and random. One defends the hip-hop connection to performance poetry, and another advocates breaking away from that connection and some of the negativity it brings to performance poetry. This discussion opens up the idea of performance poetry as an evolving movement with many voices, and not necessarily a static entity with no potential for growth or change.

As an educational tool, this DVD invites students and teachers into the conversation and provides them with an idea of what is happening in the world of performance poetry without being too overwhelming or too flashy. It also connects the poetry to the academy, as certain poets ([Tim'm T. West](#) and [J. Walker](#)) speak about their educational backgrounds and how that has influenced what they do in performance.

While some of these poets are slam poets, this documentary also

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shows other aspects and venues for performance work, whether it be [Hunter Lee Hughes](#) shaking his entire body to his poem, [Nick Lopez](#) reading over a film, or even [Jessica Healy](#) taping her poems to bathroom stalls.

- by **Joshua Gage**

Contributor to

<http://clevelandpoetics.blogspot.com>

GV7 Testimony of the Undying Power of the Spoken Word

Don't worry about poetry losing its place in the world; it has many avenues through which it conveys its message. If all else fails, it can manifest itself in the one form that it has always done for centuries: the spoken word. This is the message [director Bob Bryan](#) conveys in his latest [GV7](#) documentary entitled [Random Urban Static: The Iridescent Equations of the Spoken Word](#).

The documentary presents a cross-section of [Southern California Spoken Word artists](#) who, in this two-hour presentation of diverse styles, show their determination to keep the word alive. Basically, these poets understand that there is so much static in the urban world, and the poet's role is turn the static into words. Expertly-captured selected words, this static turns into a message that can make our world a better place.

Here is a selection of poets who remain true to what they feel, to their sense of being, even in cases where they may have to use words to search for this humanity. And when they capture it, we capture and share it with them and those around us.

Watching this documentary, I came to know artists like [Vejea Jennings](#), [Eric Haber](#), [Poetri](#), [Nicholas Lopez](#), [Natalie Patterson](#), [GaKnew](#), [Tim West](#) and many others who remind us to cry if words dictate we do so, to talk about the problems of the world and listen to those whose views and ideals may differ from ours. [Poetri](#), in particular, reminds us "to listen with our hearts" and expresses his wish that everyone on earth was a poet; then the world would be a better place. Of course, everyone is a poet; it's the extent to which we are willing to explore the poetry within and without that makes a big difference. The poets in this documentary have discovered the magic of the spoken word and are determined to keep it mending the ills of society.

One piece that stuck with me is "Letter to Hip hop" (by [Bridget Gray](#)) which joins the debate on the issue of hip-hop and social responsibility. The poet chants:

" Back that thinking up
I'm not backing that thing up "

" Stop calling yourself a n*gga
and call yourself a man"

[Eric Haber](#), who claims that he was "conceived in the summer of love and [was] born in the winter of regret" says that spoken word has the power even to say even the weird. Somewhere in that message, as another poet points out ([Sekou tha misfit](#)), there is a message that will help someone.

This documentary is a fine blend of interviews and performances which will leave you calling out for more; an inspiring, thought-provoking rendition of both the familiar and unfamiliar. Its artistry

shows the commitment to the arts that director Bob Bryan continues to demonstrate.

- by [Emmanuel Sigauke](#)

Born to Speak the Word

"Spoken word is a form of literary art or artistic performance in which lyrics, poetry, or stories are spoken rather than sung. Spoken word is often done with a musical background, but the emphasis is kept on the speaker."

Directed by Bob Bryan, [GV7 Random Urban Static: The Iridescent Equations of Spoken Word](#) is the [7th installment](#) of a [documentary DVD series](#) about the spoken word poets who live for and love the word. The truth of the word defines their very character. And the power in the word is considered a gift from God.

To call it rap music would be a shame running 8 mile long. You can say spoken word is like rap music but without the corporate and media bling-bling. The music comes from the heart and soul of the performer – grounded in reality and the spirituality. The sources of its rhythm can be found in different cultures, sexuality, and religion (sometimes even the imaginary). Spoken word has been around since the troubadours performed during the Middle Ages and then famously revived by the Beat Generation. It is a sacred art form. Focused in the act of listening to the sights and sounds around them, these creative wordsmiths are fresh and in your face.

They may not look hip hop but they live hip hop. They are the slam

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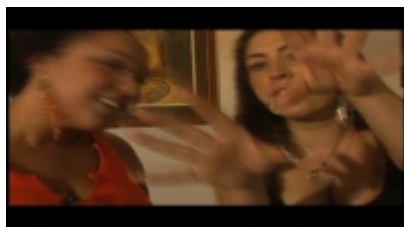
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poets, or performance artists. They are just simply the storytellers of our time skilled in capturing our attention in the digital revolution.

There is a rhyme to the reason from these artists that includes...

[The Lindz](#), [Mollie Angelheart](#), [Vejea Jennings](#), [J. Walker](#), [Eric Haber](#), [Sekou \(tha misfit\)](#), [Nicholas Lopez](#), [Natalie Patterson](#), [Jessica Healy](#), [Bridget Gray](#), [Tim'm T. West](#), [Rachel Kann](#), [GaKnew Roxwel](#), [Poetri](#), [Hunter Lee Hughes](#), and [Common Ground](#).



[Common Ground](#)

Some of the outstanding performances include pieces such as: ***Seventh Grade Girl*** by [Sekou \(tha misfit\)](#) – A junior high crush is told as an analogy to [Sekou's](#) infatuation with a woman. He is hilariously interrupted by his annoying mother on the phone during the climatic moments of his story. The best part is when he describes his kiss to the sound of the classic Miles Davis tune, So What. Pure improvised genius!

Krispy Kreme by [Poetri](#) – A fictitious conspiracy theory about Krispy Kreme Doughnuts, formally called Krispy Kreme Kroissants (KKK), selling their addictive “glazed drugs” to African-Americans to control them. Funny stuff! ***Zen*** by [The Lindz](#) – It's an entertaining speech done in a bluesy, unplugged way.

With maybe a laptop as their only technological tool and quiet room of solitude, the poets secret weapon are their voices and their mission is to bring out the poetic justice that will challenge our very being. **Word!** For more information about [Graffiti Verite](#) and its [DVD series](#), please visit www.graffitiverite.com.

- by **Victor Ho**,
Movies Editor for LA2DAY.COM

Luis A. Lopez Review of GV7 RANDOM URBAN STATIC

[GV7](#) is more than words, more than poetry... it's that elusive glimpse into the creative life we all seek.

Mr. Bryan captures the raw poetic world brilliantly in this film. He allows us to see beyond the words, beyond the ego, beyond the artistic surface. Don't expect a film like Slam. Let me be clear: these are not actors; these are true poets. Expression and heartfelt passion are sustained from start to finish. These poets love poetry and deliver, deliver, deliver.

The film is filled with vignettes of not only the poetry, but of the poets themselves. The resulting impact is extremely compelling and enriching. How many times have we seen only half the story? How many times are we left with soulless pre-packaged MTV “art”? The poets in this film are the living embodiment of the soul. Having just finished the film, the grin is still on my face. Poetry is alive. Poetry is still from the heart. Poetry is here. Take a peek.

-- by **Luis A. Lopez**,

Author Warrior - Poet of the Fifth Sun
<http://www.luislopez.com>

GV7 Review by Brad Frederiksen

The term hip-hop is one that immediately conjures up, for some, a particular form of African American and Latino inspired music. Like many of the meanings we take for granted, however, a little contemplation swiftly throws our assumptions into disarray.

[GV7 Random Urban Static](#) is the latest addition to Filmmaker Bob Bryan's truth challenging document of hip-hop culture. The emphasis for this film turns squarely upon the modern, hip-hop influenced incarnation of spoken word poetry. If you are seeking creative inspiration, this film can't fail to stir any person with a heartbeat to action. If you are interested in studying the ways in which a culture and its people respond to their environment, [GV7](#) is the perfect introduction to Bryan's [award-winning series](#).

Every one of the 15 passionate and unique Performance Poets appearing in [GV7](#) has something insightful and provoking to offer.

On teenage Love – “I feel like if I cut myself I would bleed chords in C minor”. – [Sekou \(tha misfit\)](#)

On Bitterness and On Suicide. On God and On Death. On Sexuality, On Freedom of Expression, On Oppression, On Racism, On Date Rape, On Self-Loathing and more. I laughed, I got

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angry and I shared a tear or two. At times my skin crawled.



[J. Walker](#)

"And that's why we're livin' isn't it? For those 5 minutes a week we feel inspired, maybe by a singer, poet or a beatboxer. With one line that just lit a fire that got you outside your box, and into your thoughts, 'cause inside of our box our thoughts are mixed up and backwards."

- [J.Walker](#), GV7 Spoken Word Poet (a quote from **GV7**)

GV7 Review by Brad Frederiksen
Maekitso's Café

<http://maekitso.wordpress.com/2008/06/20/gv7-random-urban-static/>

Review of RUS
(Random Urban Static)
By Mark Brunetti

Alright so it's called **Random Urban Static: The Iridescent Equations of Spoken Word** and when I think of equation I don't just think of the solution but the way we come to the solution. That's how this documentary works. We aren't just seeing the final product, the performer expressing their work, but the way in which they come to create their poetry, and some other general views on the art form itself.

Random Urban Static (RUS) is a collection of interviews and conversations with some of the

leading spoken-word performers in the scene today.

As a fellow writer, I'm gonna be honest, spoken-word is not my forte. But **RUS** gives the viewer a deeper insight into the poet and their life, which allows a novice like me to further understand and appreciate where these people come from and where they are going.

One aspect which allows the viewer to connect with each poet individually is the background of each shot. We are brought to a variety of places, whether it be outdoors where the writers are influenced, the places they perform, or right in their own home, where we get a more intimate approach to the poets and how they live. Between interviews we are shown images of Los Angeles and other parts of California which again personify the video giving it more character. (I just assumed these are images of CA considering this is where the video is from)

The video begins with a brief explanation about spoken word and the different poets expressing why they write, what moves them, and their description of the unique 'voice' that is created from their writing. After that each poet gives answers to questions about their work and how they come to do what they do. The poets discuss things and answer questions that have existed in poetry since its origins. Things like authenticity, subject material, and the values of honest expressions are discussed by each poet, and with a variety of explanations nothing is redundant or over-analyzed. Something about poets performing their work.

Which brings me to another point, the individuality of each poet. [The 15 poets](#) are a diverse group ranging from a wide variety of race, sex, and age. We hear the opinion of one poet who proclaims his pride being born in the 'summer of love' to younger poets who are still exploring themselves and their work, poets with experience and notable awards, and other poets just beginning their craft and entering the scene. One poet, [Jessica Healy](#), shows her unique approach at Spoken-Word with the **Bathroom Poetry Project** which is the simple act of typing up poetry and hanging it in both women's and men's bathroom stalls.



[Jessica Healy](#)

As I write this review, I'm thinking about how easy it is to remember the different writers and their personalities, which to me shows the interest it had over a kid raised in a world of ADD and attention spans of less than 10 minutes. Although the documentary is about 2 hours, it didn't feel like it and when it was over I wanted more from the poets and the opportunity to see more of their work. **RUS** is a really well-made documentary that explores multiple aspects of Poetry and Spoken-Word. It allows people who do not know the genre that well to get a more intimate look at the writers and the work they create.

- by **Mark Brunetti**,
[The Idiom Magazine](#)

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**Grown Folks Saturday Salute to
Random Urban Static:
Spoken Word
Review by Carmen Dixon
(All About Race) and (BLACKSPIN)**

The most talented spoken word artists, or [rhymecologists](#) proffer clever, vocabulary acrobatics as observations about the way we live in the world. They spit unexpected couplings, laying them down, end to end, from the beginning to the send. They lay bare naked truth for you to hear, see and feel.

[YouTube Video Clip
\(Performance by Bridget Gray\)](#)

The tightest lyrics provoke thought, pain and laughter. And when the performance is over your mind and heart are worked out from riding the gymnastic gyrations of verbal uneven parallel bars.

'GV7 Random Urban Static' is a documentary I watched over the past few nights. It sits you down, up close and personal with [15 spoken word artists](#) and lets you listen and watch as they open up about the creative process and what compels them to rhyme.

It's a sincere chronicle. But the most engaging moments of the film feature the artists themselves reciting their work. Hearing artists talk about art or the "artistic process" narrows the power of the rhymes for me.

Because the more I hear about the artist's personal story, and about his or her own conflicted inner dialogue, the more I am taken out of the moment and have

straggling remnants of back story floating around in my head as I watch them perform.

[YouTube Video Clip
\(Graffiti Verite' 7 RANDOM
URBAN STATIC - Part 1\)](#)



[Bridget Gray](#)

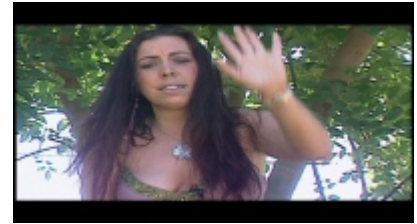
Not a big deal. After five minutes of [Bridget Gray](#), I am transported right back to all the possibility of verbal creativity.

- Review by Carmen Dixon

[All About Rce](#) [BLACKSPIN](#) *Black Voices'
Spin on the Headlines*

**Review of GV7, New Spoken
Work Documentary Film
By Des aka DLUX: THE LIGHT
(HipHopMOtiVatES - Reflecting on the
Positive of hip hop culture)**

**GV7 Random Urban Static
The Iridescent Equations of
Spoken Word** is an original feature length spoken word documentary by the Multi Award-Winning filmmaker Bob Bryan. It is the [7th release](#) in the [Graffiti Verite film series](#) and follows a plethora of poets based in L.A. This film features national slam champions, [Bridget Gray](#), [Sekou \(tha misfit\)](#), and [Mollie Angelheart](#). **Urban Static** reflects the vastness of poetry and life.



[Mollie Angelheart](#)

It took a second viewing to understand the flow of this documentary. This may detour some who aren't willing to give another two hours for viewing. This is not for those only satisfied by the ideas they can quickly understand. **GV7** is not a product of the "MTV microwave age," to quote [Vejea Jennings](#).

This film is visual poetry. There are moments that make you feel, what could have been shown and vice versa. Its strength and its weakness is the fact that it is not straight forward. I enjoyed my second viewing more than the first. Just like poetry, **Urban Static** forces you to take another watch / listen to fully grasp the message. I appreciate the film because of the way it embodies the art form it is documenting.



[Vejea Jennings](#)

The poetry displayed is phenomenal, truly representing an iridescent view of poetry in L.A. Hearing and viewing the processes of the poets will inspire spoken word artist who are birthing in this craft. The vets of the poetry world will be reminded of the reasons

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why they began to put pen to pad and recite.

It would of been nice to see more regions represented. Maybe a trip down to AZ, over to Nevada, Colorado, and Oregon (wink, wink, nudge, nudge) would provide a bigger picture poetry from the West Coast. Regardless, **Urban Static** is, and will stand as, an irreplaceable piece of Spoken Word History.

I recommend this for anyone who wants to really understand spoken word poetry, if you are willing to watch it at least twice.

- Review by Des

a.k.a. **DLUX:THE LIGHT (Desmond)**
S.W.H.H. Poet (Spoken Word Hip Hop)
The Spoken Word Hip Hop Poet
www.dluxthelight.com or
myspace.com/dluxthelight or On *Itunes*.

VividNUrban Magazine
REVIEW OF GV7
RANDOM URBAN STATIC:
The Iridescent Equations of
SPOKEN WORD

I have to admit that I had no idea what to expect, when I first agreed to review **GV7 Random Urban Statics**. However, what I found was a film that highlighted all the characteristics of me. Long before I ever ventured into the world of film and journalism, I was a hip hop artist and poet, and of course I still am. It was indeed my frustrations with the Las Vegas' media's lack of interest and support of local artists that propelled me towards becoming a journalist.

GV7 does an excellent job of illustrating how and why poets do what they do. I especially like the idea of highlighting the various types of poetry, and discussing what I myself have found, that some poems are for song, some are for the page, and that some are for both. As a rapper first, poet second I loved the that hip hop was a highlight of the film.

It is very hard to string the intricate details of a creative process and the masterminds behind it into a compelling linear story line. Filmmaker Bob Bryan did that flawlessly. By using the [verite style of story telling](#), he allowed the poets themselves to explain all that the viewer needed to know.

With this being my first introduction to the [GV series](#) I am very excited and motivated to inquire into the [prior 6 installments](#). I am hoping to leverage this review into an interview with the filmmaker and the [poets](#) who make **GV7** such a wonderful piece.

For more information please visit <http://www.graffitiverite.com/>

- by **VividNUrban Magazine**
VividNUrban Magazine is a magazine built for the Urban individual. Whether that individual is a musician, politician, teacher, athlete, doctor, athlete or any of the other tens of thousands of occupations that exist...

Athens Boys Choir
Review of GV7 by Harvey Katz

Great video! **GV7** came to me like most things, from the Internet, but it brought me to many other places. **GV7** does an exceptional job of showing the versatility of

spoken word, it's differing styles, and the many paths people take to get the words from the brain, to the page and to the stage. The visual effects keep the view enticing and the soundtrack does an awesome job of enhancing the emotions of the words. The individuality of each author's journey is a portal the public rarely gets to explore and **GV7** takes you on the journey with grace and objectivity. Great video for the spoken word enthusiast and if you're not one before this DVD you're certain to become a fan of the medium afterward.

- Review by **Harvey Katz**
[Athens boys choir](#)

Athens Boys Choir has been touring nationally since 2003, performing for audiences that are becoming more diverse everyday.

GV7 REVIEW
by Yvonne M. Estrada

I was lucky enough to be offered an opportunity to review [GV7 RANDOM URBAN STATIC](#) the dvd. [The spoken word poets](#) reading their work in different locations takes you immediately into their separate worlds. The intimacy of having these artists describe how they became inspired, and what their writing process involves, is like sharing a secret.

The distinct views and voices are enhanced by the constantly changing background images. City parks, building facades, small office spaces, show us where we live, and how human it is to tell stories, to express emotions, to speak out; not only to write, but to use our

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voices to say what can be, should be, and has to be said out loud.

The Art known as graffiti, shown boldly as a backdrop in several spoken word pieces, co-signs this need for expression. My young nephews and nieces were blown away by the fact that a film like this could be made. They have their own art and their own social commentaries (usually spray canned), but said this type of film validated how they felt, and why they did what they did. Who better to impress?

Inside a creative mind / heart is something that must be, and will be seen, communicated, and ultimately understood. This film is turning "urban static" into a clear message: Art and Artists, will, one way or another, reflect the world around them. **GV7** says here it is, take a look around and listen to what you see. Congratulations to this filmmaker and advocate of what needs to be said.

Thanks for letting me do this at all. the future is here.

yours truly,
yvonne m. estrada

Traci E. Currie, Ph.D
Comments / Review

GV7 RANDOM URBAN STATIC : The Iridescent Equations of Spoken Word

The sudden jump cuts that start the documentary are similar to how I see Spoken Word: sudden, jumpy, exciting, unexpected, and personal.

Following the credit introduction and voice over of the poet [Hunter Lee Hughes](#), I liked the various voices that spoke, which powerfully is followed by poet,



[Hunter Lee Hughes](#)

[Bridget Gray](#), stating how important the voice is. Again, it speaks to Spoken Word and helps the viewing audience understand what it is.

Although I thought unique technically and visually, the jump cut between bulb, microphone, quiet speaking voice and so forth...I was looking for more talk/conversation of what spoken word is. I was looking to find out who these people are – self identity.

I felt like I heard poet after poet sprouting their work and offering personal views based on their opinion (i.e. how parents raise their children- [Mollie Angelheart](#)), which is fine, but it gives me the feel of a poetry DVD, not a documentary.



[Vejea Jennings](#)

The documentary feel comes back when [Vejea Jennings](#) states that a poem is a "speech act." I feel like this is the beginning discussion of understanding what Spoken

Word actually is. It was a short preview, which wets our appetites (if we are listening), but for an audience that does not know Spoken Word, this may be a challenge for the simple fact that they may be looking for a "working" definition of Spoken Word from the beginning of the documentary (again, I suppose this depends on who your audience is). I do recognize that the discussion of "what" Spoken Word is comes up much later in the documentary...

[Eric Haber](#) seemed to touch on the 'personal' when he read from his work and discussed his father... He talked about looking at his kindergarten photo and shared the emotional attachment...

[Sekou](#) talked about confronting personal pain... I wanted the poet to talk about their life so that I could connect it to their poetry / Spoken Word as well.

The poet, [Nicolas Lopez](#) (who did "Suicide")... from what I could perceive, I loved the purity of him being him...It was pure and unadulterated, which is something I look for in a poet...



[Natalie Patterson](#)

[Natalie Patterson](#) --- she seemed to bring us closer to truth and what she's been through and why it is important to be honest. It was interesting watching her 'type' her story. Nice scene.

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[Poetri](#) talked about his life becoming a poet and how poetry chose him...Now that is what I was seeking - the stories that link to the uniqueness of his style (i.e. Krispy Kreme Doughnuts). I also enjoyed what [GaKnew](#) stated about the poet who cries all the time. I enjoyed many of the shared truths that were stated about poets and what they do on stage.

I loved [Tim'm](#) talk about his sexuality and how it links to his poetry as well as the bigger context of how sexuality is seen in the Hip Hop culture. To go from his story into his poem "Love" absolutely worked!!! And then later he talked about schooling, his school of writing, health – one of the best interviews! He had so much to share as it connects to why poetry is so important. I recognize that his interview may be uncomfortable, simply due to his personal story, and THAT is what made it so appealing and beautiful and poetic in itself. The honesty and vulnerability that it takes to share YOU with your audience – the very reason why poetry and spoken word is so powerful and scary!

I loved when [J. Walker](#) talked about **edutainment** and what he does....Being a psychologist, working with others. I actually wish it came earlier in the film.

[Rachel Kann's](#) piece "I Will Come" felt long and with a bit of editing or shortening even at the end, it probably would not feel so drawn out and long. Immediately after, though, she talks about the history of Spoken Word.

As the documentary came to a close, the conversation was powerful and I found the

connection between poets and their poetry (i.e. [Jenning's](#) story, [The Lindz,Poetri](#) using language / words)...

Overall, this is a solid strong dialogue on Spoken Word among and between artists.... I absolutely LOVED [Bridget Gray's](#) poem on Hip Hop. Powerful documentary.

Review by

Traci E. Currie, Ph.D. (LEO
Lecturer IV in Communication and Visual
Arts Department) - University of
Michigan-Flint

On a Personal Note:

...Overall, a powerful necessary tool to use in the classroom / film festivals and so forth. Thank you for asking me. I am teaching Spoken Word this Fall 2008, and would love the permission to show excerpts...

Traci

Review of Graffiti Verite' 7 (Random Urban Static)

by [Pancho at the Movies](#)

(Ebert & Roeper, Move it on Over!)



I had a short argument with my friend Baudelaire, "The Poetry Curmudgeon," about whether he or myself, "Pancho at the Movies,"

would be the most appropriate to review **Graffiti Verite 7: Random Urban Static**, a documentary by Bob Bryan on the Spoken Word scene in Los Angeles.

I won, as usual, which only goes to show that a wily Chihuahua can easily gain an edge over an over confident German Shepherd. But our dispute highlights the fact that Spoken Word is too broad a movement to describe in overly specific terms, other than to state the obvious fact that it involves relatively short arrangements of words, spoken before a live audience, and with a strong emphasis on the dramatic, even cinematic, intensity of live performance.

Spoken Word might best be viewed as the entire "scene" developing from such performances, a scene that naturally encompasses a great variety of artists and artistic expressions.

Random Urban Static, in fact, does an excellent job of presenting the full range and vitality of this scene. The documentary is structured around the work of some [fifteen Spoken Word artists](#) in the Los Angeles area. Bryan's selection of artists, male and female, black, white, and Hispanic, is broad, but unforced, and effectively illustrates the natural diversity of the movement. And Bryan does not present the artists mechanically, one after the other, but skillfully cuts between individual performances, presented in the home, on the stage, and often outdoors, with an unfuss, but effective use of the camera. The performances themselves are accompanied by well-edited

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interviews, which provide personal background while at the same time illustrating the artistic origins and aesthetic context of common Spoken Word themes and techniques.

Spoken Word is commonly seen as a kind of poetry, and indeed there is much in it that is familiar from poetry in the traditional, literary, sense. But like literary poetry it can be better appreciated through an understanding of the various emphases possible within the broader genre, though it must also be pointed out that there is no strong demarcation between these various emphases, within the same poem, or the same artist. Some Spoken Word, for instance, is built on the private intensity of the confessional lyric. Other performances are conducted in the mode of public oratory, or lean on the long bardic tradition of the telling of tales. Still other Spoken Word constructions foreground the artifices possible in sound, rhythm, and rhetorical figure. In this latter type, in particular, one can see the very strong influence of the themes and techniques of Hip hop and rap. [Rachel Kann](#), one of the best of the artists included in this documentary, points out that, though Spoken Word has a very long history, its current incarnation grew out of, and maintains a strong and fruitful communication with, the Hip hop scene.

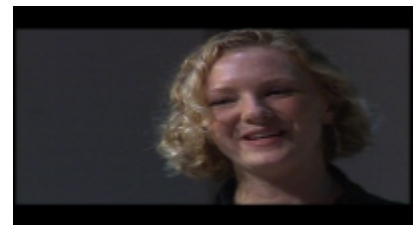


[Nicholas Lopez](#)

The conventions and techniques of the confessional lyric are well represented in the work of [Nick Lopez](#) and [Natalie Patterson](#). Though their words are presented publicly, and with a more obvious emotional tone than the hushed accents of the page, these artists nevertheless create the impression that they are speaking from the heart to themselves alone, to their own journals, or at the most to a small circle of intimate friends, about subjects of a deeply personal interest. [Lopez](#), for instance, speaks in quiet tones about the pain and perplexities of unrequited love. [Patterson](#) speaks of the similarly personal issue of the female body image, and about the need to accept the self, regardless of one's natural shape. But beyond subject matter, it is the artistic pretence of intimacy itself that is the main aesthetic principle organizing this kind of work. Obvious ornament is kept to a minimum; the language is meant to be plain and direct, and often the explicit theme is the importance of discovering and remaining true to an authentic self, despite the various pressures which might corrupt that authenticity. Interestingly, this pretence of intimacy has a paradoxical relationship with the sometimes histrionic aspects of Spoken Word performance. Many artists comment in their interviews on the tension between the audience's expectations of dramatic intensity, and the artist's need to maintain the truth of internal experience.

At a quite different pole is that branch of Spoken Word in which the speaker emphasizes their public relationship to a broader community, and their ethical or political responsibility to that community. There are different

ways, of course, to conceive of this relationship. An artist may make use the self, in a Whitmanesque fashion, as an implied community representative, in order to celebrate, reassure, or educate. [Sekou, tha Misfit's](#) "One Teach Two" is in that spirit; as is some of the work of [J. Walker](#). Alternatively, an artist may adopt a more challenging prophetic tone, using Spoken Word as a platform to upbraid a community for its own failings, in an attempt to bring it back to a more enlightened path. We see this frequently in black Spoken Word artists, such as [Bridget Gray](#) and [Tim'm T. West](#), who feel a strong identification with the traditions of rap and Hip hop, but also see their work as a challenge to the violence and sexism which they see as common in that tradition, as well as a serious threat to the broader black community. An artist may also use their work to explore the relationship between different kinds or levels of communities.



[The Lindz](#)

"*We the People*," for instance, by [The Lindz](#), explores the parallel worlds of the suburban white and the urban black, in an attempt to measure and assert their common interests. Of course poets often feel a strong identification with different communities, or both self and community, at the same time. [Tim'm T. West](#), for instance, is both black and homosexual; [Bridget Gray](#) is both black and a woman.

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The tension between these separate identifications is often the driving force of their art.



[Tim'm T. West](#)

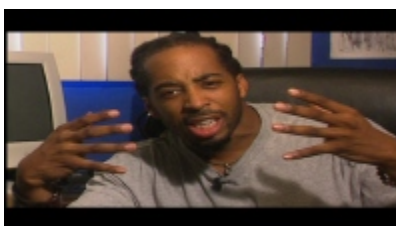
Not surprisingly, the technical elements common in this community centered branch of Spoken Word are similar to those employed in religious or political oratory. There are frequent tropes of exhortation, anger, and persuasion. The speaker's "I" will sometimes expand into the communal "we." Metaphor and symbol are employed sparingly, and those that are used are direct and familiar, and chosen to immediately engage, rather than confuse, the audience. Probably the most prominent poetic device is anaphora, the artful repetition of initial words and phrases, a figure well known from biblical verse to Whitman, and common in pulpit and campaign trail today.



[Poetri](#)

The long tradition of oral story telling is well represented in **Random Urban Static** by the artist [Poetri](#). In this branch of Spoken Word the focus is on the artful presentation of short narratives, which may or may not be based on

real events, and which may foreground entertainment, edification, or both. These stories can be told in the third person, but they are very commonly first person anecdotes with the speaker as the main character, and make good use of many common narrative devices, including surprising plot turns, dramatic irony, sentiment, and self-deprecating wit. I would have liked, in fact, to see more of [Poetri](#): he has a real talent for humor, and a modest and ingratiating presentation.



[Sekou \(tha misfit\)](#)



[Rachel Kann](#)

Finally, the more elaborately and enthusiastically artificial possibilities of Spoken Word are well illustrated in this documentary in work by [Sekou \(tha misfit\)](#), [Bridget Gray](#), and [Rachel Kann](#). [Sekou and Gray's](#) pieces show a productive kinship with the technical devices of Hip hop. [Sekou](#) makes extensive use, for instance, of interior rhyme, both for rhetorical emphasis and as a decorative filigree. He also employs well the repeating refrain, both to tie his work together as a whole, and to foreground witty and developing variations, and he

frequently highlights the rhythmic pulse of his words with his own background beats. [Gray's](#) work is similarly rich in rhyme, and she extends this richness with a beautifully developed, though never excessive, elaboration of the cadences of natural speech. [Rachel Kann](#), on the other hand, while making good use of all these artifices of sound, exploits thoroughly many of the poetic devices that seem to be deliberately avoided by those Spoken Word artists intent on direct communication alone, including elaborate metaphor, non-linear development, and an eccentric use of symbol and mythology. In her we see that Spoken Word, despite its reputation as a "popular" form, need not exclude the deranged experiments of the Symbolists, the Modernists, and the Beats.

Of course there are many more ways to fail in poetry than to succeed, and Spoken Word is no exception to this rule. Performance poetry can be dull, repetitive, unstructured, overly histrionic, artificial in cadence, riddled with cliché, and flattened by such hackneyed metaphorical constructions as the "adjective, concrete noun, of abstract noun," (Reminiscent of Ezra Pound's mocking, in the Imagist Manifesto, of the phrase "the dim lands of peace.") But most of these common types of failure hold little interest in themselves. It might be more instructive, however, to see how certain types of insufficiencies can be seen as correlated to the specific ambitions of the Spoken Word movement as a whole, and to the specific sub-genres encompassed within it.

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The confessional strain in Spoken Word, for instance, seems to me often hobbled by an extensive concern with authenticity itself, a concern that is only intensified by the directness of performance, as opposed to the page. Of course it is true that, as a dog, I have little sense of what it means to be an "authentic" human being anyway, nor do I really care.

On the other hand I suspect that humans themselves are quite fuzzy on this notion, and even if such a quality is important to one's personal life, it is not clear to me how it really matters to the poetry one produces. What I do see, though, is that an excessive concern for this quality is sometimes accompanied by a mumbling plainness of language, and a painful and isolating self-consciousness. Those artists who seem most self-conscious about the use of metaphor, for instance, often unconsciously compensate for this nakedness with an excessive dependence on a highly Latinate vocabulary, partly because this is an easy way to produce interior rhyme, and partly because Latinate terms have a superficially thoughtful and analytic air, though they in fact add little of either depth or artfulness. Furthermore, those artists whose main concern is to uncover an inner self untouched or unconcerned by external influences, might well find nothing at all, only to trumpet the common simulacra of sincerity.

The communal strain of Spoken Word, on the other hand, can be crippled by extensive concern for its social function and political effectiveness. Again, as a dog, I might be forgiven for my cold-hearted indifference to these worthy social aims, though I can

well appreciate the use of these themes as organizing tropes for poetry.

But I'm skeptical in any case about the actual social effect of this branch of poetry, even by its most sincere proponents. I do see how this poetry might occasionally have a profound effect on individual members of its audience, but the more it seems to be concerned with its broader utility, the more it seems to lean on preachiness, self-righteousness, propaganda, and self-congratulatory anger, while at the same time reinforcing, rather than challenging, the prejudices of its audience. Indeed, if this type of expression succeeds too well at its explicit aims, that success might well be scarier than its failure.

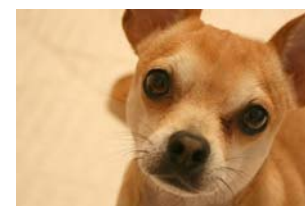
Finally, the more self-consciously artificial branches of the Spoken Word movement can also have their characteristic deficiencies. The interior rhyme frequent in Spoken Word, for instance, can sometimes seem excessive and distracting. Within Hip hop itself, which is governed more thoroughly by a regular rhythm, rhyme tends to perform the same rhetorical and unifying function that it does in traditional poetry. But without this regularity rhyme can easily degenerate into a mere decorativeness, devoid of the counterpoint of rhythm and meaning.

Similarly, prominent refrains, and the use of background music or beats behind the words, can often become crutches rather than supports, impeding rather than encouraging a deeper thematic development. The more avant-garde experiments within the movement can also easily

degenerate into random irrelevancies, riddled by a self-consciously "cosmic" imagery, imagery which often seems as familiar, and as old, as the cosmos itself.

Well, no surprise here. Art is long; life is short, and one usually has less than three minutes of strutting time upon the Spoken Word stage. It takes an admirable courage even to approach that stage, especially when the chance of lasting success is so slim, and when such apparently admirable aims as authenticity and love of community can prove to be hidden traps for art.

Spoken Word originally developed as an alternative to the perceived restrictions of written art, as a way to bring back life, spontaneity, a spirit of celebration, and a common truth to the dusty world of verse. I don't really think it has done any better than its literary counterpart. But neither would I say it has done any worse.



- Review by "[Pancho at the Movies](#)"

REVIEW BY
Ellyn Maybe, Poet

GV7 RANDOM URBAN
STATIC: Iridescent Equations of
SPOKEN WORD is a compelling

GRAFFITI VERITE' 7 (GV7) RANDOM URBAN STATIC

Iridescent Equations of SPOKEN WORD

UPC CODE #605 361 092 727

DVD Reviews

www.graffitiverite.com

journey for those interested in not only seeing great spoken word performers but also the candor that goes underneath the verse. Strong mix of readings / interviews and very resonant.

**Congrats,
[Ellyn Maybe, Poet](#)**

**[SPOKENWORD DOC: GV7
Review](#)**

Recently I had the opportunity to sit down and watch the newest installment of the multi award-winning Graffiti Verite' Documentary Series, *GV7 Random Urban Static: The Iridescent Equations of Spoken Word*. Filmmaker, Bob Bryan released the series under his Bryan World Productions indie label. The series has also played at numerous film festivals over the years.

What I really like about this documentary is that there is an equal amount of focus on the poetry and performance as there is with the one on one interviews for each poet. Issues of analyzing the portrayal of oneself vs. reality, the crumbling state of hip hop, date-rape, inequality of women, homosexuality, anorexia, and so much more are openly displayed. No topic is taken lightly or avoided, these poets are completely exposed. There are 15 poets followed in this documentary and while every poet has its purpose, there are few that really stood out and were very well written **AND** performed. Every poet had their own individual message, so this documentary has no sole message that connects each poet together...other than the point of vulnerability.

In the beginning, there is a lighthearted poem by Sekou (the misfit) called, "Seventh Grade Girl" which is about his infatuation at the time and it is easy to love. Poet, J. Walker shares how he educates the youth to think outside of the box while entertaining them at the same time. During the one on one discussion with Def Poetry Jam poet, Poetri says, "A poet definitely has to learn the art of listening," emphasizing how much of a learning tool it is for poets. Poet, Rachel Kann breaks down the difference between poetry on page and spoken word. I like how she explains that spoken word came before hip hop with storytellers but the modernization of spoken word came from hip hop. Later on in the documentary, Rachel performs her poem, "My Priority" which I really enjoyed and it will definitely make you think about your priorities. Poet, Bridget Gray presents my favorite poem on the documentary, titled "My Letter To Hip Hop." She also shares a piece, " I Am a Woman" that is just as strong and significant. The poem, "We The People" from poet, The Lindz really takes to heart how "we the people need to be the people" and not the segregated, social status societies that we are. The duo who make up "Common Ground," Mollie Angelheart and Natalie Patterson perform their piece, "On Hunger" which every female and male, young or not needs to hear. It is all about self esteem and self image and it can really turn your way of thinking and living around... especially in this society that we live in which is so dwelled on image.

I enjoyed this documentary and was presented with such thought provoking pieces that I am sure you

will benefit from when you watch it. Also, the background images, music, and effects on the documentary are put together well enough to not completely interrupt the concentration from the poetry. GV7 is released in 2 versions, for the general audience and an unedited version. Both versions have a running time of 2 hours.

Video Clips of GV7 can be found on [Youtube](#).

Written by Melody Simpson



[Buy GV7 at Amazon.com](#)

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Audiences, Schools &
Libraries\)](#)**

GRAFFITI VERITE' 7 (GV7) RANDOM URBAN STATIC

Iridescent Equations of SPOKEN WORD

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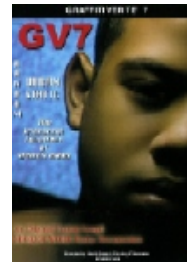
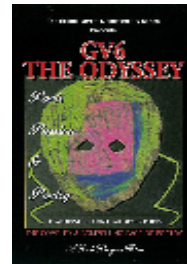
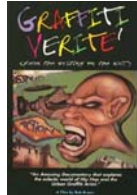
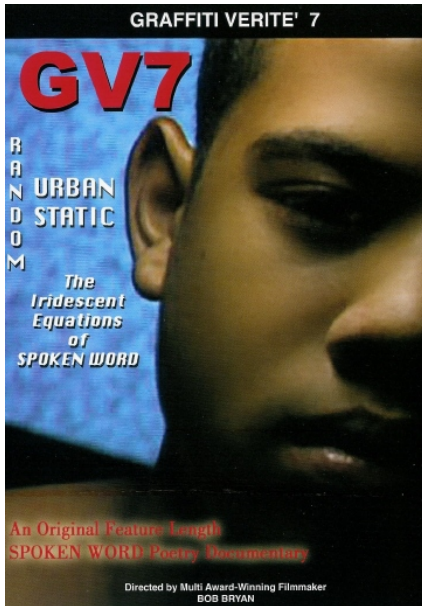
DVD Reviews

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