

GRAFFITI VERITE'

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The Iridescent Equations of Spoken Word Graffiti Verite' 7 DVD by Bob Bryan

A Review by David Frazer

Featured Writer for Ascent Aspirations Magazine

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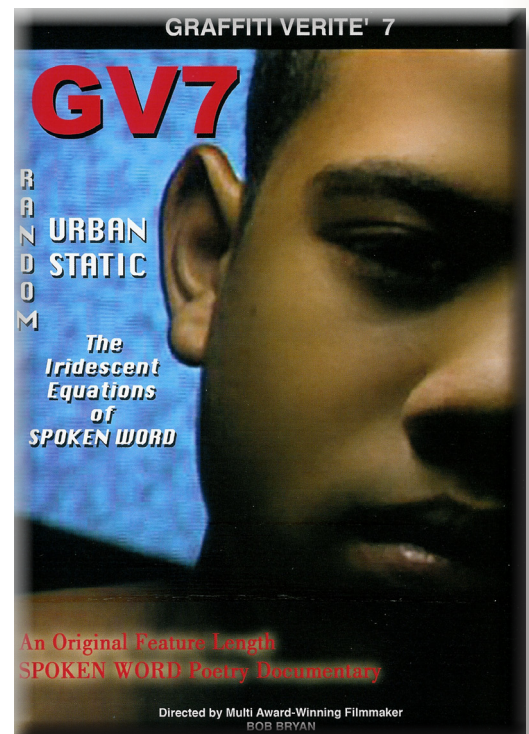
Once again Bob Bryan has produced a collage of impressions that presents contemporary spoken word artists; their lives, their ideas, and their art. Through a series of responses to informal interviews often in the poets' homes, or in parks, and cafés, and through open air informal and formal indoor stage 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. **Molly 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. **Poetri** 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 is a counselor, poet, rapper and a healer, uses his art in the classroom to help students work through their own issues. **Molly 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.

Molly 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”. **Molly** 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.

David Fraser lives in Nanoose Bay, on Vancouver Island. He is the founder and editor of Ascent Aspirations Magazine, <http://www.ascentaspirations.ca>, since 1997. His poetry and short fiction have appeared in over 50 journals including Three Candles, Regina Weese, Ardent, Quills and Ygdrasil. He has published a collection of his poetry, *Going to the Well* (2004), a collection of short fiction, *The Dark Side of the Billboard* (2006) and edited and published the five print issues of Ascent Aspirations Magazine AA Publishing. A second collection of poetry, *Running Down the Wind* appeared in 2007. David is currently the Federation of BC Writers Regional Director for The Islands Region. His latest passion is developing Nanaimo’s newest spoken word series, *WordStorm*, *WordStorm Site*. David Fraser has a BA in English from University of Toronto, and an MEd in adult education from OISE. In Ontario he taught English, Creative Writing Writer’s Craft among other subjects at the secondary school level for 30 years. Currently he is a full time writer who also teaches skiing at Mt Washington in the winter.

For more info on director Bob Bryan and **Graffiti Verite’** please visit <http://www.graffitiverite.com>

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