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## GV7 Review by Nancy Shiffrin, PhD. (c)

### RANDOM URBAN STATIC: Iridescent Equations of Spoken Word

An Original Feature Length Spoken Word Poetry Documentary

Running Time: 2 hours

DVD Written & Directed by Bob Bryan

Bryan World Productions, Los Angeles, CA

**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.

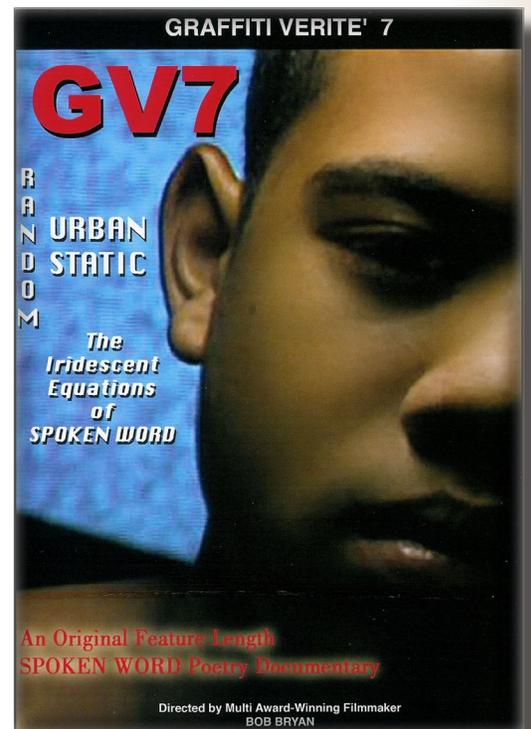
Here are 15 performers, griots, prophets. It's not that they reject the page, only one, **Mollie Angelheart**, claims not to read or write, and she has help writing down the words. It's that, as **Rachel Kann** points out, they came along as Rap and Hip Hop, which themselves derive in part from children's 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.

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 men's 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, about coming out of the closet, 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 Reviewer Nancy Shiffrin PhD is 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.

Through **CREATIVE WRITING SERVICES** her literary arts consultancy, she helps aspiring writers achieve publication and personal satisfaction. Nancy Shiffrin PhD is the author of **The Holy Letters** (poems) and **My Jewish Name** (essays) both available

from Booksurge.com or the author herself. A major theme of her work is cultural diversity in Los Angeles. She has published in the Los Angeles Times, New York Quarterly, Earth's Daughters and numerous other periodicals.

*"Eroticism is one of the basic means of self-knowledge, as indispensable as poetry..."* Anais Nin, In Favor of the Sensitive Man

Nancy Shiffrin's new collection of love poems **GAME WITH VARIATIONS** is now available on-line. Click on the link below to read more and order <http://www.unibook.com/en/Nancy-Shiffrin/GAME-WITH-VARIATIONS> "Nancy Shiffrin's poems are gut-land responses to a personal life of risks, frustrations, and celebrations. Her writing is lean, sensitive, erotic. She celebrates the female body with a rare vigor." Robert Peters

**THE VAST UNKNOWING** is still available. Order a signed inscribed copy from Nancy directly @ [nshiffrin@earthlink.net](mailto:nshiffrin@earthlink.net) Nancy's website <http://home.earthlink.net/~nshiffrin/> Read a selection from **THE VAST UNKNOWING** <http://www.othervoicespoetry.org/vol36/shiffrin/index.html> **THE VAST UNKNOWING** collects a wide spectrum of poetry from Nancy Shiffrin...*One of her main questions is Who are we? What made us that person? She explores a number of sources of our identity...(in the poem) "My Shoah" (Shiffrin) brings together many of her disparate threads—family religion...evil...details from her personal history—and makes them work together. When she is at her best, as in this poem, Shiffrin produces deep powerful poetry.* G. Murray Thomas, poetix.net

*"Buckle up. Hold tight! THE VAST UNKNOWING is like riding the rollercoaster. It will plunge you into despair, exhilarate you, shake you to the depths of your being, terrify you, elate, disturb. And leave you weak-kneed, dizzy and delighted that you saw it through to a safe landing. A ride not to be missed. ... words as weapons, words as balm, sometimes words that puzzle, words that arouse...In her poem, "At the Writer's Retreat", Shiffrin quotes Anais Nin, "There are no writer's blocks, only secrets we are afraid of telling." Nancy Shiffrin isn't afraid. And no one will remain indifferent to the virtuoso power with which she reveals her secrets." - Ricky Rapoport Friesem, Poetica Magazine: Reflections on Jewish Thought*

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

#### Contact Information

**BRYAN WORLD PRODUCTIONS**  
P.O. Box 74033  
Los Angeles, CA 90004  
Tel: (323) 856-9256  
Fax: (323) 856-0855  
Email: [bryworld@aol.com](mailto:bryworld@aol.com)