

GRAFFITI VERITE'

GV DOCU-SERIES

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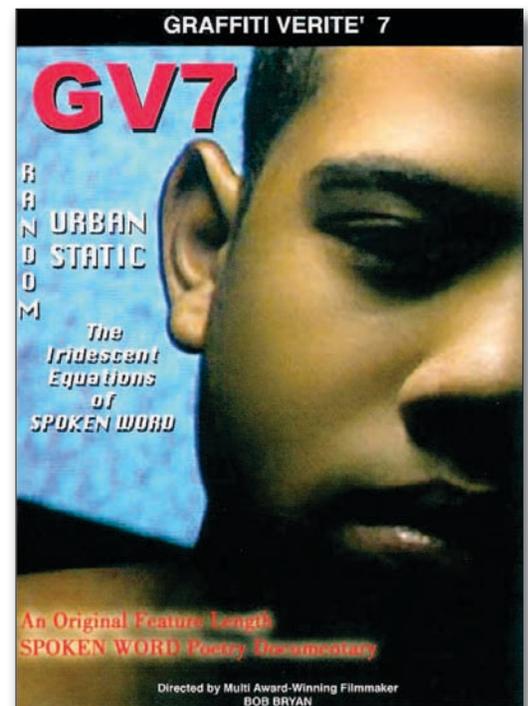
FILM REVIEWS of **GV7 RANDOM URBAN STATIC:** **The Iridescent Equations of SPOKEN WORD**

Directed by Multi Award-Winning Filmmaker Bob Bryan

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 (*the 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 headturning, 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 "movie" or 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. 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 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.

-- CLEVELANDPOETICS: The Blog



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.

-- Kam Williams, Author



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 **GV7** 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, 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.

-- Allen Taylor, Poet



“I just got my copy of the film, and watched it, and I am SO impressed, and very grateful to you. I can't tell you how many exploitative crappy “poetry documentaries” (*I hesitate to even call them that! They're that bad!*) I have seen.

I am so impressed with how much heart and humanity is in your film, and how great you are at capturing poetry performances.

And I am very honored and pleased with how you presented me in the film. Kudos to you, and thanks from the very bottom of my heart. All my best!



-- Rachel Kann,
Poet, Fiction Writer, & Spoken-Word Artist



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.

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. **RANDOM URBAN STATIC** 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.

-- Nancy Shiffrin, Ph.D.,
Poet, Critic & Teacher

“**GV7 RANDOM URBAN STATIC: Iridescent Equations of SPOKEN WORD** is a compelling 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 and interviews; and very resonant. Congrats!

-- Ellyn Maybe, Poet

“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 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.

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!

-- Victor Ho,
LA2DAY.COM



GV7 RANDOM URBAN STATIC The Iridescent Equations of Spoken Word is an original feature length spoken word documentary by the multi award-winning indie filmmaker Bob Bryan. It is the 7th release in the GRAFFITI VERITE DOCU-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.

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.

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 artists who are birthing in this craft. The vets of the poetry world will be reminded of the reasons 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.

-- Des a.k.a. DLUX: THE LIGHT,
(Desmond)



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**.

GV7, 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..."*

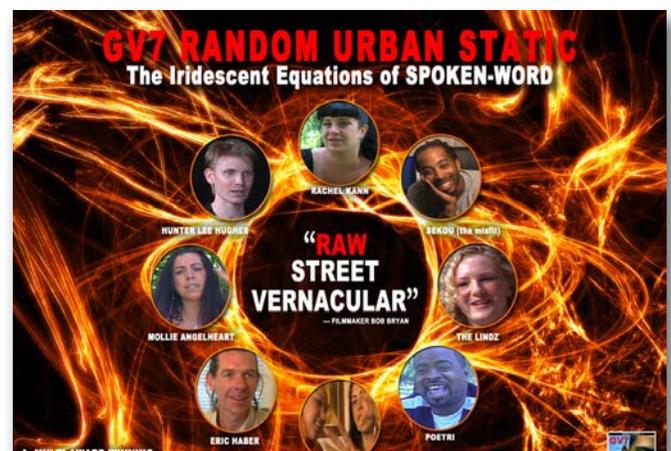
*"Stop calling yourself a n*gga
and call yourself a man..."*

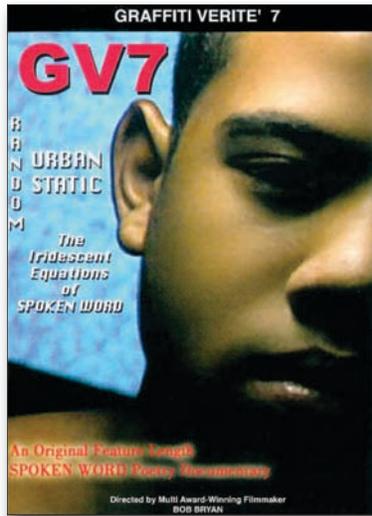
Eric Haber, who claims that he was *"conceived in the summer of love and [was] born in the winter of regret"* says that spoken word has the power even to say even the wierd. Somewhere in that message, as another poet points out (Sekou *tha misfit*), there is a message that will help someone.

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.

-- Emmanuel Sigauke, Writer





The **GV DOCU-SERIES** is currently available online @ **Amazon.com Instant Video** where DVD's can also be purchased for Schools and Libraries domestically and abroad.

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