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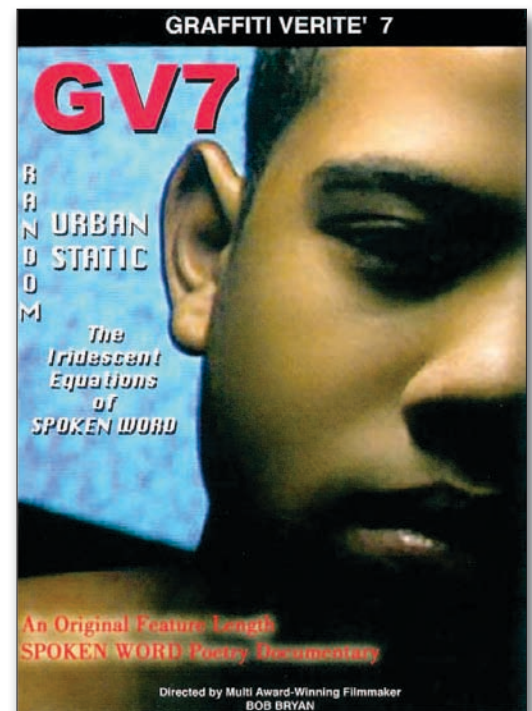
FILM REVIEWS of **GV7 RANDOM URBAN STATIC:** **The Iridescent Equations of SPOKEN WORD**

Directed by Multi Award-Winning Filmmaker Bob Bryan

Once again Bob Bryan has 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 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 documentary, **GV7 RANDOM URBAN STATIC**, 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, Writer
ASCENT ASPIRATIONS MAGAZINE



Random inspiration and thought provocation. Hot and cold refreshments... 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 documentary 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 angry and I shared a tear or two. At times my skin crawled.

"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**)

-- MAEKITSO'S CAFE



G**V7 RANDOM URBAN STATIC** - 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, 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.

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 --- 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.

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's 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!

-- Traci E. Currie, Ph.D.

“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 documentary 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 their purpose, there are a few that really stood out and were very well written AND performed. Every poet had their own individual message, so this documentary has no single message that connects each poet together... other than their collective 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 (*the poem*) 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 he shares that, "*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 in the documentary, titled “*My Letter To Hip Hop*.” She also spits 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 often are. The duo who make up “*Common Ground*,” Mollie Angelheart and Natalie Patterson perform their piece, “*On Hunger*” which every male or female, young or old needs to hear. It is all about self-esteem and self-image issues and it can really turn your way of thinking and living around... especially in this society that we live in which is so focused on image only.

I enjoyed this documentary and was presented with such *thought provoking pieces* that I’m sure you also will benefit from it when you watch it. In addition, the background images, music, and effects used in the documentary are put together in a professional way to not completely interrupt the flow of the poetry. **GV7** is released in 2 versions, Rated “G” for Libraries and Schools and an Unedited Original Version for those who don’t mind “some raw street vernacular.” Both versions have a running time of 2 hours.



-- Melody Simpson, Writer



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 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, 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 self-lessness. 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*”.

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



“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.

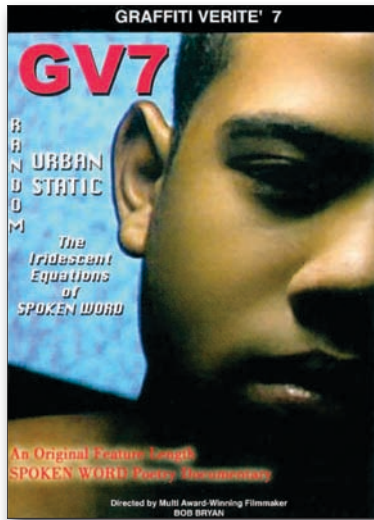
The individuality of each author’s journey is a portal the public rarely gets to explore and **GV7 takes you on the journey with grace and objectivity.**



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.

-- Harvey Katz,
ATHENS BOYS CHOIR





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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