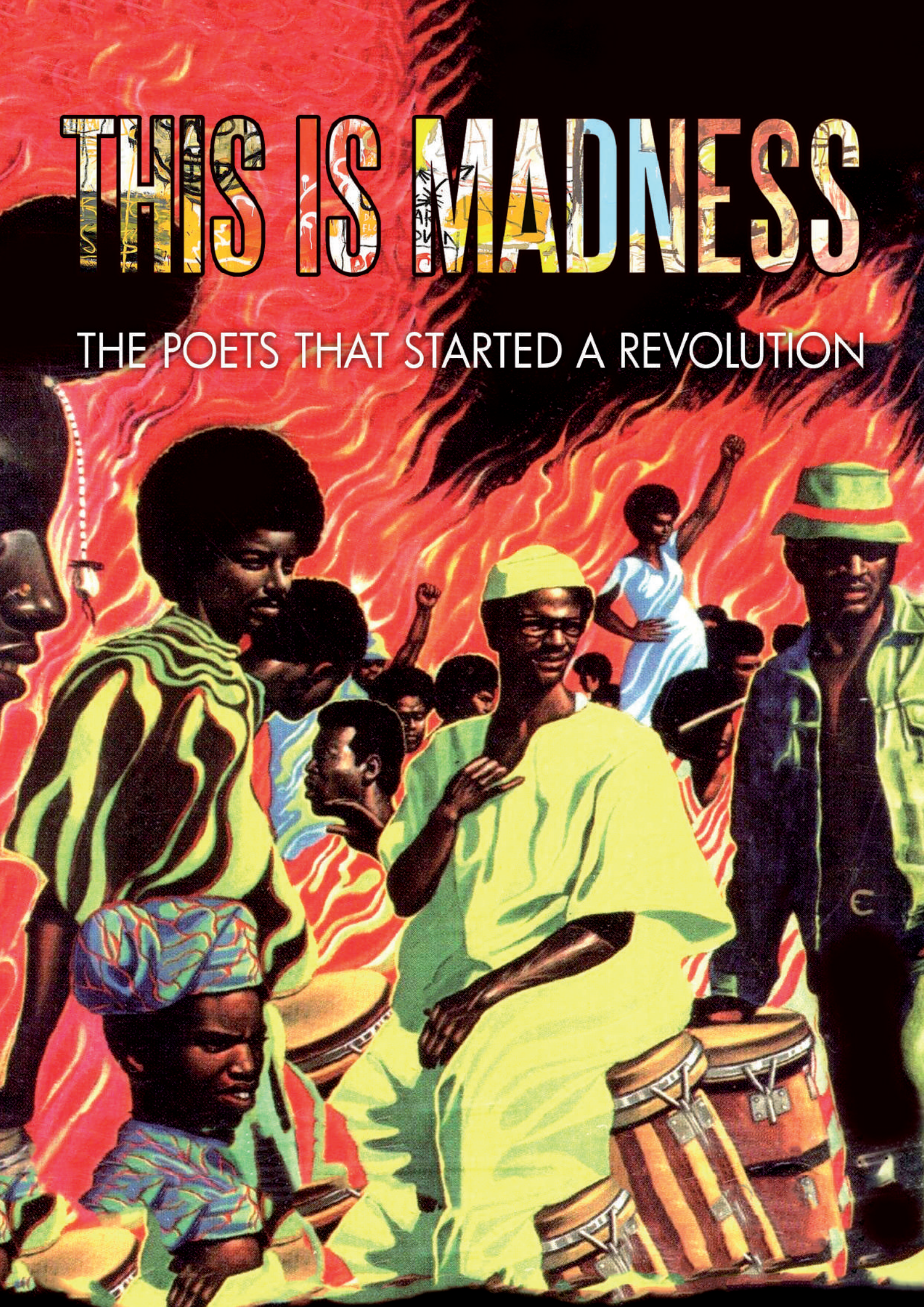


THIS IS MADNESS

THE POETS THAT STARTED A REVOLUTION



THIS IS MADNESS

Origin of production: UK

Genre: Documentary Feature

Language: English

Production Company: Port Royal Media Ltd / This Is Madness Ltd

Writer/ Director: Marko Nine

Producers: Jezz Vernon & Victoria Thomas

Classification: 15 TBC

Logline: As race riots rock America once more, we return to the story of Hip-Hop's true founding fathers - The Last Poets, Gil Scott-Heron and The Watts Prophets – legendary militant black Poets and musicians that came together in 1968 to create an urgent new voice amidst the revolution.

[CLICK HERE TO WATCH THE PROMO](#)



“When the revolution comes some of us will probably catch it on TV, with chicken hanging from our mouths.”

The birth of Hip-Hop has become urban mythology over the past forty years. The continuous breakbeat was an innovation by DJ Kool Herc in the early seventies who would switch back and forth between the drum breaks on two copies of a James Brown record, in the meantime arguments continue over whether ‘Here comes the Judge’ by Pigmeat Markham, ‘Rapper’s Delight’ by the Sugarhill Gang or ‘King Tim III’ by the Fatback Gang was the first rap record. But there has never been any question over where the ferocious cultural manifesto, the politicism and the anger of Hip-Hop’s best lyrical work originated. The question, as America is rocked by race riots, is where did it go?

The year is 1968. In Marcus Garvey Park in Harlem, a group of black musicians, writers and activists formed a group, calling themselves The Last Poets. They read poems and played drums - and when they spoke, they spoke plainly. Their message was about unity. About social justice. About empowerment. About all that was wrong with their world and all that could be done to make it better. Malcolm X had been assassinated three years earlier while Martin Luther King had been shot just 3 months prior – anger was running high. While many had aligned themselves with militant outlets like the Black Panthers preparing for an armed revolution, the Last Poets were the first to embrace revolution through poetry and music - shocking the establishment through mainstream media channels. Twelve months earlier on the West coast a similar group had come together calling themselves the Watts Prophets.



The Watts Prophets

Things Gonna Get Greater: The Watts Prophets 1969-1971



Fifty years on they are all considered to be the founding fathers of Hip-Hop alongside Gil Scott-Heron. Over five decades dozens of members joined and left the groups and a multitude of albums were recorded.

This Is Madness - (the title of one of The Last Poets most celebrated tracks) will explore their fifty year story and ask why Hip-Hop forgot their lessons. As 21st Century race riots rock America we'll bring their voice to a new generation. Mark Twain said, "history doesn't repeat itself, but it does rhyme".

Featuring decades of exclusive interviews with the Poets, the Prophets and Gil Scott-Heron alongside interviews with some of the biggest Hip-Hop stars of all time, we're also filming key commentators and black intellectuals to truly understand the modern landscape of American society.

THE LAST POETS

This is Madness



CELLULOID

Director Bio

Marko Nine is a songwriter/filmmaker who has known and worked with The Last Poets for the past two decades. He has been filming them since 1994 and followed their journey as a friend and collaborator.

In the musical arena, he has worked with Rob Hegel (Air Supply), Annie Burns (The Burns Sisters), Chris Butler (The Waitresses), Keith Levene (Public Image Ltd.), and Pat DiNizio (The Smithereens), and has composed music for television and feature films.

His current film projects include adaptations of Peter Hoeg's 'The Quiet Girl', Nicholas Christopher's 'The Soloist' and Luke Rinehart's 'The Dice Man'.

“We were born May 19, 1968, Malcolm X day. We were dealing with Malcolm’s ideas and his whole concept of self-determination and black nationalism. We wanted to be the voice of that. That was the impetus of our existence. I really could not buy Martin Luther King’s program. The idea that we wanted to sit next to them in a luncheonette or a bathroom. You got to built your own toilet.

Don’t beg anybody for your friendship. You be who you are. You be respectful onto yourself and every living thing around you.”

Abiodun Oyewole - The Last Poets



Director's Statement

I have been privileged to enjoy many years of fruitful comradery with members of The Last Poets since our initial meeting, resulting in unparalleled access to previously unseen footage, and to unreleased recording collaborations. Based in Harlem for a good portion of that time, I have also engaged in conversations with Ta-Nehisi Coates, Thomas Chatterton Williams, and others within the black intelligentsia.

This film will be a planetary polaroid of the cultural/political landscape known as Hip-Hop in light of the new wave of race riots, as engendered by revolutionary voices such as the Watts Prophets, Gil Scott-Heron and the Last Poets. I intend to follow the on-going influence of the originators of Hip-Hop to explore where the true, transformative message has been obliterated, and where it's flourished.



Producer JEZZ VERNON [IMDB LINK](#)

Jezz Vernon has been Managing Director of Port Royal Media and Port Royal Distribution since 2016. Over the past decade he has produced a range of feature films and documentaries including *The Borderlands*, *Born in New York & Raised in Paris* and the forthcoming *People You May Know*, as well as exec producing multiple other projects. Previously he was Managing Director of UK Film Distributor and Sales Agent Metrodome, having joined the company in 2005. During his tenure he also oversaw production within the company from 2010. Metrodome's releases included *The Secret in Their Eyes*, *I Am Love*, *Frances Ha*, *Tangerine*, *The Falling* and *Sunset Song*. He has been a board member of strategic agency Film London since 2015 and lectures at the National Film & Television School.

Producer VICTORIA THOMAS [IMDB LINK](#)

Victoria Thomas trained as a solicitor before embarking on a career in film, founding production entity The Polka Dot Factory in 2010. She has produced both short and feature length films across documentary, fiction and animation. Her films have screened at film festivals internationally and been broadcast on television, winning awards and nominations from a range of notable institutions including BAFTA Scotland. An alumni of Berlinale Talents, IDFA Academy and the UK'S National Film and Television School, she holds an MFA in Film.



CONTACT

Jezz@portroyal.london
+44 (0) 7976 883034

Victoria@polkadotfactory.studio
+44 (0) 7952 305247



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