

Synopsis

Groter dan het leven, wild, uitdagend en androgyn, maar ook model, pop-icoon en actrice - Grace Jones is het allemaal! Met 'Nightclubbing' en 'Slave to the Rhythm' in de jaren tachtig sloeg ze een brug tussen disco en new wave en verzoende aldus water en vuur. Maar deze onwereldse zangeres is ook dochter, moeder, zus en zelfs grootmoeder. Sophie Fiennes volgde Grace Jones een aantal jaren waarin Grace zich volledig openstelde. Ze neemt ons mee naar Jamaica waar we kennismaken met haar familie en de achtergrond van haar traumatische jeugd wordt onthuld. We zien haar in Parijs op een fotoshoot met de beroemde fotograaf (en toenmalige partner en vader van haar zoon) Jean-Paul Goude en tijdens een spectaculair optreden in 2016 in Dublin waar ze iconische hits vertolkt als *Slave To The Rhythm*, *Pull Up To The Bumper*, *Nipple To The Bottle* en meer recente stukken als *Williams' Blood* en *Hurricane* en covers als *Love Is The Drug*. 'Bloodlight' is het rode studiolampje wat brandt als een artiest aan het opnemen is en 'Bami' is Jamaicaans brood, de basis van de dagelijkse voeding.

Grace Jones: Bloodlight and Bami vlecht het publieke en privé leven van Grace Jones samen in een uniek portret wat alle facetten van haar leven toont: de zigeuner, de artiest en feestende hedonist, de warme en grappige vrouw en moeder met het felle en vasthoudende zakentalent. Dit is een Grace zoals we haar nog niet kennen.

Korte synopsis

Wild, uitdagend en androgyn. Model, pop-icoon en actrice - Grace Jones is het allemaal! Maar ze is ook dochter, moeder, zus en zelfs grootmoeder. Sophie Fiennes volgde haar een aantal jaren waarin Grace zich openstelde. We zien haar op Jamaica waar we kennismaken met haar familie en haar jeugd. In Parijs tijdens een fotoshoot en in Dublin tijdens een spectaculair concert waar ze al haar iconische hits en meer recente stukken vertolkt.

Oneliner

Documentaire over het artistieke en privé leven van zangeres Grace Jones met spectaculaire live-optredens.

Achtergrond

Regisseuse Sophie Fiennes (zus van Ralph en Joseph), bekend van 'The Pervert's Guide to Cinema', draaide vijftien jaar geleden met 'Hoover Street Revival' al een docu over Jones' broer Noel, een predikant. Niet lang daarna begon ze aan 'Grace Jones: Bloodlight and Bami', waaraan ze tien jaar gewerkt heeft: de eerste vijf om te filmen, de volgende vijf om hem af te werken. Een reis van Jones met haar zoon Paulo naar haar vaderland Jamaica én een uniek concert in Dublin in 2016 lopen als twee rode draden door deze impressionistische film.

Grace Jones is in 1949 geboren op Jamaica. Haar ouders, Marjorie Jones en dominee en politicus Robert W. Jones, verhuisden in 1965, samen met Grace en haar tweelingbroer Christian, van Jamaica naar Syracuse, in de Amerikaanse staat New York. Voor ze begon te werken als model studeerde



Jones theater aan het Onondaga Community College. Begin jaren zeventig verhuisde ze naar Parijs waar ze werd ontdekt en in 1977 haar eerste grote hit had met La Vie En Rose. In de jaren tachtig nam ze iconische albums op als 'Nightclubbing' met de monsterhits I've Seen That Face Before, Pull Up To The Bumper en 'Slave To The Rythm' met de gelijknamige hit . Ze bleef actief met live optredens (o.a. North Sea Jazz, Night of the Proms) en bracht in 2008 het succesvolle (come-back) album 'Hurricane' uit. Ze werd ook succesvol als actrice in o.a. Conan the Barbarian en James Bond's A View to a Kill.



INTERVIEWS





TIFF '17: Sophie Fiennes' intimate portrait of “Grace Jones”

By Daniele Alcinii – September 7, 2017

Filmed over the course of a decade, [Sophie Fiennes'](#) latest feature-length documentary explores the many lives –performance, personal and public – of seminal New Wave icon Grace Jones.

In *Grace Jones: Bloodlight & Bami*, gone are the stylings of a traditional biography, ripe with sit-down interviews and archive footage.

“That’s not an interesting form of documentary to me because then it’s always about the past,” says Fiennes of the decision to treat *Grace Jones* as a cinéma vérité project. “I like the present moment and capturing that present moment.”

Instead, the 115-minute film, which serves as the opening night TIFF Docs film, provides an intimate vérité-style look at the Jamaican model-turned-singer-turned actress.

The doc sheds light on the former *Vogue* cover model and singer by tracing her with family on a holiday road trip across Jamaica, where her familial roots and the story of her traumatic childhood are uncovered. Fiennes’ lens is also fixated on Jones as she enters into the recording studio with Jamaican duo Sly and Robbie, and jaunting over to Paris with frequent creative collaborator Jean-Paul Goude.

(The film’s title is taken from Jamaican patois, in which “bloodlight” is the red light that illuminates in recording studios, while “bami” means bread, the substance of daily life.)

Interspersed throughout the film are performances from a 2016 concert at the Olympia Theatre in Dublin, Ireland, that provide a theatrical element to Fiennes’ intimate portrait. The film sees Jones performing such hit songs as “Love is the Drug,” “Pull Up To The Bumper,” “Amazing Grace,” “Hurricane” and “Slave to the Rhythm” alongside ornamental routines that echo her modeling past.

Produced by Dublin-based Blinder Films, Sligoville and Amoeba Film, the film was financed by BBC Films, the British Film Institute, Irish Film Board and Roads Entertainment, in cooperation with ZDF/ARTE.



The film was produced by Fiennes, Katie Holly, Shani Hinton and Beverly Jones.

Executive producers include Christine Langan, Joe Oppenheimer, Lizzie Francke, Keith Potter, Francesca Von Habsburg, Danielle Ryan, Alan Maher, James Wilson and Émilie Blézat.

Realscreen caught up with Fiennes to chat about *Grace Jones* ahead of the doc's world premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival this evening (Sept. 7).

This interview has been edited and condensed for clarity and length.

What was the genesis of *Grace Jones*? How did it come to be?

I had made a film about her brother's Pentecostal church in Los Angeles and it was from seeing that that film (*Hoover Street Revival*, 2002) that she spontaneously suggested we embark on a project together. It was very much the beginning of an organic process of really giving herself over to being seen in a documentary context outside of this construction. She had never been filmed before without makeup. She's controlled by her public image very carefully, very tightly. She's kept her private self very private. And I think that for her it was a really exciting and challenging process to be seen in a different way.

Can you take me through the process of creating and developing this film that was 10 years in the making?

I started in 2005, but after five years I knew I had the material that was covering a certain moment in her life. I knew that I really needed to capture the performance in a contrapuntal way to set that against this intimacy in the film. I wanted to set this question of construction of self on a stage against being in one's life in a day-to-day kind of way – to create a relationship between those two registers of being.

Grace as a performer has changed a lot since her early work with Jean-Paul Goude. I really felt her performance had to be captured properly because she's an extraordinary performer and, as I was filming over the five years with just a small documentary camera, I could see this amazing performance happening. This was something that I wanted to capture in a higher production value than my DV camera could do – it needed to be done properly – and that meant raising money to make that happen.

What sort of production challenges did you encounter during the making of this film?

It's always a challenge to raise money. The paperwork and the bureaucracy now that's required in bringing a film to completion is enormous, just in terms of making these agreements work. It's a whole year of just putting paperwork together. That's why my lawyer, a wonderful woman called Shani Hinton, is actually also a producer on the film — because she was doing so much of this work and that was a huge part of completing a film.



The shooting, creatively, I would say is one of the most thrilling experiences for me because it was a risk in creating a show. We only had two performances and shot it on 16mm – you're changing film magazines and there's always a certain fragility in that.

In terms of the documentary side of it, it was just constantly being in these moments, capturing them and finding ways of framing that you get to that strength of Grace's beauty and the power of her physically, and also the many sides of her character.

From my understanding, you've edited the past five of your documentaries using Final Cut. Why is that?

Because no one would ever take the time to go into the material the way that I would and I couldn't afford that anyway. But I also love editing. Documentary filmmakers have often edited their own work because you don't have a script to follow...you have to write it in the edits. Now with the software systems, you really can write with film, and I don't just mean what is said in speech. It's also to do with the rhythms of picture, sound and the evocation of place and moment. Building those is always the part that I really, really enjoy.

What's next for you as a documentary filmmaker?

(Documentary personality and philosopher) Slavoj Žižek and I have a pact that we are going to make a trilogy, so I have one more film to make with him that we're talking about – the final in our *Pervert's* series. The working title is *The Pervert's Guide to the 21st Century*. To have made a film that was exploring psychoanalytic ideas and then ideological ideology, and to be in the world that we're in now, it's a really interesting challenge to see what the material for this film will be.

<http://realscreen.com/2017/09/07/tiff-17-sophie-fiennes-intimate-portrait-of-grace-jones>





Grace Jones unmask for TIFF doc opener Bloodlight And Bami

The music, art and fashion trailblazer talks going vérité, why she'll always be an underground star and who should play her in a biopic

BY KEVIN RITCHIE - AUGUST 30, 2017

It's after midnight and Grace Jones has just finished watching a fashion show at her home in Jamaica.

For the preceding week, the musician, actor and model's eight-year-old granddaughter and her girlfriend had been begging Jones to let them raid her closet and work the catwalk.

"Finally I said 'Okay! Tonight! Let's do it!'" Jones says over the phone, unleashing a deep, throaty laugh. "We have to leave them alone in the room and they go through my drawers. They pull everything out, style themselves and you're not able to peek or help. They do their own thing."

Her granddaughter's presentation also featured some dancing on the runway.

"Of course her girlfriend is saying you don't dance in a fashion show," Jones says. "And she said, 'Well, I like to be myself and I like to dance in the fashion show.' I said, 'Now you're saying the right thing!'"

It's pretty clear where she gets that resolve from.

After a 19-year break between albums, Jones released the dark and dubby Hurricane in 2008, a record full of autobiographical songs that traced the origins of her uncompromising performance persona back to her strict and religious upbringing in Jamaica.



Her public profile is low-key compared to the days when she was an underground dance music fixture in 1970s New York City, a trailblazing model in Paris, a muse to art stars like Keith Haring, Andy Warhol and Jean-Paul Goude (her former partner) and a left-field celebrity in the 80s.

But when she does surface – usually for concerts – the result is unforgettable.

Lately, Jones has been performing naked save for tribal headdresses and body paint inspired by Nigerian ancestry as well as her collaborations with Haring in the cult horror movie *Vamp*, and her days partying at storied NYC dance club Paradise Garage.

She has also stayed in storytelling mode, publishing the wildly entertaining 2015 memoir *I'll Never Write My Memoirs* and wrapping the 11-year production on a documentary about her life *Grace Jones: Bloodlight And Bami*, which gets its world premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival this week.

Directed by Sophie Fiennes, the film is a turning a point for Jones. Eschewing the usual archival footage and talking-head interviews of a typical rock doc, it's a vérité-style peek into her world over the past decade.

The title references the merging of art and life: “bloodlight” is slang for the red light in Jamaican music studios and “bami” is bread.

All the threads of Jones's various guises come together in the film: mother, daughter, grandmother, artist, indie musician, model, instigator, lover, adventurer.

We see Jones hanging out with her family in Jamaica, coaxing absentee bassist Robbie Shakespeare to come to a studio session for her *Hurricane* album. We see her going to church, going to the club, partying backstage, doing her makeup in cars and hotel rooms, cradling her newborn granddaughter, discussing childhood abuse, shutting down sexist and shady entertainment industry operators and delivering electrifying performances on her *Hurricane* tour.

Letting cameras into her world was a total departure for Jones, who usually exaggerates her personality through highly controlled images and performances that merge music with theatrical fashion and visuals in ways that have reverberated into subsequent generations of performers, from Kanye West and Rihanna to Róisín Murphy and FKA Twigs.

“You get all different sides with this documentary – totally natural, no makeup, just improv, no rehearsals and no special lighting until we did the performances, which I was totally involved with,” she says. “It's really the first time that I unmask, I guess you could say.”



She gave Fiennes – who made a 2002 doc about Jones’s Pentecostal bishop brother, Noel, 100 per cent control save for “a couple of ideas in the editing.” The collaboration was not unlike those with her former partner, the photographer Jean-Paul Goude on iconic covers for early 90s albums *Living My Life*, *Slave To The Rhythm* and *Island Life*, but even less hands-on.

“As females in the art world, we got along very well. I loved what she did on my brother’s documentary,” she says of Fiennes. “I never watched any of the footage. I just had total trust in her, which is how I usually work when I collaborate.”

While Jones’s memoir goes deep into formative experiences that shaped her outlook, the doc has potential to preach her gospel of independence to a wider audience.

It comes at an opportune time, when the things she has stood and fought for – celebrating Blackness and queerness, powerful sexuality, subverting notions of gender and rebuffing corporate interests – feel especially threatening to those in power. At the same time, Jones has never tried to be palatable to mainstream interests.

“I believe I’m always underground,” she says. “The way I grew up, everybody was telling you what to do regardless of what you wanted to do. In order to get truths across, whether in performance or in songs, one has to be totally committed and passionate about what they’re doing and loving it. I can’t do my best performance if I have to question what other people want.

“I’ve got a lot of experience,” she adds, “from being allowed to be myself.”

Though the doc has no archival footage, many moments that might be the subject of a flashback in a standard music doc are recounted through conversations with friends, family and collaborators. The infamous TV interview in which she slapped a sexist British host for turning his back on her is tipsily reenacted for Fiennes’s camera during a backstage hang out.

She also repeats her solution to misogyny – and one of the best lines from the memoir: “I want to fuck every man in the ass at least once. Every guy needs to be penetrated at least once.”

Is there anyone she can possibly think of that urgently needs to be penetrated in 2017?

“Anybody who is penetrating needs to be penetrated!” she shoots back. “So they will know how the other shoe fits.”

Despite years of experience, she still encounters situations in which people try to get their fingerprints on her vision.



Bloodlight And Bami captures one such moment when Jones arrives to rehearse her disco-era hit La Vie En Rose for a French TV show and producers have a tacky surprise that's too good to spoil awaiting her. What transpires – onstage and off – is at once surreal, hilarious and a sad commentary on the ways the mainstream will always seize any chance to homogenize artistry.

When I bring up the shocking-not-shocking sequence, Jones laughs long and hard.

“Yeaaaaaaah,” she says. “I view it all as if I’m in a painting and if what’s around me doesn’t feel comfortable or sends the wrong visual message, then I will speak up. I’ve walked out of TV shows where I’ve gone, seen sets that were really just awful and said ‘I don’t belong in that painting.’”

She doesn’t want to hurt people’s feelings. “At the same time, I feel compelled to have the last say if the subject matter is me,” she says. “I can’t change that.”

Once the documentary rolls out, she will shift focus to finishing up her next album, which she has been working on with Wally Badarou, the pioneering synth musician who worked on many of Jones’s biggest records from the 80s. Befitting her body paint on stage, the record has a heavy African rhythmic pulse but with French and Jamaican influences.

A feature film adaptation of her memoir is also on the table. Offers have been made, but as usual she is proceeding with caution so her life story doesn’t get the superficial treatment. As for a star? Lupita Nyong’o’s name has been bandied about.

“Her name is thrown at me a lot, but my character has many characters so...”

So the actor has to be versatile?

“Yeah!” she cackles.

Someone who can penetrate but also be penetrated?

“You got it!” she says. “We’ll see. It definitely will be fun.”

Would the film benefit from another female director?

“It just has to be the right person,” she says. “A lot of men have a lot of woman in them. So it doesn’t have to be a woman, it doesn’t have to be a man. It just has to be a very good filmmaker!”

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/tiff2017/grace-jones-ummasked/>



POV

POINT OF VIEW MAGAZINE

Sophie Fiennes, Grace Jones and Shifting Shape

By Maurie Alioff, September 22nd, 2017



Director Sophie Fiennes
Photo by Maurie Alioff

Launching TIFF's doc section, Sophie Fiennes's film *Grace Jones: Bloodlight and Bami* gave the audience at its first public screening the taste of ecstasy they hoped for. Both Fiennes and the living icon revelled in the wave of excitement that crashed through the Elgin.



Driven by the almost 70-year-old Jones's unstoppable energy as a performer and human being, her still powerfully gorgeous body, and her sleek sexuality, the movie was a dream project for Fiennes that she immersed herself in for ten years.

For one thing, "I love being in Jamaica," the director told me a few days after the debut. Even before embarking on the project, she had been all over the island "scouting locations for advertising shoots. With *Grace*, I travelled around Jamaica, getting a different access to it, a different sense totally. It was brilliant to see it through her eyes." Jones is deeply rooted to the island where she was born. Fiennes filmed the Spanish Town streets that she grew up on, the mountain countryside, and other locales that pulse with life, but are not postcard pretty.

Fiennes recalls a moment when Jones talked to Dickie Jobson, director of the 1982 film *Country Man*, a cultural milestone on par with *The Harder they Come*. Laughing, Fiennes imitates Jones swinging into Patois inflection: "Jamaica is the umbilical cord. When they out of tings to sing about they come back to the umbilical cord, and they cut it up, and eat it like sausage." A supremely cosmopolitan woman who has lived in London, Paris, and New York, Jones returns to the blessed isle as often as she can. "She just loves it," says Fiennes. "She recharges."

Apart from tracking Grace Jones's experiences in Jamaica; her interactions with family, friends, and former neighbours; and memories of her cruelly abusive step-grandfather Mas P, *Bloodlight and Bami* zeroes in on what Fiennes calls "the contrapuntal tension between the fragility of daily life and what the performer is doing on stage."





Photo by J Countess / WireImage – TIFF

Fiennes crosscuts between cinema verité footage of her subject dealing with money and personnel issues, and stylized sequences of the singer and dancer on stage. In concert footage shot in 2016, Jones struts and stalks wearing flamboyant hats, corsets, and low-cut, high-on-the-thigh one-pieces, the kind favoured by party-going Jamaican women a fraction of her age.

“I wanted to bring into the film that incarnation of Grace,” says Fiennes. After years of tracking Jones, “I said to her, ‘I can’t complete this film without your performance, and I can’t shoot your performance in a random way.’”

Fiennes continues: “I’ve watched her perform a lot of music festivals with all this stuff on the stage. If you film that, you see all these bits of rubbish behind her.” Fiennes and her crew staged Grace Jones’s performances in an Irish theatre where they could orchestrate every detail. She wanted her musical sequences, shot on Super 16, to look “classic and theatrical.”

The doc eschews vintage footage of its star. You don’t see much Grace Jones of the 1980s or 90s. “It’s all on YouTube,” says Fiennes. “We made our own material.” Why work with the performer for years and load up on sound and images from the past? “This is not a nostalgic film. It’s a film in the present tense, in the moment. Someone else can make that other kind of film. It just doesn’t interest me.”



The sister of actors Ralph Fiennes and Joseph Fiennes, Sophie's restless, adventurous spirit originates in her childhood. "As a family we moved around a lot, and I never stayed anywhere very long. I'm a gypsy who grew up in small provincial English towns, and in the west of Ireland. Very rural, really undeveloped, like parts of Jamaica in a way."



Director Sophie Fiennes and Grace Jones at the TIFF premiere of *Grace Jones: Bloodlight and Bami*

Photo by J Countess / WireImage – TIFF

Fiennes "wanted to be a filmmaker from about the age of 14. I was babysitting, and I saw *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser* on TV. It was like you get grabbed by something. That's what I wanted. This is a language. This is a place. A world that I knew I wanted to explore."

What was it about Werner Herzog's movie that cut so deep?

Fiennes was taken by "the opening shot of the cornfield blowing, the way that he held the shot, and something happened and changed, and there was a possibility to surf that moment in the film, that image, and wonder and respond. I was taken into a filmic world that wasn't like anything else I had seen."





Jones performing in *Bloodlight and Bami*
Courtesy of TIFF

Over the years, Fiennes has “worked in photography, in fashion, and on fiction films with Peter Greenaway.” The experiences coalesced into “a snowball of skills, and knowledge, and interests. It’s great when you do different things in your early years, and you bring that experience to what you make. When I was filming the performance sequences, I was really happy that I had done a one-week workshop with a brilliant lighting designer called Jennifer Tipton, who worked with Twyla Tharp and Bob Wilson. All of that information bubbled up in me as I created that show.”

Throughout *Bloodlight and Bami*, which refers to the Now Recording signal in a Jamaican sound studio and flat bread often eaten with fish, Grace Jones appears in her typically flamboyant costumes, or looking like she could be a yardie. She’s masked and unmasked, covered and uncovered.

A couple of years ago, I said to a Jamaican woman, “You are all shape shifters.” She laughed and nodded. Grace Jones is the empress of shape shifters. I told Fiennes that for me, the film undercuts judgemental clichés about makeup and other ways women design a look. Fiennes implies that Jones’s masks and costumes are not a way of hiding. In fact, they reveal.

“Absolutely. Thank you. That is the intent of the film really, what you picked up. You might want to say here is the real person behind the mask, but it’s really a dialogue.”





Fiennes and Jones on the TIFF red carpet
Photo by J Countess / WireImage – TIFF

That dialogue can trigger a powerful force. “What is the iconic thing?” Fiennes asks. “It’s something we believe. An icon is a point of belief. It has awakened our imaginari-um. It’s not actually in an archive. It’s in our excitement. In our pleasure of how Grace has reproduced in all this shape shifting.”

Sophie Fiennes’s previous work included her collaborations with the radical philosopher Slavoj Žižek: *The Pervert’s Guide to Cinema* (2006) and *The Pervert’s Guide to Ideology* (2012). “When I came across Slavoj’s work,” she says, “I found a source I could really play in, particularly in *The Pervert’s Guide to Cinema*. There’s a section about *Vertigo* where he talks about how woman is the subject because the guises of the woman, the masquerade of the woman, the constructions of the woman, which are supposed to be the domain of the female, are the truth of subjectivity. Masculinity is fake. Masculinity is a defence against the nightmare of subjectivity. Grace is a brilliant subject to explore that idea.”



Photo by J Countess / WireImage – TIFF

Zizek also talks about how “the sexual desire of woman is terrifying, and there is something about the largesse of Grace’s libido that is probably more threatening ultimately than her baring her teeth and going Ahhhh.”

A friend of a friend once lived above Grace Jones in a loft building on Jane Street overlooking the Hudson River. He claimed that he was kept awake at night by the volume of her orgasmic shouts. The building rocked.

Fiennes laughs whole-heartedly when she hears this story. She thinks the guy was fantasizing. But he’s gay, I point out.

“That doesn’t change things. A friend of mine is a psychoanalyst, and one of his subjects was perplexed by the fact that when he was having sex with his boyfriend, he kept seeing a vagina. It’s the origin of the world.”

Fiennes has made a film about a grandmother for whom the term sex symbol is a lame understatement. Does Grace Jones have secrets? Is she a



Jamaican Obeah woman who commands mysterious powers? “She probably is,” says her director and long-time friend. “I can’t even describe it. She’s kind of excessively alive unless she’s fast asleep in the middle of the day. That’s how I see her. But I don’t know. There is not an easy answer to that question. That is the mystery. She is herself. Creativity is erotic.”

Maurie Alioff writes about movies for publications off- and on-line, and is a screenwriter currently collaborating on a documentary featuring Bob Marley’s granddaughter while researching other Jamaica-related projects, including a magical-realist crime story drawing on stories he hears on the island. He has written for radio, journals and TV, taught screenwriting and been a contributing editor to various magazines.

<http://povmagazine.com/articles/view/sophie-fiennes-grace-jones-and-shifting-shape>





TIFF 2017 Women Directors: Meet Sophie Fiennes—“Grace Jones: Bloodlight and Bami”

W&H: Describe the film for us in your own words.

SF: The film is intimate and experiential and takes the viewer inside Grace Jones' world.

W&H: What drew you to this story?

SF: “Grace Jones” exists almost as a cultural construction—a visual fetish. The film was a unique opportunity to explore the person beyond that fascinating surface.

W&H: What do you want people to think about when they are leaving the theater?

SF: I don't approach making a film this way as it's out of my control. The cinema screen is a surface that acts like a mirror and reflects the internal world of each viewer as much as the subject of the film itself.

W&H: What was the biggest challenge in making the film?

SF: As ever, finding the right financing partners to make it possible to make the film we wanted to make. It's a big jigsaw and it takes time to fit the pieces together.

W&H: How did you get your film funded? Share some insights into how you got the film made.

SF: All the documentary footage is shot on prosumer digital video cameras so I was able to gather this material at relatively low cost without significant investment. This gave Grace and I the creative freedom we needed.



I knew I wanted to capture her performance and knew this would require substantial investment to do it justice. It took a long time, but by working with Katie Holly of Blinder Films as a lead producer we were able to partner with the British Film Institute, BBC Films, and the Irish Film Board, who were all excited by the premise of the film and have supported us throughout.

W&H: What does it mean for you to have your film play at the Toronto International Film Festival?

SF: Toronto is a dynamic festival, both creatively and in terms of the market. I always enjoy showing films there. After many years of cooking up this brew, it's going to be quite an experience to finally serve it up.

W&HL What's the best and worst advice you've received?

SF: Best advice: "Start as you mean to continue."

Worst advice: I guess I deleted it as I can't recall it.

W&H: What advice do you have for other female directors?

SF: Go as far creatively as you can—don't limit yourself.

W&H: Name your favorite woman-directed film and why.

SF: I really enjoyed Joanna Hogg's "Exhibition" for its subtlety and quiet depth.

W&H: There have been significant conversations over the last couple of years about increasing the amount of opportunities for women directors yet the numbers have not increased. Are you optimistic about the possibilities for change? Share any thoughts you might have on this topic.

SF: There are a lot of women in powerful positions in this industry, but not directors of fiction it seems. There are many female documentary directors.

In terms of fiction, it comes down to the stories we as a society want to tell. Why so much violence against women? Do women want to make these kinds of films? The tyranny of genre as a guiding industry principle seems to leave women either on a rom-com merry-go-round or laid out of autopsy.

<https://blog.womenandhollywood.com/tiff-2017-women-directors-meet-sophie-fiennes-grace-jones-bloodlight-and-bami-39da30df790c>



The Billboard logo, consisting of the word "billboard" in a bold, white, sans-serif font, set against a solid black rectangular background.

Grace Jones Documentary 'Bloodlight and Bami' Shows Soft Side of Fierce Visionary

September 10, 2017 – By Karen Bliss

Director Sophie Fiennes and Grace Jones speak to the media at the "Grace Jones: Bloodlight And Bami" premiere during the 2017 Toronto International Film Festival at The Elgin on Sept. 7, 2017.

Early on in Sophie Fiennes' documentary *Grace Jones: Bloodlight and Bami*, there's a scene of clamoring fans, all different ages, sexes and races, waiting for the singer, actress, model and fashion icon to sign their photos and vinyl record sleeves.

"Would you do another movie?" asks one fan of Grace Jones, who has appeared in close to two-dozen films and TV shows, including *A View to a Kill* and *Conan the Destroyer* in the '80s and part of the musician-packed cast of *Gutterdammerung* just last year. "My own," she answers.

It just took 10 years, off and on, to complete her own. In fact, her book, 2015's *I'll Never Write My Memoirs*, which came out in late 2015, was "done way after," said Jones at an onstage Q&A following the world premiere of *Bloodlight and Bami* at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF).

But it was worth taking their time in order to show a side of the now 69-year-old that isn't always fierce, glamorous, strong and camera-ready. Performances of "Slave to the Rhythm," "Pull Up to the Bumper," "Nipple to the Bottle" and what Jones calls "bio songs" like "Williams' Blood" are more than reminders of her captivating stage presence.

Joining Jones onstage at TIFF, Fiennes said they could provide a narrative thread. "You could structure it through the songs. They were like arias, like 'Love Is the Drug' that you return to with an insistence on a certain theme."

Like the title of the doc suggests -- bloodlight is Jamaican slang for red light that glows when an artist is recording and bami is traditional Jamaican cassava flatbread -- this is Jones onstage and off, the performance artist



onstage in stilettos, corset, masks and hats and drinking champagne in a fur coat in a Paris hotel room; and also crowded around a table in Jamaica with her family, chatting and eating, sharing memories and road-tripping to Spanish Town, where she grew up.

English director Fiennes (2006's *The Pervert's Guide to Cinema*) was ready to take off to Moscow within days or to the studio that same night or to Jamaica for the Jones family reunion. "I had my bag packed ready all the time," she said.

To which Jones added: "It was a lot of spontaneity, and you have to seize that moment."

The two met after Fiennes made 2002's *Hoover Street Revival: Life, Death and God in South Central LA*, a documentary about Jones' brother, Bishop Noel Jones.

"It was as if we connected immediately and my brother spoke about her as well a lot," Grace said. "There was just the magic there; it was meant to be, it was already written. You know what I mean?"

The film -- which is hoping to land a distributor during TIFF -- continually juxtaposes the confident, self-assured visionary that has made her so captivating all these years with the down-to-earth family-focused mother, daughter, sister, grandmother and lover.

"So, Grace, what do you see in this film that's different from other representations of you in your career?" asked the moderator for the Q&A.

"Well, the representations of me doesn't stand next to this, really, because it's all so completely different," she said. "There's images I made sure to control as much as possible. It's harder now with internet and stuff, but I was very strict on what went out.

"Even some things I wanted to go out, some people didn't want to go out because they thought the record company is going to have a problem if that goes out, and I'd say, 'Well, why? I want it out.' And they would hold back things. So it's all been a learning experience and feeling confident enough to have these sides that I know I confided and trusted Sophie on camera, like a fly on the wall."

<http://www.billboard.com/articles/news/7957916/grace-jones-documentary-bloodlight-bami-toronto-festival>





Five minutes with the legendary Grace Jones

By Michael-Oliver Harding – 13th September 2017



In an early scene of the new documentary *Grace Jones: Bloodlight and Bami*, the ferocious songstress and boundary-smashing model—whose prior silver screen highlights include portraying an Eiffel Tower-scaling Bond henchwoman and a centuries-old vampire stripper—signs autographs for fans huddled behind a barricade. One of them asks if she'd ever act in another movie, to which she commandingly answers, "My own!" This sets in motion a globetrotting journey a full decade in the making, acquainting us with Jones' loved ones while peeling away her enigmatic, larger-than-life persona.

Director Sophie Fiennes is with the avant-pop legend when she delivers powerhouse performances in a Dublin theatre, attends church with her mother and revisits her Pentecostal upbringing in Jamaica, sips Cristal in her hotel room in a fur coat and reconnects with her former co-conspirator (and father to her son) Jean-Paul Goude in Paris. Over the course of the film, the subversive 69-year-old performer—who reminds us men should be penetrated at least once "so they know what it's like to receive"—reveals herself like she seldom has before. Judging by the outpouring of praise during a post-screening Q&A at the Toronto International Film Festival last week, audiences were relieved that



the ageless diva—who once threw her baby shower at the legendary Paradise Garage dressed as a toy soldier—has lost none of her bite or risk-taking spirit.

When *Interview* meets her the following evening for an expeditious five-minute chat in the dining room of an opulent Yorkville hotel, Jones is feasting on a hearty meal of steak frites. “I have to eat and talk, darling, so I’m afraid you’ll hear my munching on your recorder.” And with that said, Jones proceeded, her wit unimpaired and her laughter as rip-roaring as ever.

MICHAEL-OLIVER HARDING: TIFF’s world premiere was such a party. Libations were being passed around very generously in my section of the Elgin Theatre, and the capacity crowd was cheering and singing along to every one of your performances in the doc—as if you were live on stage. Is that what you had in mind when you first met Sophie for the project?

GRACE JONES: Oh, absolutely! (*laughs*) And there was no hesitation. From the get go, it was like, we’re doing this! The connection with Sophie was immediate and just magic. I met her through my brother [Bishop Noel Jones], because I saw the film [*Hoover Street Revival*] she made about him. And I had complete faith in her.

MICHAEL-OLIVER HARDING: People who mention your malleable identity usually point to your trailblazing androgynous persona. But watching the film, it struck me how malleable your use of accents also happens to be. You not only speak French but also fluctuate between American, Jamaican and British inflections and speech rhythms, depending on context and company. Is that something you do consciously?

GRACE JONES: No. I think it’s somewhere in my head, in my travel space, and it just comes out. It’s a visual thing that happens unintentionally. People will tell me, “You do realize you just spoke with that accent, right?” And I’ll go, “Oh, did I?” So it’s not something I think about. As we talk, I have a visual about my speech and it just comes out like that. If that makes any sense! (*laughs*)

MICHAEL-OLIVER HARDING: My favourite line of the film has you speaking French. You let a TV producer know his lustful, Victoria Secret-esque choreography concept for your song “La vie en rose” is in poor taste. “C’est très étrange, I’m like a madam in a whorehouse,” you tell him. How frequently do you find yourself turning down tacky propositions?

GRACE JONES: (*laughs*) Often! Actually, I’ve walked off a couple of really tacky sets, where they wouldn’t change it. So I’m like, “okay, I’m out of here.” (*laughs*) And usually they don’t ask me back! (*laughs*) I basically tell them,



“Just give me a white wall and I’ll be happy! Give me a grey wall, a white wall, a black wall, a red wall.”

MICHAEL-OLIVER HARDING: But not a softcore squad of lingerie-clad ladies.

GRACE JONES: For some reason, I can inspire things that are in good taste, but then sometimes I can also inspire, like, woooooow. (*laughs*) Some producers have this really sexual idea, and they’re like, “Now I can do this, with her!” (*laughs*) And I will just go: non, non, non. That’s not me, it’s you. You’re projecting, man.

MICHAEL-OLIVER HARDING: Another film premiering at the fest explores the early years of Basquiat. You guys were friends with Keith Haring and Andy Warhol, and you both performed at legendary ’80s nightclub Area. How do you remember him?

GRACE JONES: He was just so sweet and easygoing. He really didn’t have a clue how his work was going to be received. Because you just never know, do you? So he was totally unpretentious and was just always giving away stuff. In that way, he was a lot like Keith; that’s something they had in common. I remember Keith with my son in Switzerland, when we ran into each other and they drew—my son would draw a piece, Keith would draw another, and unfortunately we can no longer find any of them.

MICHAEL-OLIVER HARDING: Were they drawing on walls?

GRACE JONES: No, it was on paper, but they were in the street, in front of the hotel, and they were just giving them away! I think it really was all about the pleasure of doing what they loved to do, and not thinking about the complications that would follow. It was just about freedom. Same goes for Basquiat. He was very soft-spoken and didn’t get into any sexual orgies or anything of the sort. (*laughs*) But we found ourselves together, within this group, and unfortunately, he died so young. Whatever relationship could have developed between us pretty much stopped there.

MICHAEL-OLIVER HARDING: Talking about youth, you mentioned during the film’s Q&A wanting to give lectures to young people, “should they want to listen.” Is there anything that makes you think today’s youths wouldn’t queue up for a Grace Jones lecture?

GRACE JONES: Well... (*laughs*) I think if I can come out outrageous enough, I can get them into the room. And then to keep them engaged, one would have to say something that would make them go: “Wow, really? Wow. That’s amazing.”



But I think the first thing I would need is a professorship diploma... Actually, I don't know if one needs that to give a lecture.

MICHAEL-OLIVER HARDING: I mean, you're Grace Jones. No diploma will come close to matching those credentials.

GRACE JONES: (*laughs*) Perhaps you're right.

<https://www.interviewmagazine.com/film/grace-jones-tiff-interview-bloodlight-and-bami#>

