

SPOTLIGHT

DVD Chronicles Chicago Poetry Slam



MOVIE REVIEWS

by Kam Williams

Does the hip-hop style of rhyming and its down-to-earth subject-matter about life in the 'hood deserve the same respect as the classical couplets of Keats and other lofty lyricists whose work benefits from ivory-towered academia's stamp of approval? The answer to that question might lie in "Louder Than a Bomb," a documentary

chronicling the Slam Poetry competition of the same name staged annually in the Windy City.

Its 600+ entrants from 60+ schools are an ethnically-diverse array of high school students who share a passion for the spoken word format. Co-directed by Greg Jacobs and Jon Siskel (nephew of the legendary, late film critic Gene Siskel), the film telescopes narrowly on the fortunes of four teams and their talented stand-outs.

Nate Marshall hails from Whitney Young Magnet School, Adam Gottlieb from North College Prep, Nova Venerable from Oak Park High, and "Steinmenauts" Lamar Jorden, Charles Smith and Kevin Harris represent defending champion Steinmetz High. To the uninitiated, most of their uniformly-strident, high-energy performances highlighted here might be reminiscent of rap.

However, the absence of musical accompaniment makes it easier for an audience to focus on the rich content of the writers' evocative verses which tend to reflect issues in their personal lives. Given how deeply teenagers tend



From 'Louder than a Bomb'

to feel about their troubles, the staccato rants will probably sound like emotional dumps to the average adult, whether they're weighing-in on absentee fathers, drug-addicted parents, or even just doting Jewish parents.

Although I thoroughly enjoyed watching this flick, my only worry is whether or not these accomplished poets will ever learn to speak grammatically. Sorry, but I couldn't help but be concerned upon hearing "When we was on

the stage..." and "I plan to go to college and be like a professor..." in post-performance interviews.

"Louder Than a Bomb" blasting the King's English to smithereens leaving Ebonics as the last language standing!

Louder Than a Bomb

Very Good ☆☆☆
Unrated

Running time: 100 Minutes
Distributor: Virgil Films and Entertainment

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