

## Rhonda Ross: The “Pocono Mountains Film Festival” Interview

By Kam Williams  
Special to *The Skanner News*

**S**inger-songwriter Rhonda Ross is an African Diasporic Woman of the World. Bilingual in French and English, and raising her son to be fluent in 4 languages, Rhonda often connects with her audiences through their native tongues.

Her original music lives in the gap between jazz, neo-soul, funk and gospel. Her lyrics live in the pause between life's most important questions and answers.

Rhonda has the entire package — as an entertainer, as a poet, and as a human being. She has great power on stage and her refreshingly personal and moving performances set her apart from

other vocalists of her era. Through Rhonda's individual and creative expression, the legendary Ross influence continues to live on and expand. Rhonda headlined one of President Obama's 2nd Inaugural Balls, and later performed to standing ovations and rave reviews at The Hollywood Bowl, the Montreal International Jazz Festival, Wolf Trap and The Theater at Madison Square Garden.

**Kam Williams:** Hi Rhonda, thanks for the interview.

**Rhonda Ross:** Hi, Kam. I am thrilled to talk with you!

**KW:** I told my readers I'd be interviewing you, so I'll be mixing their questions in with mine. First, let me say congratulations on receiving the Music Career Achieve-

ment Award at the Pocono Mountains Film Festival.

**RR:** Thank you. It's quite an honor and a surprise. And an insult! [LOL] I don't feel old enough to be receiving a “Career Achievement” Award, but I guess I am. Oh well. [Sighs, and laughs some more]

**KW:** Also screening at the festival is *Crackdown Big City Blues*. What interested you in the film?

**RR:** I was a really young actress when I was cast in *Crackdown*. I think I was 21. It was a huge challenge to play a young lady who was my age, but with so much tragic life experience. It taught me a lot.

**KW:** Larry Greenberg says: You were on *Cosby* back in 1997, but I'm not

going to ask you about that. I'd like to know about your role as a dancer in the cult classic, *The Last Dragon*. Is dance a passion of yours and where did you learn to dance?

**RR:** *The Last Dragon* was a special film for me because I got to work with my father. I also enjoyed meeting Vanity, Taimak and the late Leo O'Brien. Leo and I became great friends and stayed friends for years. I have never studied dance, but I love it. I love moving my body in time with the music and I even dance a little during my music concerts!

**KW:** Reverend Florine Thompson has two questions for you: Who or what is your

primary source of inspiration? And what achievement are you most proud of?

**RR:** That's easy. It's the same answer to both! My son and my son! I am literally obsessed with being a mother. It consumes my every thought and weaves its way into the songs and plays I write—into everything. And I am really proud of the effort I put into it. Don't



PHOTO BY LISA PACINO

Rhonda Ross

get me wrong, I make a lot of mistakes and have to restart every day. But I know my intentions are pure and I keep on trying harder the next day.

**KW:** Judyth Piazza asks: What was your most memorable Motown moment growing up as a child?

**RR:** I was born in 1971, so all my Motown memories are in LA, and they mostly include my mother, my father and the Jackson brothers coming over and playing and singing with us in our home in Beverly Hills.

Read the rest at [www.theskanner.com](http://www.theskanner.com)

## Film Review: 'The Walk' Recreates Daredevil's Stroll between Twin Towers



'The Walk'

By Kam Williams  
Special to *The Skanner News*

**I**n 1968, Philippe Petit (Joseph Gordon-Levitt) a struggling juggler, mime, magician and trapeze artist decided to elevate his game, literally, by stringing his tightrope between the tops of the Twin Towers. The World Trade Center was yet to be erected, which gave the Parisian street performer a half-dozen years to plan and practice for his death-defying feat.

Finally, on the morning of August 7, 1974, he pulled off the eye-popping stunt with the help of a few friends sworn to secrecy. They'd agreed to help rig the high wire, despite breaking the law in the process.

You see, Philippe hadn't bothered to ask the authorities for permission, figuring it'd never be approved. And for 40 minutes, he put on a heart-stopping show, during which he danced a jig, saluted the crowd below and even lay down on the wire to take a brief rest.

Written and directed by Bob Zemeckis (who won an Oscar for *Forrest Gump*), *The Walk* recounts the events surrounding Philippe's bold and historic stroll. However, the film takes a few liberties with the facts along the way, ostensibly in deference to the demand for the sort of romance and tension found in the typical Hollywood drama.

Consequently, Philippe has a hand-wringing love interest here, Annie (Charlotte Le Bon), as well as several close calls while

hovering a quarter-mile above the ground between skyscrapers. In reality, the relationship wasn't very serious and the only time he feared for his life was when he fell down a flight of stairs while being manhandled by the cops who'd just arrested him.

The film takes a few liberties with the facts along the way

If you're interested in an accurate, if less sensational version of events, check out *Man on Wire* which won the 2008 Academy Award for Best Documentary. But if all you care about is production values, stick with this hyperactive, special effects-driven affair guaranteed to keep you on the edge of your seat until Philippe plants his feet back on solid earth.

A heart-stopping spectacular which plays fast and loose with the truth in the interest of overstimulating entertainment.

**Good ★★**

**Rated PG** for mature themes, peril, brief nudity, drug references, smoking and mild epithets

**Running time:** 123 minutes

**Distributor:** Sony Pictures

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