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Shared Darkness
A Communal Life in Film and DVD, Examined



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Gil Scott-Heron: The Paris Concert



This entry was posted on 6/28/2007 9:27 AM and is filed under [DVD Reviews](#).

Beat poetry and longer texts set to free-form blues, folk or soul music always spark suspicion amongst a certain set of the population, perhaps because of their pungent association with a certain breed of hippie that's no longer (or never was) in favor. Encouraged by writer Langston Hughes, though, **gangly, Tennessee-bred spoken word performer Gil Scott-Heron**, the son of a Jamaican footballer, did some quite interesting things; he tried his hand at keyboard in several rock groups and published *The Nigger Factory*, a raw examination of racial politics and activist university life in the 1970s.

If he's never really broken out into the mainstream, and additionally had to battle his own personal demons (he recently served a prison stint of several years on a drug-possession charge), **Scott-Heron is one of those figures whom other artists you admire would certainly recognize and cite as an important influence**. His music and lyrics, mixing the political with the poetic, and denouncing the repressive violence and oppression inflicted upon African-Americans by society at large, made him a cult hero in the eyes of radical rap and hip-hop musicians throughout the world.

Newly released on DVD, **this concert performance from July of 2001 at the New Morning club in Paris showcases Scott-Heron's fine, bristling soul tradition**, billed alongside the Amnesia Express. "Blue Collar" kicks off the two-hour set, followed by the frequently sampled "A Lovely Day," an airy valentine of perfect-stride empowerment. Other tracks include "Three Miles Down," "Work for Peace," "Angel Dust," "There's a War Going On," "Did You Hear What They Said?," "Your Daddy Loves You," "Everybody Loves the Sunshine," "Winter in America," "95 South (All of the Places We've Been)," "Johannesburg" and "The Bottle." What one sees in these tunes, regardless of their familiarity with the peddler, is the laid-track for the sort of social consciousness found in rap from groups as disparate as Public Enemy, The Roots and Common.

Housed in a regular Amray case and presented in 4x3 full screen on a region-free disc, this disc comes with fairly solid Dolby digital 5.1 and DTS stereo audio tracks. There are no DVD extras (an interview or something would have been nice), but this DVD is a fine example of a fitfully rebellious storyteller's sterling ability. [To purchase it via Amazon, click here.](#) **B (Concert) C+ (Disc)**

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