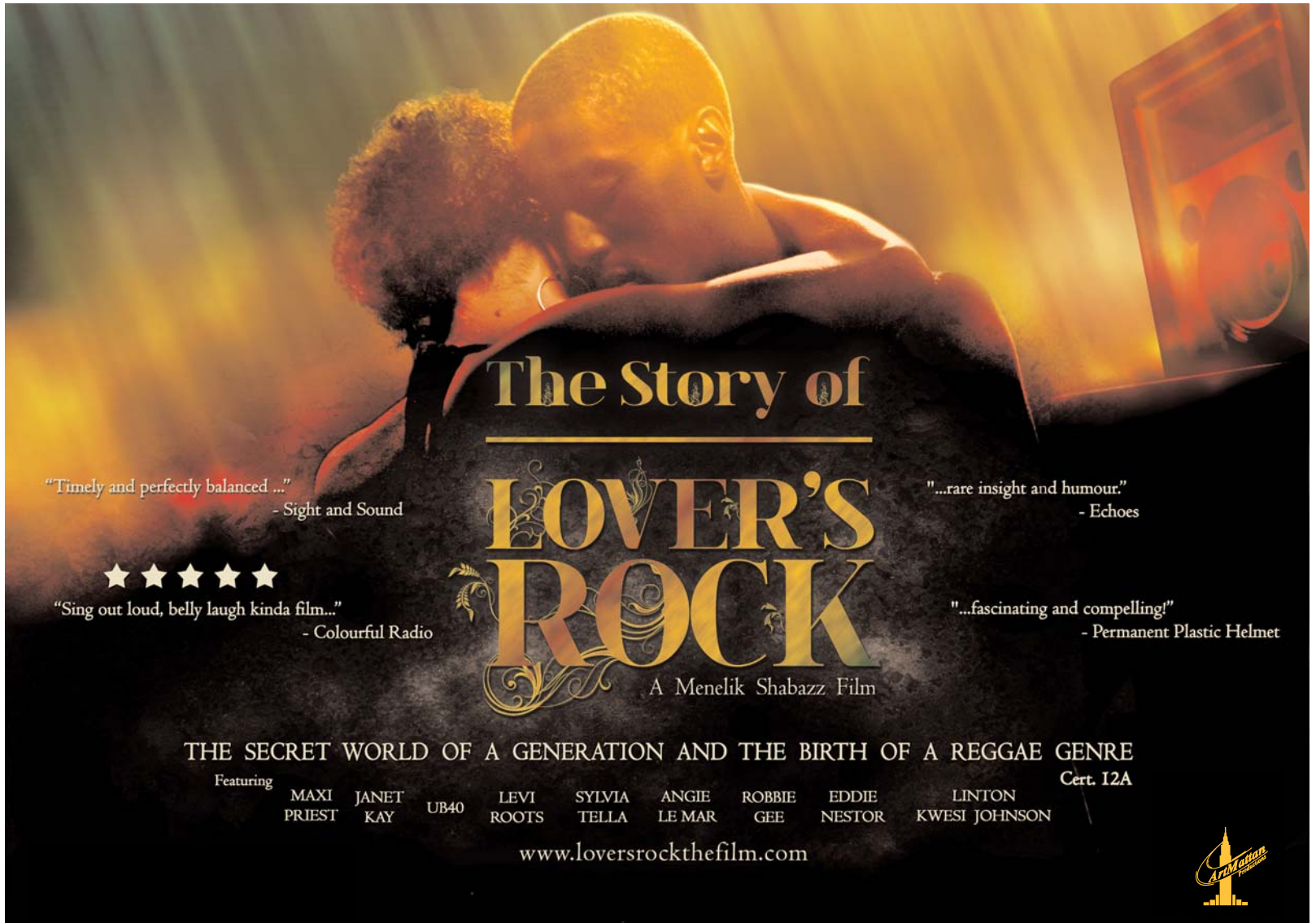


ArtMattan Productions presents



**The Story of**  
**LOVER'S ROCK**  
A Menelik Shabazz Film

"Timely and perfectly balanced ..."  
- Sight and Sound

★★★★★  
"Sing out loud, belly laugh kinda film..."  
- Colourful Radio


"...rare insight and humour."  
- Echoes

"...fascinating and compelling!"  
- Permanent Plastic Helmet

THE SECRET WORLD OF A GENERATION AND THE BIRTH OF A REGGAE GENRE  
Cert. I2A

Featuring  
MAXI PRIEST    JANET KAY    UB40    LEVI ROOTS    SYLVIA TELLA    ANGIE LE MAR    ROBBIE GEE    EDDIE NESTOR    LINTON KWESI JOHNSON

[www.loversrockthefilm.com](http://www.loversrockthefilm.com)



**THE STORY OF LOVERS ROCK**



## SYNOPSIS

Lovers Rock, often dubbed 'romantic reggae' is a uniquely black British sound that developed in the late 70s and 80s against a backdrop of riots, racial tension and sound systems. Live performance, comedy sketches, dance, interviews and archive shed light on the music and the generation that embraced it. Lovers Rock allowed young people to experience intimacy and healing through dance-known as 'scrubbing'- at parties and clubs. This dance provided a coping mechanism for what was happening on the streets.

Lovers Rock developed into a successful sound with national UK hits and was influential to British bands (Police, Culture Club, UB40) These influences underline the impact the music was making in bridging the multi-cultural gap that polarized the times. The film sheds light on a forgotten period of British music, social and political history.



### Director's Statements

**"The Story of Lovers Rock** looks at lover's rock through interviews, comedy, live performance, dance and archive footage. It tells the story of its south London origins to success in Japan and becoming a global brand. In between, we look at the underground scene around the music – its intimate dance, the soundsystems, the social backdrop in the volatile era of the 70s and 80s – as well as the lack of mainstream success in the UK."

"Lover's rock is a genre that black Britons can claim as their own. This music, which reached global proportions, yet was virtually unrecognized in the UK, was also a vehicle for a special kind of intimacy. It opened up our chakras, although we didn't realize it at the time - this music about young males and females dealing with their emotions. And it was also a coping mechanism for what was happening in the streets."

"Many of today's young people were born out of the lover's rock experience, yet express themselves in very different ways in music and in dance. So for me, the film is important not only in telling an untold story, but as a vehicle to bring younger generations into our story. The media focus has often been on our parents' generation, the 'Windrush generation', but my generation, the 'rebel generation', who came in the 60s, and those who were born here in the 70s, we have been very influential to mainstream British culture - just like lover's rock."

**“It's the music that matters, and that is put on the screen with real skill and affection.”** *DEREK MALCOLM - THIS IS LONDON*



## **ABOUT THE DIRECTOR**

Menelik Shabazz comes to mind with the mere mention of Black independent filmmaking in the United Kingdom. Born in Barbados, Menelik was introduced to the world of video during his teen-age years in London. He attended the London International Film School (1974-76). Since that time he has worked as an independent filmmaker, very conscious of the world around him.

Preceding his first short documentary, *Step Forward Youth* about London-born black youth, he debuted his first feature film, *Burning An Illusion*, in 1980. The film, funded by the British Film Institute, won the Grand Prix at the Amien Film Festival in France. This coming of age drama about a woman, who gains a greater awareness of her identity and position in contemporary British society, forged new traditions in British Black filmmaking.

In 1982, Kuumba Productions, a commercial company Shabazz co-founded, became an outlet to create independent projects in London. He produced documentaries: *Street Warriors*, *The People's Account* and *I Am Not Two Islands*. Shabazz is the co-founder of Ceddo Film/Video Workshop in London. Through Ceddo he wrote and directed *Time & Judgement*, which tells the history of the struggles of the Black community across the world through the use of newsreel footage. In 1996, as part of the six part BBC Education series *Hidden Empire*, Shabazz completed *Catch A Fire* which documents the life of Paul Bogle and the 1865 Morant Bay Rebellion. Frustrated by how Black filmmakers were being maltreated in the UK, prompted Shabazz's decision to publish the *Black Filmmaker Magazine (BFM)*. In addition to serving as Publisher and editor of this London based magazine, he continues to write/develop projects for cinema and television, and serve as the Director of the *BFM International Film Festival*.

Lecture Topics: Scriptwriting, Directing, Filmmaking in the UK, and West Indies Cinema

### **Filmography:**

*The Story of Lovers Rock* (96min/2011)

*Step Catch A Fire* (:30 min/1996)

*Time & Judgement* (87min/1988)

*Burning An Illusion* (35mm/16mm/Color/107 min/1982)

*I'm Not Two Islands* (Producer/1982)

*Street Warriors* (Producer/1985)

*The People's Account* (Producer/1987)

*Step Forward Youth* (:30 min/1976)

*Forward Youth* (30 min./1976)

*Burning An Illusion* (35/16mm/Color/107

min./1982)films for over a hundred years.

**THE STORY OF LOVERS ROCK - directed by : Menelik Shabazz**  
**UK - 2011 - 96 mn - Documentary - English**

**Performing artists**

MAXI PRIEST  
UB40  
ASWAD  
JANET KAY  
CARROLL THOMPSON  
LOUISA MARK  
TREVOR WALTERS  
JEAN ADEBAMBO  
SANDRA CROSS  
SILVIA TELLA  
PETER HUNNIGALE  
WINSOME  
MIYUKI NAKAJIMA  
AVA LEIGH  
LOVELLA ELLIS  
SUGAR MINOTT

**Comedians**

ROBBIE GEE  
EDDIE NESTOR  
WAYNE ROLLINS  
GLENDA JAXSON  
RUDI LICKWOOD  
MR CEE  
KWAKU  
TEDDY BEAR  
SPECIAL P  
QUINCY  
ANNETTE FAGON

**Interviews**

MAXI PRIEST  
LEVI ROOTS  
JANET KAY  
EARL and ASTRO/UB40  
LINTON KWESI JOHNSON  
TIPPA IRIE  
DENNIS BOVELL  
ANGIE LE MAR  
SILVIA TELLA  
VICTOR ROMEO EVANS  
JOHN MASOURI  
SNOPPY  
KOFI  
SANDRA CROSS  
JOHN MACGILLIVRAY  
CHRIS LANE

HUGH FRANCIS  
'H' KWAME PATTEN  
NEFERATITI IFE  
PATRICK CANN  
MACARTHUR ROMEO  
TREVOR WHITE  
LOVELLA ELLIS  
DEAN MARSH  
MYKAELL RILEY  
MAD PROFESSOR  
AVA LEIGH  
JOHN KPAYE  
PROF. LEZ HENRY  
PAULETTE GERMAN-HARRIS

**Team**

**Director/Producer**  
MENEK SHABAZZ

**Director of Photography**  
IAN WATTS

**Editor**  
JULIAN SABATH

**Associate Producers**  
PAULETTE  
HARRIS-GERMAN  
MICHAEL WHITE  
WEST

**Sound Mixers**  
ALBERT BAILEY  
LEON LAZAREVIC  
TAWA DUROWOJU

**Costume Design**  
ANNIE CURTIS -JONES  
JACQUELINE LODGE

**Dance Consultant and  
Choreographer**  
'H' KWAME PATTEN

**Online Editor**  
ADAM DOLNIAK

**Set Design**  
FYNA DOWE  
JOY PRIME

**Music Consultant**  
KWAKU BBM



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# LOVER'S ROCK: THE STORY OF REGGAE'S MOTOWN

Lover's rock influenced the Police and Sade, and gave women a voice in reggae – so why was it sidelined in its native Britain?

- [David Katz](#) - [guardian.co.uk](#), Thursday 22 September 2011 17.34 EDT

In 1979, [Janet Kay](#)'s piercing falsetto was one of the defining sounds of the summer. Silly Games, her bittersweet ode to a faltering relationship, enjoyed heavy radio play, thanks in part to a subtle arrangement by songwriter/producer [Dennis Bovell](#), a distinctive drum pattern from [Aswad](#)'s Angus Gaye and distribution on a Warners subsidiary. The song reached No 2, the highest chart placing for a black, British woman at that point. It also signaled a coming of age for lover's rock, the softened, British [reggae](#) sub-genre that focused on romance, but, as noted in Menelik Shabazz's documentary [The Story of Lover's Rock](#), involved so much more than setting teenaged heartbreak to a reggae beat.

Though a primarily underground phenomenon, lover's rock influenced pop acts such as [the Police](#), [Culture Club](#) and [Sade](#), and offered an antidote to the male-dominated space of Jamaican roots reggae, whose Rastafari iconography and political specifics were often alienating for many black Britons. Lover's rock became crucial to the formation of a black British identity during a politically and socially turbulent era.

"Lover's rock is a genre that black Britons can claim as their own," Shabazz says. "This music, which reached global proportions, yet was virtually unrecognized in the UK, was also a vehicle for a special kind of intimacy. It opened up our chakras, although we didn't realize it at the time – this music about young males and females dealing with their emotions. And it was also a coping mechanism for what was happening in the streets."

Kay says: "People of our generation gravitated towards lover's rock because it was created here. And it wasn't only black people that enjoyed the music. It crossed over to everybody of our generation."

The Barbados-born Shabazz is best known for his 1981 drama [Burning an Illusion](#) and the BBC docudrama *Catch a Fire*. He describes the new film as a "fusion documentary": "It looks at lover's rock through interviews, comedy, live performance, dance and archive footage. It tells the story of its south London origins to success in Japan and becoming a global brand. In between, we look at the underground scene around the music – its intimate dance, the soundsystems, the social backdrop in the volatile era of the 70s and 80s – as well as the lack of mainstream success in the UK."

Lover's rock emerged in the mid-1970s, when the owners of London's soundsystems began cutting romantic ballads with young women singing: Count Shelly issued [Ginger Williams's Tenderness](#) in 1974, only to be surpassed the following year by 14-year-old Louisa Mark's [Caught You in a Lie](#), a

peculiar rendition of an obscure soul song, put together by Bovell for Lloydie Coxson's soundsystem. The emerging genre solidified after a Jamaican immigrant, Dennis Harris, opened a recording studio in south-east London, with Bovell and guitarist John Kpiaye as the in-house players. They crafted reggae cover versions of Motown and Philadelphia soul ballads with vocals from [TT Ross](#), [Cassandra](#) and the harmony trio [Brown Sugar](#), featuring future Soul II Soul vocalist Caron Wheeler. Once Harris formed a label called Lover's Rock, borrowing the name from an Augustus Pablo dub B-side, the new music had its name.

"The name came from the record label, in the same way that early ska in this country was named after the [Blue Beat](#) label," says [Linton Kwesi Johnson](#), the reggae poet whose regular backing band has featured Bovell and Kpiaye since the late 1970s. "It was a way to give women a voice in reggae music in Britain, and an alternative to the social commentary of the male-dominated productions. Like British reggae in general, lover's rock provided cultural continuity for the second generation [of black Britons], albeit with a distinctive British sound."

"Dennis Harris was a visionary," declares Neil Fraser, the London-based record producer better known as Mad Professor, whose [Ariwa](#) label has enjoyed widespread success with lover's rock and roots alike. "You'd go to parties, and when his records started to play, that's the time to grab a girl and dance."

Bovell adds: "He made such a contribution to helping youngsters have a sense of purpose. We were going to make the equivalent of Motown in reggae, with the new Supremes from south London, and the music we were making was supposed to be tough enough to stand up to any Jamaican import."

In its early phase, lover's rock was largely a south London phenomenon, but following the unprecedented success of Silly Games, its centre temporarily shifted east, as producers such as Leonard "Santic" Chin and Bert "Ital" Campbell abandoned roots reggae for lover's rock. "Santic and Ital were recording out of a small studio in the East End called Easy Street," Fraser says. "Leonard Chin had been recording Augustus Pablo and Horace Andy in Jamaica, but one of the first songs he did in England was I'm So Sorry by Carroll Thompson, and that went mega. He followed it up with Jean Adebambo's Paradise, and Ital had a chart success with Love Me Tonight by Trevor Walters – a really jazzy record – so east London had a hit factory going on, and lover's rock stayed in east London until we developed our sound enough to compete."

In the 1980s, as labels such as Ariwa and Fashion started tapping into the market, lover's rock became associated with south London again, at a time when Jamaican singers such as Sugar Minott, Gregory Isaacs and Johnny Osbourne were tailoring their output for British lover's rock fans. The Ariwa breakthrough came in 1985, with Sandra Cross's rendition of the Stylistics' Country Living. "My studio was a crude eight-track affair that couldn't match up to the competition," Fraser says. "Once I saw that the east London sound was getting stale, I changed my studio and came up with a cover of Country Living, which the Mighty Diamonds had already done in reggae, and got Sandra Cross to sing it. The first thousand copies sold out in two days. Then we had big hits with Lorna G, Kofi and John McLean. So we held the lover's rock thing from 1985 till 1992, when it didn't really make sense no more."

Although singers such as Peter Hunnigale, Lloyd Brown and Donna Marie would continue to enjoy success with it, lover's rock began to wane in the early 1990s, superseded by digital styles but also co-opted by Jamaican artists. "There's always been people in England who didn't quite believe in lover's rock, who thought real reggae comes from Jamaica," Fraser says. "Also, mainstream radio was reluctant to play reggae – especially British reggae – unless it was on a

major label. But I think lover's rock was hijacked by the clever Jamaicans like [producer] Donovan Germain, who was coming to England all the time, and who came up with Audrey Hall's [One Dance Won't Do](#), which had a nice Jamaican bass line. Records like that took the whole lover's rock scene back to Jamaica, as well as people like Maxi Priest, who went to Jamaica to record once he started to make hits. All those things helped the British scene to become less significant."

The music has now gained a new lease of life in Japan, inspiring local singers such as Sandeii, Machaco and Iria to delve into the form; Kay recently inked a multi-album deal with Sony Japan. "[A gig in Japan] was the first time I'd ever experienced people crying in the audience," Kay says. "They don't necessarily understand all the lyrics, but they understand the sentiment of the music."

Shabazz says: "Many of today's young people were born out of the lover's rock experience, yet express themselves in very different ways in music and in dance. So for me, the film is important not only in telling an untold story, but as a vehicle to bring younger generations into our story. The media focus has often been on our parents' generation, the 'Windrush generation', but my generation, the 'rebel generation', who came in the 60s, and those who were born here in the 70s, we have been very influential to mainstream British culture – just like lover's rock."

"Lover's rock was the black soundtrack of the era," Fraser says. "A lot of kids who are in their 20s and 30s now, their parents would have been making love to lover's rock records, so undoubtedly, it's in their DNA."

- [The Story of Lover's Rock](#) opens at selected cinemas from 28 September
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