

# IF THE STREETS WERE ON FIRE

## **SYNOPSIS (Short)**

As youth violence rises in London, a wild and rebellious community of young people tear up the city's streets in the name of 'knives down, bikes up'. As they try to escape the harsh realities of street life through the brotherhood of biking, their already precarious existence is jeopardised when they are forced away from the safe spaces of central London.

## **SYNOPSIS (Long)**

In a country where years of austerity have pushed people to their limits, violence incubates; where racism and prejudice are ingrained in the systems of authority, inequality persists.

Through BikeStormz, social activist Mac has created a movement for kids across London that creates a safe space to be free and express themselves beyond any threats. A torrent of young people glide through the city on their bikes, doing wheelies, tricks, death-defying acrobatics and cheering as they hurtle through the postcode-neutral space of London's heart. Yet as they come together and find ways to express themselves through biking – the kind of liberation that surfers and skateboarders eulogise – they are challenged with the threat of arrest by the police and accusations of anti-social behaviour.

## **A NOTE FROM OUR DIRECTOR**

When I first met Mac, he was sitting on a dimly lit stairwell in the back of a now closed bike shop in East London, and he said this:

*"In life you have to put kids on a track,  
if you don't put them on a track, they're walking on the gravel.  
And you can't complain, when gravel gets kicked up in your face."*

It was at that moment that I fell for Mac and all he was trying to do with the biking scene. I knew there was something special here; at a moment when inequality plagues our country, and many are left to fend for themselves. Mac saw the cracks in the system, and built a net to catch those who might stumble and fall... Mac and Miles are brilliant men, and have worked hard to carve out futures for themselves away from their past lives. I feel blessed to have met them, witnessed them, and shared life with them.

While the world has changed dramatically over the last 50 years, many people still feel marginalised from dominant political and social narratives. The film seeks to address the difficult questions about what it means to exist in the margins of a nation with devastating levels of inequality, and hopes to remind society that behind stereotypes of youths in hoods are children who have witnessed more chaos than a grown adult ever should.

## **IF THE STREETS WERE ON FIRE: BACKGROUND**

IF THE STREETS WERE ON FIRE is a labour of love; having been in production for over 6 years. Over that time the film was supported by the BFI Doc Society, and was selected for CPH: Forum, Cannes Marche du Film as well as BFI Film Festivals' inaugural Works-In-Progress showcase. The documentary had its World Premiere at the 66th BFI London Film Festival, where it had two sold out screenings, and came second in the LFF Audience Awards.

## **THE TEAM**

**Alice Russell**, *Director*

Alice has worked in a variety of formats from shorts to feature docs, and on broadcast documentaries for the flagship current affairs strands Panorama and Dispatches, and on programmes for the BBC, Channel 4 and Vice News. MEN BUY SEX was her first film which won the SIMA Creative Activism Award and was awarded Vimeo Staff Picks Best of the Month. AGENTS OF CHANGE was selected as a festival focus from the premiere UK documentary festival Sheffield DocFest. Her films have screened at festivals worldwide and premiered on Nowness and Dazed. IF THE STREETS WERE ON FIRE is her debut feature.

*BIFA Springboard 2023.*

### **SOCIALS**

Instagram: @thealicerussell

Twitter: @thealicerussell

**Gannesh Rajah**, *Producer*

Gannesh spent most of his career as a Producer, working with clients including Google, Spotify, and Sky 1. He's worked at several film festivals and produced three short films - the first was selected for over a dozen festivals, including Foyle, Edmonton, and LSFF. His first feature doc as Associate Producer, 512 HOURS WITH MARINA ABRAMOVIĆ, premiered on Sky Arts last year. Currently working as a Development Producer, he was a Doc/Fests 'Future Producers', a 'Doc Society Fellow', part of the BFI NETWORKS Insight Producer Programme, as well as the latest BAFTA Crew cohort. IF THE STREETS WERE ON FIRE is his first feature documentary as producer.

### **SOCIALS**

Instagram: @grajah

**Julia Nottingham**, *Executive Producer*

Her documentary, BE WATER about the life of Bruce Lee, premiered at Sundance 2020. Past credits include XY CHELSEA, SKATE KITCHEN, KINGDOM OF US, and TROPHY. Her production company, Dorothy Street Pictures currently has fiction projects in development with Film 4 and BBC Films and non-fiction projects with ESPN Films and CNN Films. Julia was Head of Documentary at Pulse Films for four years prior to going independent.

*Screen International as a Future Leader (2018)*

**Lynn Nwokorie**, *Executive Producer*

As Executive Producer in independent feature documentaries such as BURN IT DOWN! ( 2021) dir. Tim Travers Hawkins and Celia Aniskovich. Lynn is also a programme advisor for the BFI London Film Festival, editorial consultant and curator for Sundance, the Scottish Documentary Institute and The Gotham Film & Media Institute. Previously, she was the fund manager for the BFI Doc Society Fund - the UK's national documentary film fund and the Bertha Doc Society Journalism Fund - in support of works including

Grierson nominee *Nascondino* (2021) dir. Victoria Fiore and *An Insignificant Man* (2016) dir. Khushboo Ranka and Vinay Shukla which premiered at TIFF, IDFA and CPH:DOX and won Best Documentary prize at Warsaw Film Festival 2016.

**Ruben Woodin Deschamps, Cinematographer**

A talented cinematographer with years of experience in documentaries, commercials and music videos - working on iconic videos for the likes of Biffy Clyro, Kojey Radical and Radiohead. Most recently, Ruben was the cinematographer for *THE REASON I JUMP* (Sundance, 2020) , Jerry Rothwell's Sundance audience award-winning documentary described as an "immersive cinematic experience of non-speaking autistic people."

*ScreenDaily Stars of Tomorrow 2020.*

**Xanna Ward Dixon, Editor**

After completing a Masters degree in Religious Studies from the University of Edinburgh, Xanna was accepted as a BBC and Adobe Scholar to study editing at the National Film and Television School. Since graduating she has edited animation, fiction and documentary films which have been screened across the world at festivals such as Cannes Film Festival, the BFI London Film Festival, Palm Springs Film Festival and South By Southwest. She has editing broadcast credits on Channel 4, Netflix and HBO. Nominations and awards include BAFTA, Grierson and the HBO Best Short at the American Black Film Festival.

Xanna's first feature documentary *POLY STYRENE: I AM A CLICHE* won both the Best Documentary and Raindance Discovery awards at the 2021 British Independent Film Awards.

## PRODUCTION COMPANY



Dorothy Street Pictures is an independent production company founded in 2018 by Emmy winning and BAFTA nominated film and tv producer Julia Nottingham. Dorothy Street Pictures is driven by a desire to shine a light on the people, places and things that have been underexplored whilst providing a home for filmmakers, both new and established, to tell authentic, original and distinctive stories.

Recent credits include: TWAS' THE FIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS (AppleTV+), BURN IT DOWN! (LFF 2021), PERSONA (HBO MAX 2021) and BE WATER (Sundance 2020).

Past credits include XY CHELSEA (Tribeca 2019), SKATE KITCHEN (Sundance 2018), KINGDOM OF US (LFF 2017) which won the Grierson Best Doc prize and was nominated for Outstanding Debut at BAFTA 2018, TROPHY (Sundance 2017) which won an Emmy for Outstanding Nature Documentary, ALL THESE SLEEPLESS NIGHTS (Sundance 2016) which won Best Director at the festival and THE POSSIBILITIES ARE ENDLESS (SXSW 2014).

### SOCIALS

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## CONTACT INFORMATION

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*For any inquiries about If The Streets Were On Fire (including sales and distribution).*

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