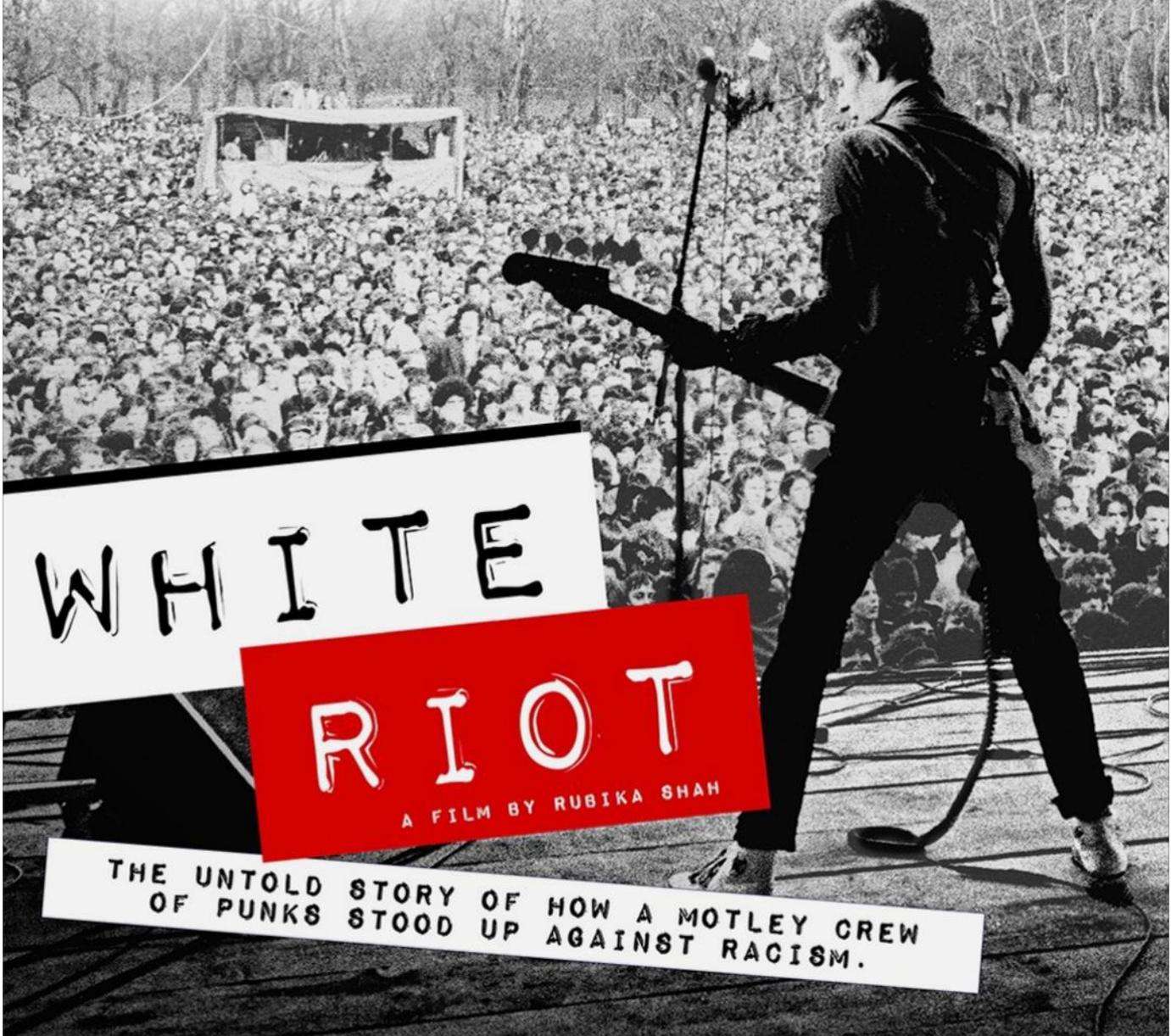


FEATURING

THE CLASH
STEEL PULSE
TOM ROBINSON
POLY STYRENE
SHAM 69
ALIEN KULTURE
AND MORE...



WHITE

RIOT

A FILM BY RUBIKA SHAH

THE UNTOLD STORY OF HOW A MOTLEY CREW
OF PUNKS STOOD UP AGAINST RACISM.



WINNER
BFI LONDON
FILM FESTIVAL
GRIERSON AWARD 2019

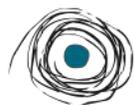
Berlinale
70th Internationale
Filmfestspiele
Berlin
Generation

WHITE

RIOT

directed by **RUBIKA SHAH** produced by **ED GIBBS**

2019 / 80 min / UK / English / Documentary



FILM MOVEMENT®

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FEATURING

RED SAUNDERS

THE CLASH

POLY STYRENE

ROGER HUDDLE

STEEL PULSE

SHAM 69

KATE WEBB

TOM ROBINSON

ALIEN KULTURE





SYNOPSIS

Britain, late-1970s. Punk is exploding. The country is deeply divided over immigration. The National Front, a far-right and fascist political party, is gaining strength as politicians like Enoch Powell push a xenophobic agenda. Outraged by a racist speech from Eric Clapton, music photographer Red Saunders writes a letter to the music press, calling for rock to be a force against racism. *NME*, *Melody Maker*, and *Sounds* all publish the letter.

Flooded with responses, Red discovers many share his views. Teaming up with like-minded creatives Roger Huddle, Kate Webb, Syd Shelton and Australian graphic designer Ruth Gregory, the team bands together to create Rock Against Racism (RAR) and a fanzine, *Temporary Hoarding*. Speaking directly to the youth, *Temporary Hoarding* reports stories and issues that the mainstream British media ignores, like immigration, the Catholic side of the Northern Ireland conflict, and the police's controversial "suspected persons" (sus) powers. They give a voice to the voiceless. The National Front begins to strike back, committing acts of violence against RAR supporters and petrol-bombing their HQ. Despite this, RAR spreads virally across the UK and into Europe, becoming a grassroots youth movement. The Clash, Steel Pulse, Tom Robinson and other top bands of the day jump on board.

White Riot is a moment in time when music changed the world. When a generation challenged the status quo. It's Woodstock meets the March on Washington, punk-style.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I began making *White Riot* as I was curious about the rise of the far right in the late 1970s. I had heard snippets about this era from family, about the racism they faced as British-Asians. Feeling ignorant about our recent history, I embarked on a journey to find out more.

What I found is that amongst all the hatred of that era, a small counter-culture movement – Rock Against Racism – began in a print shop in East London. It was an outlet for young people to share their views. They believed in equality – and music, punk, and graphics were their weapons.

In my work, I often explore identity and youth culture: everyday people trying to make sense of our place in the world. It is a common theme that drives me to tell stories. So much of today's politics mirrors that of the late 1970s. *White Riot* is an inspiring story about youth culture making a difference.



Q&A w/ DIRECTOR RUBIKA SHAH

What drew you to the project?

I was really interested in archive and music and stumbled across The Clash's performance at the Rock Against Racism carnival. I couldn't believe this movement - Rock Against Racism - happened in the late 1970s and I didn't know anything about it. That was the launchpad of my journey into wanting to tell their story.

What were your inspirations for the film?

I was really inspired by Brett Morgan's films, especially *Kurt Cobain: Montage of Heck* and *Chicago 10*. His storytelling is impeccable and his films draw you in to reveal a fundamental truth about his subjects.

How difficult was it to gain access to some of the archival material like the "Battle of Lewisham" or of the gig in Victoria Park, etc.?

Gaining access to private archives is often a complex and delicate process. It requires months of searching via the internet, then emailing, knocking on doors, etc. There is some material we found that has never been seen before, and had been sitting in people's attics for 30+ years. We were lucky that some of the archive holders supported the cause and had attended the RAR carnival, so that also helped.

It was a real surprise to hear about Eric Clapton and Rod Stewart giving their support to NF. Was that something a lot of people knew about? Did the musicians express any regrets?

The Clapton outburst is quite well known, but my reading is that a lot of people didn't know, or had forgotten about Rod Stewart's supporting Enoch Powell. Clapton recently expressed regret.

Where are the people from the film today?

Red continued to perform and photograph, as well as make films. Dennis Bovell is still making music today (he produced The Slits in the late 1970s). Syd Shelton's photography can be seen all over the world. Kate Webb became a journalist. Steel Pulse still make music.

Can you describe the process of bringing the Temporary Hoarding pages to life in the film, as well as the animation process in general?

My animator and I developed the animation style when making our short, *White Riot: London*. It is inspired by the scrapbook approach that the RAR crew took when making *Temporary Hoarding*. We cut out elements from various sources and animated them, playing around with shutter speeds to give it a rough 2D effect.

In which ways is this film relevant today?

The film feels incredibly relevant today because of the rise of fascism and racism around the world, with Brexit and the spread of right-wing populism. Grassroots movements like Extinction Rebellion show that people power can still make a difference, that the media can be used as a powerful and positive force for change.



ROCK AGAINST RACISM

RED SAUNDERS

Red Saunders is a professional photographer who combines his photographic practice with cultural, artistic, musical, and political activism. Saunders was a founder of Rock Against Racism. He specialized in portrait photography, working for nearly two decades for *The Sunday Times Magazine*, as well as *Rolling Stone*, *GQ*, *Time*, *Life*, and *Condé Nast*. He was a member of the radical theatre group CAST. His latest work is the *Hidden* project.

ROGER HUDDLE

Roger Huddle is a socialist, graphic designer, and writer. He has finished with work after half a century and plans to spend the rest of his days studying all that he missed while working. Roger was born in Walthamstow East London (when part of Essex) where he still lives. Political activism is central to his life: founder member of Rock Against Racism in the late 1970s, local campaigner in Artists Against Cuts (antiscrap), and now involved in action over pensions. During the last decade, he has become more and more involved in creative writing, gardening and studying art history. Main influences include William Morris, Jazz, constructivism, and Marx.

KATE WEBB

Kate Webb is a critic, editor, and a regular reviewer for the *TLS* and *The Spectator*. Her work has appeared in *The Guardian*, *Observer*, *Al Jazeera*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Guernica*, *Cineaste*, *Electric Literature*, *British Review of Journalism*, on the *British Library* website, and elsewhere in print and online. Her essays on Angela Carter and Christina Stead have been published by Macmillan, Virago, and the Halstead Press; her doctorate, *Hollywood, History and the Politics of Bohemia* considers Stead's portraits of twentieth-century communists, particularly in her posthumous novel, *I'm Dying Laughing: The Humourist* (1986).

THE BANDS

THE CLASH

Formed in 1976 in the vanguard of British punk, The Clash would soon become the most iconic rock band of their era, a symbol of intelligent protest and stylish rebellion in the turbulent years of the late '70s and early '80s. Just as importantly, they were to become unflinching musical pioneers, integrating first militant reggae, then dub, funk, jazz and hip hop into their music, which has helped to make them one of the most respected and sampled bands by modern DJs and dance musicians. Eventually cracking the Top 10 in America in 1982 before splitting three years later, they were to leave behind an extraordinary recorded legacy comprising four single albums – *The Clash* (1977), *Give 'Em Enough Rope* (1978), *Combat Rock* (1982), and *Cut The Crap* (1985) – and a magnificent double in their legendary *London Calling* (1979), voted album of the decade by Rolling Stone magazine, and a controversial, experimental, and musically diverse triple – *Sandinista!* (1980).

STEEL PULSE

Steel Pulse are a roots reggae musical band from the Handsworth area of Birmingham, England, which has many Afro-Caribbean, Indian and other Asian migrants. They originally formed at Handsworth Wood Boys School, and were composed of David Hinds (lead vocals, guitar), Basil Gabbidon (lead guitar, vocals), and Ronald McQueen (bass); along with Basil's brother Colin briefly on drums and Michael Riley (vocals, percussion). Steel Pulse were the first non-Jamaican act to win the Grammy Award for Best Reggae Album.

TOM ROBINSON

Born in Cambridge in 1950, Tom Robinson first became known in the late 1970s as a musician and LGBT activist with the Tom Robinson Band (TRB), who were early supporters of Rock Against Racism and Amnesty International. In 1977, their Top 5 debut release "2-4-6-8 Motorway" became one of the landmark singles of the UK punk era. Other hits included "Glad To Be Gay," "Up Against The Wall," and the band's debut album *Power in the Darkness*, which went gold in the UK and Japan. As a solo artist, Tom had further solo hits in 1983 with "War Baby" and "Atmospherics: Listen To The Radio," and co-wrote songs with Peter Gabriel, Elton John, and Dan Hartman. In 2015, he released "Only The Now" – made with award-winning producer Gerry Diver – with many guests including Billy Bragg, John Grant, Martin Carthy, and Ian McKellen. It can be heard in full on Spotify, YouTube, and Bandcamp. As a radio broadcaster, Tom hosts three shows a week on BBC Radio 6 Music. He has won two Sony Radio Academy Awards and served as a member of the Ivor Novello Awards committee for 15 years. In 2016, he was awarded a fellowship of LIPA for his support of new music through hosting BBC Music's Introducing Mixtape podcast and his Fresh On The Net music blog.

POLY STYRENE

Poly Styrene (Marianne Joan Elliot-Said) was a punk rock pioneer whose raw, intense vocals and colorful, subversive stage costumes inspired a generation of women in rock music. After seeing a concert featuring the Sex Pistols, she took the stage name Poly Styrene and in 1976 formed the band X-Ray Spex, for which she served as songwriter and vocalist. With short tight songs that used humor as well as anger to skewer sexism, racism, and consumerism, the band rapidly gained a fan base. Its best-known song was "Oh Bondage, Up Yours!" (1977). X-Ray Spex broke up a year after the 1978 release of the band's essential first-wave punk album *Germ Free Adolescents*. Poly Styrene reformed

the band in later years; she also recorded solo albums, including *Generation Indigo*, which was released about a month before her death from breast cancer.

SHAM 69

Sham 69 are an English punk rock band that formed in Hershham in 1975. The band was one of the most successful punk bands in the United Kingdom, achieving five top 20 singles, including "If the Kids Are United" and "Hurry Up Harry". The band's popularity saw them perform on the BBC's Top of the Pops, and the band appeared in the rockumentary film, *D.O.A.*. The original unit broke up in 1979, with frontman Jimmy Pursey moving on to pursue a solo career. In 1987, Pursey and guitarist David Parsons reformed the band, joined by new personnel. Although subsequently going through a number of line-up changes, Sham 69 remain active and are still playing gigs today.

ALIEN KULTURE

Alien Kulture was a British punk band active from 1979 through 1981, founded by Ausaf Abbas, Azhar Rana, Pervez Bilgrami, and self-described "token white" Huw Jones. Inspired by the nascent punk scene, the Anti-Nazi League, and the Rock Against Racism concert series, and wanting to express the frustrations of second-generation Asian immigrants during a period of ethnic tension and race riots in Britain, the members of the band turned to music to achieve politically what they had not been able to via protest rallies. They took their name as a response to then newly elected Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's stated fears of being "swamped by people with a different culture". Seeking to express themselves as youth caught between two cultures, they wrote songs about racism and issues within the Asian community, such as arranged marriage, leading to attacks both from neo-Nazis supporting the National Front as well as other Asians who felt they were disgracing their community. The band eventually recorded one single, "Culture Crossover" b/w "Asian Youth", which was released by Rock Against Racism Records. They attracted the support of famed BBC DJ John Peel, who said he played them on air not just because they were Asian but because he liked their music. However, they were otherwise ignored by mainstream media, and the group came to feel their music was not having the political effect they had hoped for. They disbanded soon after, having played only 30 shows.



RUBIKA SHAH

WRITER, DIRECTOR

Rubika is a writer/director and *Screen International* Star of Tomorrow, whose films have screened at Sundance, Berlin, Tribeca and Hot Docs. Her mini-doc about David Bowie screened in UK cinemas through Picturehouse and was featured in *The Guardian*, *Rolling Stone*, and *i-D Vice*. Her debut feature, *White Riot*, was showcased at the Great 8 at Cannes 2018, and she is also working on an expanded version of her David Bowie doc.

ED GIBBS

WRITER, PRODUCER

Ed is a writer/producer whose slate includes *White Riot* and a number of other feature documentaries and narrative features. His films have screened at festivals worldwide, including Sundance, Berlin, Tribeca and Hot Docs. He is also a respected critic and journalist, contributing to *ABC News*, *BBC News*, *Little White Lies*, *Rolling Stone*, *Time Out* and *The Guardian*, among others.