



IF THE POET

A Spoken Word Film by

Kim Saltarski

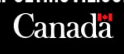
AMAZING AIN'T IT ENTERTAINMENT INC. IN ASSOCIATION WITH CBC

A FILM BY KIM SALTARSKI "IF THE POET"

FEATURING IAN FRENCH AKA "IF THE POET" WITH IAN KETEKU, PORSHA O, CATHERINE BELLEAU-ARSENAULT, FANNON

EDITED BY TERRY MARTINDALE & ANDREW KINES DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY & CO-PRODUCED BY TED PARKES PRODUCED & DIRECTED BY KIM SALTARSKI

IFTHEPOETMOVIE.COM





“I may be middle-aged and outdated, but my rage has never abated.” – IF, the poet.

**The creative urge-to-purge has no age limit in
Kim Saltarski’s inspiring slam poetry documentary
IF THE POET**

**World Broadcast Premiere
CBC TV – FIRSTHAND
November 12, 2015
9 p.m. EST / 9:30 p.m. NT on CBC-TV**

(Toronto – October 7, 2015) In June of this year, the Canadian spoken word community was buzzing as Canada was represented at the World Cup of Slam Poetry in Paris by a newcomer, determined to become its oldest champion.

IF THE POET is a documentary about that man, Ian French - a mid-‘50s Torontonian with a career, family, mortgage - and a cat – who suddenly decided to channel a lifetime of societal rage and painful life-lessons into dramatically-forceful poetry, competing on stages against accomplished spoken word artists 30 years his junior.

Using the stage name IF, he is accompanied on his journey by an unlikely mentor, the young, renowned Ghanaian-Canadian poet and recording artist Ian Keteku – a former Slam Poetry World Champ himself – who relentlessly pushes IF to become a world class performance poet.

Directed by Kim Saltarski, IF THE POET exposes Canada to the wild world of slam poetry, an underground scene that has exploded in recent years and is now wildly popular all over the globe.

The adrenalin-fueled film uses Ian French’s checkered past as its springboard. We learn how his creative angst sprang from a difficult childhood, how a learning disability cursed him academically and led him to act out dangerously, and how he finally found a way to channel his creative energies into Slam Poetry.

And we meet some of the other colourful personalities against whom IF competes enroute to Paris. Among them: fellow Canadian world finalist Catherine Belleau-Arsenault, Porsha O (U.S.), German Lukomnikov (Russia) and Clotilde de Brito (France).

Director Saltarski says he first encountered IF at a sold-out poetry slam in Toronto, “and I instantly knew that his story must be told beyond the spoken-word stage.”

“Thus began my over yearlong odyssey chronicling IF’s triumphs and frustrations finding his place in that exploding scene. But what I didn’t know was that being a fly on the wall in IF’s wondrous world would result in me personally growing as much as IF did. The result is one of my proudest achievements as a storyteller.”

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For more info, request a screening link for review purposes, set up interviews, get GAT:

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For pictures: www.gat.ca/media | login | un: media | pw: media | TV | IF The Poet

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT:

I instantly knew after the first time I experienced IF performing his powerful personal truth at a sold-out poetry slam in Toronto that his story must be told beyond the spoken word stage.

Thus began my over yearlong odyssey chronicling IF's triumphs and frustrations finding his place in the exploding Canadian and International spoken word scene. But what I didn't know that being a fly on the wall in IF's wondrous world would result in me personally growing as much IF did on his own journey.

Our resulting documentary film, IF THE POET, is one of my proudest achievements as a storyteller. IF's inspiring message of "no fear, only love" is truly a beacon for all of us to embrace.



Kim Saltarski

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ONE-LINER:

“IF the Poet” is the inspiring story of Ian French, aka “IF”, beginning with his ‘terrifying’ slam debut at age of 50 and culminating in his obsessed quest to win the World Cup of Slam Poetry in Paris, France.

SHORT SYNOPSIS:

“IF The Poet” is the compelling, against all odds story of Ian French, a.k.a. “IF”, from his humiliating slam poetry debut at age 50, to five years later, representing English Speaking Canada at The World Cup of Poetry in Paris, France.

It’s an unfiltered trip into the mesmerizing heart of competitive Slam Poetry, pitting IF against the best poets in the world and the demons of his past.



LONG SYNOPSIS:

What happens when a middle-aged man with a career, family, mortgage, and a cat crashes the competitive world of Slam Poetry?

IF THE POET is the moving, irreverent and inspiring story of Ian French, aka “IF”, beginning with his ‘terrifying’ slam debut at age of 50 and culminating in his obsessed quest to win the World Cup of Slam Poetry in Paris, France.

It is also the touching story of the unlikely relationship between 54 year-old IF and his poetic coach and mentor, the renown 29 year-old Ghanaian-Canadian poet and recording artist Ian Keteku, who IF calls “Canada’s greatest living poet”.

From IF’s ADHD-fueled youth, run-ins with the police, and intense struggle to escape secondary school with a sliver of self-worth, to his becoming a successful entrepreneur and father, IF is one of Canada’s most highly decorated and recognized Performance Poets.

IF THE POET is a captivating look inside the wild world of slam poetry and an unflinching look IF’s obsession with spoken word, the price he has paid for that obsession as he transforms his personal demons into poetic anthems. It shares the mesmerizing evolution of IF and Keteku’s friendship as they practice, bleed, sweat and bond in preparation for the World Championship. All the while raising the emotional and personal stakes for IF to rise to the elite creation and performance level that Keteku demands.

The film tracks IF’s embarrassingly awful slam debut, through to becoming a member of 2013 National Championship Toronto Slam Team and winning the 2014 Canadian Individual Poetry Slam Championship in Vancouver. It climaxes at the World Cup of Slam Poetry in Paris, France where IF bares his soul on stage in his attempt to become the oldest person to ever win the ultimate crown of slam poetry.

IF THE POET is a cinematic ride into the wild heart of Slam Poetry where poets have 3 minutes and 10 seconds to seduce, mesmerize and impress a raucous crowd of rhyme junkies, hipsters, Hip Hop heads, and... 5 randomly selected judges. You’ll meet the wonderfully weird stars of the Canadian and International Slam Poetry scene for whom sex, sasquatches, race riots and rap, are all fair game for their poetic assault. They include: Porsha O (USA), Catherine Belleau-Arsenault (Quebec), German Lukomnikov (Russia) and Clotilde de Brito (France).

Directed and Produced by IF’s doppelganger Kim Saltarski, **IF THE POET** is a spoken word odyssey documentary commissioned by CBC. IF’s message of empowerment, transformation and personal expression is a true inspiration for all ages



FILMMAKER BIOS:

Kim Saltarski - Director / Producer / IF Doppelgänger



When the camera isn't rolling or the keyboard clicking, Kim is also a prolific songwriter, husband of one, fanatic father of two, friend to many, blissed out world traveller, watermelon lover and much more...

Kim's gripping documentaries for NGOs Children International & Plan Canada shot in Benin, Colombia, Peru, Zambia, The Philippines and Ecuador have touched the hearts of millions across North America. In addition, Kim produced and directed a riveting docu-adventure reality series, "Operation Unplugged" for travel+escape channel that took him racing across Canada's National Parks with 8 techno addicts.

On the comedy flipside, Kim was the executive producer/showrunner on "popcultured with Elvira Kurt" for The Comedy Network. He produced "Out Of Bounds with John Oakley" for Global and produced four "Cream of Comedy" TV specials for The Comedy Network.

In fact Kim has applied his dynamic bald brain to over 400 hours of original animated and live action family, tween, adult comedy, reality and documentary TV programming. His bevy of broadcasters include: Nickelodeon, CTV, The Comedy Network, YTV, Disney Channel, Global, Discovery Channel, BBC Kids, The Comedy Network, YTV, Disney Channel, Global, Discovery Channel, BBC Kids, Cartoon Network, and The Family



Ted Parkes - Cinematographer / Co-Producer

Ted has a riches of experience directing, producing and lensing everything from industrials and commercials, and on-air promos to TV series and indie features. But his true passion is being behind the camera. Ted was DOP on “Rich Bride Poor Bride” for Life and “Collector Showdown” Bell Express Vu. He did second Unit camera for “War of the Wheels” for Global. He contributed to the CBC’s “Movie Night in Canada” opening and bumper ads.

He was technical Producer on “Girly Ghost Hunter” on The Space Network, and for the TV sports franchise “All Strength Challenge” which aired on Outdoor Life Network (OLN). He was also the Cinematographer for independent feature through Litmus Productions “Soul Suitcase”.

Ted’s work has taken him around the world, 25 countries at last count. Destinations including Guatemala, Peru, Mexico, Europe, Russia, Africa as well as many Canadian, US and Caribbean locales.



FEATURED POETS:

IF THE POET

IF (Ian French) is a Performance Poet, musician, filmmaker, father and friend.

His poems channel the wisdom of Spirit, the rage of the wounded and the yearning that resides in every human heart. He says “every poem I write is a ‘shout out’ to the sacredness of our days, a three chord party jam, and a tribute to the triumph of love over fear.”

IF is a member of the 2013 National Champion “Toronto Poetry Slam Team”, winner of 2013 Buffalo International Slam, 2014 Canadian Individual Slam Champion. He has performed at various festivals including the prestigious Word On The Street and Words Aloud. IF writes his best poetry while walking and can often be seen wandering the streets, gesticulating wildly and muttering to himself.

IF can be reached at ifthepoet@gmail.com and www.ifthepoet.com



IAN KETEKU

Ian Keteku is an articulation of a generation's heartbeat. A magician with syntax, a word sorcerer conjuring new realities, sound paintings, all in an attempt to better understand our existence.

Keteku is the 2010 World Poetry Slam champion. Ian Keteku also uses his voice to speak for the voiceless and inspire messages of peace, action and critical thought.

He has performed his poetry and music all over the world and continues to plant seeds of poetic justice globally. Ian is also part of the critically acclaimed spoken word troupe "The Recipe". Ian Keteku has shared the stage with some of the most lauded names in literature and music.

In addition to performances, Keteku conducts poetry, writing and performance workshops for youth and various community groups. Inspiring people to accept the power of their own voice.



PORSHA O

Porsha Olayiwola, aka “Porsha O”, is the 2014 Individual World Poetry Slam Champion and the 2015 National Poetry Slam Champion.

Black, poet, dyke-goddess, hip-hop feminist, womanist, friend: Porsha separates herself from the field of issue-based performance poets by applying advanced political analysis to examine injustice while providing perspective on concrete solutions with exciting and accessible language.

A native of Chicago, Porsha now resides in Boston where she writes and teaches.

www.Facebook.com/PorshaO



CATHERINE BELLEAU-ARSENAULT

Catherine Belleau-Arsenault is the 2014 Grand Slam Championship of Quebec. Originally from Montreal, she moved to Rimouski, Quebec where she discovered poetry slam that lead her on a magical odyssey to Paris to represent French-speaking Canada at the World Cup of Slam Poetry.

When she is not slamming, juggling, swing dancing, and playing Chopin on the piano, Catherine can be found doing a master degree in Town Planning and Regional Development, while working as a liaison agent for a Mental Health organization.



AUDIENCE REACTIONS:

“WOW! IF is amazing!”

“Fantastic! A loving portrait of a fascinating individual.”

“You’ve focused on a truly compelling character with great stage presence. It’s a very unpredictable and unexpected story. “

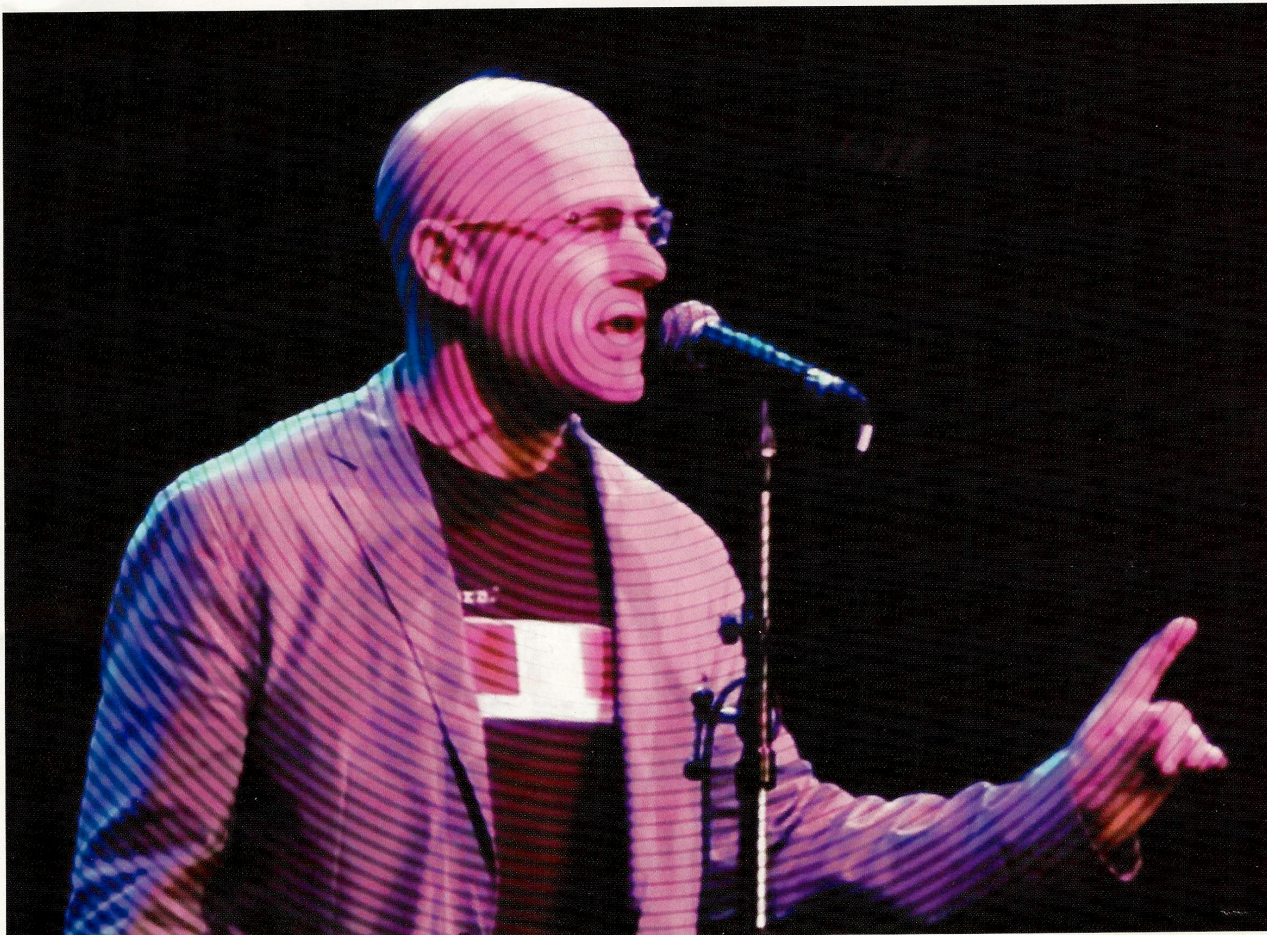
“Nothing short of awesome. The buildup. The finale. Blew me away.”

“A masterpiece. Shows the Canadian slam scene at its best and IF at the height of his beautiful, authentic power.”



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GUM PROBLEMS p. 38 ■ GIRL FIGHT p. 39 ■ REVIEWS p. 40 ■ LOL p. 41
VIDEO GAMES p. 42 ■ ON SCREEN READING p. 43 ■ WOMEN IN MEMOIR p. 44



■ IAN FRENCH, AKA "IF"

PROFILE

New classics

Spoken word brings wisdom at any age *by Jane Welowszky*

BY DAY, IAN FRENCH, 54, is president of a successful downtown Toronto direct-marketing agency, with an impressive client list and an equally impressive reputation. By night, IF, as French is known on stage, is taking the world of spoken word by storm. Last year, he

earned the title Canadian Individual Poetry Slam champion, and now French is poised to compete in the World Championships in Paris, France, in June.

How does a middle-aged advertising executive not only compete—but win—in

an arena where cultural diversity, youth, and street cred reign supreme? Not surprisingly, it's a question French has heard before. Both audiences and poets met his early appearances with skepticism, but as they listened to French's poetry and distinctive approach to the material, they gradually came to embrace IF as one of them.

For years, songwriting and playing in live bands were French's creative outlets. About 10 years ago, he started listening to hip-hop

arts & ideas

to stay involved in his then-teenage son's life, and was immediately captivated by the way the artists played with lyrics. "I thought they changed the whole lyrical game in an astounding way," he says. Inspired, French started writing in the same style, and where he lacked the ability to perform rap, he found success turning his songs into poems.

A few years later when French stumbled on to live poetry readings at a neighbourhood café, he knew he was on to something. But it wasn't until he made his first slam appearance at Toronto's Drake Underground that French discovered the competitive side of spoken word. French was hooked. "I knew that was the art form for me," he recalls.

French believes that one of the rules of good poetry is that the more intimate and personal it is, the more universal it becomes: "a strange juxtaposition," he admits. His own formative years were fraught with difficulty, giving him a wealth of material to mine for his art: a childhood diagnosis of ADHD; drug- and alcohol-related run-ins with police; and going to five different high schools. Yet, he says his early life experiences have been leavened with wisdom and empathy as a result.

Where issues of race, poverty, and political strife colour younger poets' performances, empowerment and transformation are at the core of IF's message. Rather than an "us-and-them perspective," his age allows him to channel his rage in a more optimistic, hopeful way.

In addition to French's unique perspective, he also attributes his success to great mentors. While a member of the 2013 Toronto Slam Poetry Team, French met Ian Keteku, the team's coach and 2010 World Slam Poetry champion. Keteku introduced French to different styles of writing, and forced him to dig deeper on an emotional level. French relies on humour to tender difficult issues, but under Keteku's mentorship, he also learned to delve into personal areas that were the most troubling and allow his vulnerability to emerge.

To French, spoken word is a gift he never saw coming. "It has allowed me to express myself in a way I never thought possible," he says. "It's just been a magical trip."

CREDITS

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CINEMATOGRAPHER / CO-PRODUCER

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featuring

IF The Poet

Ian French

with

Ian Keteku

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Porsha Olayiwola, Catherine Belleau-Arsenault, Clotilde de Brito, JakBrol, German Lukomnikov, Paul Weigl, Katerine Volsing, Dante Alarido, João Paiva, Bram E. Gieben, Black Panther, Audrey Lane Cockett, Andre Prefontaine, Patrick de Belen, Erin Cotton, Sabrina Benaim, Jaimie G, Kaz Mega, Inali Barger, Kay'la Fraser, C-Command, Erin Dingle, Dia Davina, Fannon Holland

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IAN KETEKU APARTMENT ART

Komi Olaf

LOCATIONS

The Drake Hotel, The Measure, The Central, The Rhino, Havana Restaurant & Theatre, Café Deux Soleils, Rio Theatre, Codman Academy, Haley House Cafe, Espace Belleville

FOOTAGE COURTESY OF:

Guelph Spoken Word - Videographer: Mark MacKinnon
Buffalo International Poetry Slam - Videographer: Carl Bailey for Njozi Productions
Univox Choir Toronto - Videographers: Vitold Vidic & Graham Robinson
Slamontreal, The Ligue québécoise de slam,
The Festival international de la Littérature - IVY & Yvon Jean
Poetry Slam, Inc. - Suzi Smith, Tedx, Western University, SPEAKout Poetry

SPECIAL THANKS

bravoFACTUAL - Rachel Goldstein-Couto, Bob Culbert,
Nathan Schwartz, Gina Dineen, Kate Yorga

Pilote Le Hot – Coupe du Monde 2015
Dave Silverberg - Toronto Poetry Slam
Bānoo Zan - Shab-e She'r Poetry Night
Chris Gilpin & Jillian Christmas & shayne avec i grec
Verses Festival & CIPS 2014 & Vancouver Poetry House
Ntare Ali Gault & Erika Gault - Buffalo International Poetry Slam
Dwayne Morgan - Dwayne Morgan Productions
Moe Clark - CFSW 2013

RC Weslowski, Magpie Ulysses, Scribe, Sir Realist, Same Difference, Macer,
2013 Toronto Poetry Slam Team: David Delisca (aka Dahveed Delisca),
Sarah Zeiler Kligman (aka Kliggy), Richard Glen Lett (aka Optimus Rhyme),
Jason Pennells (aka Philosofly), Northern Lights Direct: Sandy French, Jane French,
Luc Bourgon, Anna Fowles, Jasmina Emmanuel, Annia Vuthirong, Ryan Johnson
Nick Paulozza, JP Pawliw-Fry, Elizabeth Pawliw-Fry, Sue Berlove, Atul N. Rao,
Allan Novak, Fred Kamping, Tom Wolsky, Mark Monteforte, Dallas Bergen
Lucas Marchand, Barbara Cuden, Hayet Benkara, Karen Longhorn,
Apple Gurus: Dave, Josh, Andrew, Kevin, Joanne Jackson, Diana Warne, Karina
Rotenstein, Ahmad Ismail, Pallavi Joshi, Julian Carrington, Amy Lee, Tracey Kadish
& Mohawk College, Dr. Nick Argyropoulos, Jeanette Wayne,
& all the amazing poets and volunteers at CIPS 2014 & Coupe du Monde 2015

LOVE & SUPPORT SUPER SQUAD

Wendie, Maya & Jason Saltarski, Wendy Parkes, Lise St-Arnaud,
Matisse St-Arnaud-French

DEDICATED TO:

Margaret Agnes Robertson 1923-2014
Felix Saltarski 1930-2014
Zaccheus Jackson 1978-2014

FOR THE CBC

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