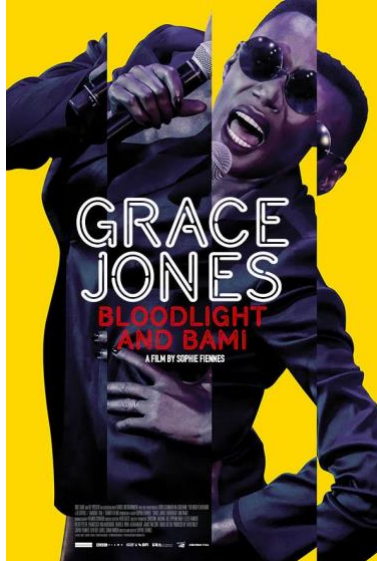


# KINO LORBER

## GRACE JONES: BLOODLIGHT AND BAMI



Directed and edited by Sophie Fiennes

With Grace Jones, Jean-Paul Goude, Sly Dunbar, Robbie Shakespeare, Ivor Guest

– World Premiere, Toronto International Film Festival 2017 –  
115 min. – UK/Ireland

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## **LOG LINE**

This electrifying journey through the public and private worlds of pop culture mega-icon Grace Jones juxtaposes musical sequences with intimate personal footage, all the while brimming with Jones' bold aesthetic.

## **SHORT SYNOPSIS**

This electrifying journey through the public and private worlds of pop culture mega-icon Grace Jones juxtaposes musical sequences with intimate personal footage, all the while brimming with Jones's bold aesthetic. A larger-than-life entertainer, an androgynous glam-pop diva, an unpredictable media presence—Grace Jones is all these things and more. Sophie Fiennes's documentary goes beyond the traditional music biography, offering a portrait as stylish and unconventional as its subject. Taking us home to Jamaica, the studio with long-time collaborators Sly & Robbie, and behind-the-scenes at shows all around the world, the film reveals Jones as lover, daughter, mother, and businesswoman. But the stage is the fixed point to which the film returns, with eye-popping performances of "Slave to the Rhythm," "Pull Up to the Bumper," "Love is the Drug," and more. Jones herself has said watching the film "will be like seeing me almost naked" and, indeed, Fiennes's treatment is every bit as genre-bending as its subject, untamed by neither age nor life itself.

## **LONG SYNOPSIS**

Wild, androgynous and larger than life, Grace Jones plays all these parts. Yet here we discover her as lover, daughter, mother, sister and even grandmother, as she submits herself to our gaze and allows us to understand what constitutes her mask. The stage is where Grace Jones' most extreme embodiments are realized and her theatrical imagination lets loose: this is where the musical of her life is played out. The film includes unique performances of her iconic hits "Slave to the Rhythm" and "Pull Up to the Bumper," as well as more recent autobiographical tracks, Williams' Blood, "This Is and Hurricane." These personal songs link to the film's narrative that follows Grace on a holiday road trip across her native Jamaica, with her son Paulo and niece Chantal. Here the family's roots and the story of her traumatic childhood are uncovered.

Grace and her brothers Chris and Noel, raised for several years by their violent, disciplinarian step grandfather Mas P, now attempt to understand and exorcise this formative experience. Meanwhile, the sensuality of the island and its tropical splendors resonate a pleasure principal that has equally shaped Grace Jones' appetite for life. In Jamaican patois, 'Bloodlight' is the red light that illuminates when an artist is recording and 'Bami' means bread, the substance of daily life. The film cuts between Jamaica and Jones' public and professional life. We see her moving between Tokyo, Paris, Moscow, London and New York, in the recording studio with Jamaican drum and bass duo Sly and Robbie (musical collaborators across her career) and socializing with backstage groupies, as she recounts her perspective of the infamous Russell Harty TV appearance. Warm and funny, she is both Bacchus – the wild partying hedonist – and a fierce and tenacious businesswoman.

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Her stage is the fixed point to which the film returns, with “Love Is The Drug” acting like an aria, bringing the film to its final and most touching scenes, including an encounter with French photographer Jean-Paul Goude, father of Jones’ son Paulo and creator of her iconic album covers. This is a Grace we have not seen before, someone who reminds us of what it is to dare to be truly alive. In all her apparent contradictions, Grace Jones may appear an exception, but she is also a point of identification: she is the exception that proves the rule.

## **A TALK WITH DIRECTOR SOPHIE FIENNES AND WRITER LEONIE GOMBRICH**

**There’s an enormous amount here for fans of Grace Jones to enjoy, but this film goes much further than that. It’s a very rich and textured portrait of both a performer and a person. Can you tell us how it came about?**

Grace and I originally met because I’d made a film about her older brother Noel’s church in Los Angeles (*Hoover Street Revival, 2001*) and she said, “You understand where I’m from.” She stood up at the end, clapping, and said, “I love the *smell* of your film”. Also, she felt that because I come from a big family, I knew something about the shared experience of siblings.

She was in the middle of making her album *Hurricane*, but we didn’t want the film to be just about that – we wanted to go further. I decided to be very open, just gather footage – gather evidence. When you make an observational documentary, you’re completely at the mercy of life as it’s unfolding; you have control over nothing except your creative instinct. I had a bag packed and when she called, I’d just go – to Moscow, to the studio, to New York – as part of her entourage. She actively wanted to explore her relationship to Jamaica and as there was a family gathering there, she brought me along. I happened to be in Paris when she was doing the photo-shoot with Jean-Paul Goude and her granddaughter was born. I gathered material across five years, so I had an enormous amount. Then I began the process of sorting through it, working out what I could do, what the footage I had created could say about Grace.

**The footage of Grace and her family in Jamaica acts as a core narrative: there’s clearly a story there that unfolds throughout the film.**

There are four cinematic layers and the Jamaican holiday road-trip is one. They are interwoven in such a way as to pull the viewer through. It’s like an onion skin: constructing those layers and how they work together *is* the work of making the film.

The film isn’t nostalgic, it’s not a biopic in the sense of telling the full story of her whole life in a piecemeal way. Grace’s past is always in her present anyway, but the Jamaican material takes us to her origins; the root and the soil which grew her, as much as the narrative of the childhood itself. As I gathered the material, I became fascinated by the contrast between what was natural, in terms of light, skin, sounds, and colors and what was ‘anti-natural’, as the film simultaneously follows Grace into her professional and

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public life - so, the texture of the metropolis, painting her face, living in a series of presidential hotel suites, and her passage to and from the stage itself.

**Her performance is captured powerfully with the luscious concert footage that punctuates the film. Watching it, it was a gradual realization that her songs are a commentary on her life – you’ve certainly used them in that way.**

Grace sees herself as a storyteller so I approached the performance with that in mind; thinking about the songs as shaping the narrative. I made a rough edit of the documentary footage in advance so I had the best possible sense of what songs would link where; from the mesmerizing fury of *Nipple to The Bottle*, to her call to action to ‘party!’ that is *Pull Up To The Bumper*. Grace once said to me, “The music says more about me than I can say about the music.” I hope I managed to bring that sense into the film.

The staging gives Grace space and freedom to move and retains her aesthetic language: strong, graphic, elegant. She didn’t rehearse in the set. It’s like she says in the film: “The performer out there takes the risk.” Her instinct in the live moment is key to how her performance happens, and it’s also in how she relates to her audience. Her performance has changed a lot since the One Man Show in the 1980s. She was much more distant then.

Grace feels powerful being naked; it’s not a point of fear or vulnerability for her. Jasper Conran worked with costumiers at The Royal Opera House to design a corset to give her this freedom to be in her own skin. There’s a quality of attack in how she moves, like a dancer, and it’s also informed by her modeling career. She’s animated by life and in this sense, she is properly erotic. Then, of course, there are the Philip Treacy hats. We pulled this extraordinary wimple from his archives and she wears it when she sings *Williams’ Blood*; she’d worn that when she sang with Pavarotti.

I worked closely with Ivor Guest, who is the producer of Grace’s album *Hurricane*. Ivor appears in the film, and is the musical director, overseeing the recording and mixing of the live music. Ivor formed The Grace Jones Band, who have toured with her since 2008.

I worked again with cinematographer Remko Schnoor and we shot on Super 16 mm film. I had in mind the simplicity of those extraordinary sequences of Rita Hayworth in *Gilda*, where the camera plays in a subtle way with her performance, so you can read and follow what the body is doing. Film is such a sensual medium. I hope people see the film in the cinema, as it’s only there that the sound and picture can be fully experienced.

**Even though the music’s incredibly important, she’s something other than a pop star, isn’t she? That’s not what defines her at all.**

I see her as a performance artist. Outside of corporate gigs, for Grace, visual

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expression or making music is an art practice. That's why she self-funded the album, *Hurricane*. As she says in the film, "We want the freedom to make the music we want to make." It's very personal. It's like any artist – you're out there, fighting for your creative life. We see her do that. And we see the pleasure of her making the music, those creative moments when she's with Ivor Guest and Sly & Robbie.

**You've made a lot of films that seem to be about performance, or at least about performers. Was that part of what interested you about working with Grace?**

Well, frankly Grace is just great fun to be with! She is extremely funny, and I really try to minimize the sense of my presence in the film, so as the viewer you get these two hours with her to yourself, as it were.

But performance is a central part of the person and the artist, Grace Jones, so to make a film that didn't represent that would have been nonsense. I'm also interested in *being* as a daily performance. "Who do I need to be today, who do I feel myself to be?" is part of everyone's life; it certainly is for women.

In this sense, Grace is a wonderful subject. It would be a mistake to think of the "mask" with a fixed "self" behind that. We do see her constructing her stage persona: putting on the make-up, the painted mask, and becoming 'Grace Jones', but in nearly every documentary scene she's also unconsciously experimenting with who or what she feels she is. People are immediately struck seeing the film by how she slips between accents: French, English, Jamaican, American or, in Japan, even speaking English with a Japanese accent.

I realized after cutting the film that she is naturally riffing on this question of identity almost all the time, beyond the androgyny she is famous for playing with. "Sometimes you have to be a high-flying bitch," she says, or "I'm going tribal," or "I'm human, man! I'm *human!*," or "Oh the fucking panther is coming out in me now!" or "I feel like six years old!" or "I'm a Gypsy, *please!*" She might be a lascivious 'Williams', an entitled 'Jones' or the dominating 'Mas P'.

I think it's fascinating how she realized that she is unconsciously impersonating her scary, Jamaican stepfather, 'Mas P', in her stage persona; in this sense, her performance is a transformational act. It's a testament to the creative impulse; she's not a victim and she is not afraid. She turned that fear around and put it out there, onto us!

**Which brings us to another of the film's layers: her international "gypsy" life. Her location changes almost as much as her identity. She's so constantly on the move that you really can't tell where her home is. If someone asked me where she lives, I'd have to say, "On the stage."**

That was deliberate. The stage is the anchor. There's enough disassociation of place and time that the stage needs to be a physical place we return to, even if Grace's performance there is shifting according to the songs.

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**Her international life, sipping Cristal champagne in a fur coat in Paris, is a striking contrast with her world in Jamaica, attending church with her mother or traveling with her brothers to Spanish Town, where they grew up.**

For me, this is the beauty of ‘verite cinema’ – or ‘documentary cinema’. I am trying to find a term to define a new genre as it’s so frustrating today that everyone wants to approach films in terms of genres. So it’s not fiction but it’s not journalism either. It’s the richness of time and moment captured. These contrasts we travel through with Grace are simply the crazy contrasts of the world itself. In the edit I discovered I could play all kinds of games, moving between day and night and from place to place with Grace.

**Yes, after wild, hedonistic partying in the far-out reaches of an urban night club, we wake up and go to church with Grace in Jamaica; what we see is that her mother is a performer, too – a church performer.**

Yes, and we see Grace supporting her mother’s performance in church. Whether you’re religious or not, there is something very powerful that happens with her mother’s performance and Grace within it. For me, it’s because the song touches on the loss of intimacy with her parents in her childhood – this is a large part of the Jamaican story in the film. We see her mother singing jubilantly, “God’s eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches over you and me!”, but for Grace, it was the eye of the mother that was not there for many precious years of her childhood.

An eye, a gaze, being *seen*, or simply looking and being looked at: this theme emerged in a powerful way from the documentary material. It’s central to cinema itself, which captures the visual world, but it’s also very personal and critical for Grace, I think. With my camera, I am that intimate gaze, but now I pass this over to each person who views the film.

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## ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

### **Sophie Fiennes/ Director-Producer-Editor**

Sophie Fiennes is a film director whose feature documentaries for theatrical exhibition include her collaborations with the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek, *The Pervert's Guide to Cinema* (2006), and *The Pervert's Guide to Ideology* (2012), her portrait of German artist Anselm Kiefer, *Over Your Cities Grass Will Grow* (2010), and her most recent film *Grace Jones; Bloodlight and Bam!* (2017), an observational odyssey into the world of the iconic singer and performer. This project came about following Fiennes' first feature documentary *Hoover Street Revival* (2001) about a Pentecostal church community in Los Angeles, and the sermons of its preacher, Bishop Noel Jones, brother of Grace Jones.

Fiennes' work for television includes her first short *Lars from 1-10*, about the Danish film director Lars von Trier and his 'Dogme rules' film manifesto and arts documentaries, *The Late Michael Clark*, (2000), *Because I Sing* (2001), *VSPRS Show and Tell* (2005), and *Liu Xiaodong Half Street* (2013). She also made a 5 minute fictional short, *First Row Orchestra*, for Arte's Hopper Vu Par (2012).

Fiennes' films have received international distribution and screened in festivals from Cannes official selection to Toronto and Sundance. She was awarded a NESTA fellowship in 2001, to develop her innovative approach to film, and the Arte France Cinema Award in 2008 at Rotterdam's Cinemart.

### **Katie Holly/ Producer**

Katie Holly is Managing Director of Blinder Films, where she has produced several award-winning and critically acclaimed features including *One Hundred Mornings* (2009), *Sensation* (2010), *Citadel* (2012) and *The Pervert's Guide to Ideology* (2012).

Her latest feature, Whit Stillman's *Love & Friendship* (starring Kate Beckinsale, Chloë Sevigny, Xavier Samuel, and Stephen Fry), premiered to critical acclaim at the Sundance Film Festival 2016 and enjoyed extended releases at both US and UK box offices.

Another recent release is *The Queen of Ireland*, a feature documentary about accidental LGBT activist Panti Bliss. Picked up by Universal Pictures for distribution in the UK and Ireland, *The Queen of Ireland* went on to secure the highest opening box office of any Irish documentary to date.

Her most recent projects include the original TV drama *Striking Out*, which broadcast on RTÉ in January 2017, as well as *Grace Jones: Bloodlight and Bam!*, a documentary on the musical and fashion icon, directed by Sophie Fiennes. She is also currently in pre-production for *Vita & Virginia*, which depicts the true account of the passionate relationship between literary innovator Virginia Woolf and her only lover Vita Sackville-West, directed by Chanya Button.

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Katie has also produced and exec-produced comedy series for RTÉ including the award-winning *The Savage Eye* and *Irish Pictorial Weekly*. She is a graduate of EAVE, Inside Pictures, was a former *Producer on the Move* at Cannes, and is a board member of the Irish Film Board and Irish Film Institute.

## **Shani Hinton/ Producer**

Having spent 10 years in private practice in the Film Department at Bird & Bird working with Peter Dally, Shani set up her own law firm in April 2008 to work directly with her key clients. She has wide experience in film development, finance, production and distribution having worked on many varied productions all over Europe. Her clients include:

**Nick Broomfield** for his documentary and feature work since *Kurt & Courtney* through to *Whitney Can I Be Me*. She is also working with Nick on the development of a feature film based on Ronan Bennett's novel *The Catastrophist*; and

**Sophie Fiennes** for her documentary projects since *Hoover Street Revival* and *Over Your Cities Grass Will Grow* and, most recently, *Grace Jones: Bloodlight and Bami*.

## **Remko Schnorr/ Cinematographer**

Remko Schnorr (1974) successfully graduated from the Dutch Film Academy in 2000. He started to work as a cinematographer on short films, commercials, and music videos. In 2004 he shot his first feature-length film *Pluk van de Petteflet* for Dutch filmmaker Ben Sombogaart. In 2006 Remko teamed up with director Sophie Fiennes on the long documentary *The Pervert's Guide to Cinema*. In 2009 the short film *Missen* (Jochem de Vries) received a Golden Palm nomination in Cannes for the best short film.

Feature films of his hand are *Cornea* (2014, Jochem de Vries) and the Swiss Road-Movie *Rider Jack* (2015, This Lüscher). With Dutch documentary filmmaker Willemie Kluijfhout, he shot the feature-length documentaries *L'amour des Moules* (2012) and *Sergio Herman Fucking Perfect* (2015).

Over the years he continued his collaboration with Sophie Fiennes resulting in the documentaries *Over Your Cities Grass Will Grow* (2010), *The Pervert's Guide to Ideology* (2012) and *Grace Jones: Bloodlight and Bami* (2017).

Remko also keeps shooting commercials, music videos and short films for renowned artists like Katerina Jebb and Erwin Olaf - at home and abroad. His love for working on film and the transfer of textures and tactility are a feature of Remko's work.

## **Ivor Guest/ Musical Director**

Ivor Guest began his recording career in the late eighties working alongside Sean Oliver (Rip Rig and Panic), Bruce Smith (The Pop Group/PIL) and Tim Simenon (notably on



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the Bomb the Bass album 'Clear'). He formed a partnership with Atticus Ross, latterly of 'NIN, and together they worked on many projects, notably Barry Adamson's 'The Negro Inside Me' and 'Oedipus Schmoedipus', as well as their own project with Tim Simenon 'Strange Cuts'.

Ivor's film scoring career began in the UK with Nick Love's cult movie *The Football Factory* and continued as one of New York documentarian Alex Gibney's regular composers. With Gibney, he scored *Taxi to the Dark Side*, which won the Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature and Ivor was Emmy nominated (a first for a documentary score) for his work on *Mea Maxima Culpa -- Silence in the House of God*.

Ivor's work with Grace Jones spans almost a decade-- he produced (and co-wrote many tracks on) 'Hurricane' and made 'Hurricane Dub' in its entirety, as well as doing the musical direction for Jones' legendary live shows. Recently Grace and Ivor's track 'Original Beast' made an appearance on the OST album for 'The Hunger Games-- Mockingjay Part One'.

In addition to his work with Grace Jones, Ivor has produced two albums for the iconic French artist Brigitte Fontaine ('Prohibition' and 'L'un N'empeche pas L'autre') and worked with Brian Eno, Lana Del Ray, Jessie Ware, Skye Edwards, Tony Allen, Dave Okumu, Wally Badarou and Seb Rochford. In France, he has worked with Jaques Higelin, M, Christophe, Bertrand Cantat, Arno, Philippe Katerine and Emmanuelle Seigner.

## **Eiko Ishioka/ Original Staging Concept**

Eiko Ishioka (July 12, 1938 – January 21, 2012) was a Japanese art director, costume and graphic designer known for her work in stage, screen, advertising and print media. She was noted for her advertising campaigns for the Japanese boutique chain Parco, her collaboration with sportswear company Descente in designing uniforms and outerwear for members of the Swiss, Canadian, Japanese and Spanish teams at the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City and was the director of costume design for the opening ceremony of the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing. She won the Academy Award for Best Costume design for her work in Francis Ford Coppola's 1992 film *Bram Stoker's Dracula* and was posthumously nominated for an Academy Award in the same category for her work in Tarsem Singh's 2012 film *Mirror Mirror*.

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## CAST:

Grace Jones  
Jean-Paul Goude  
Sly Dunbar  
Robbie Shakespeare

## CREW:

Director – Sophie Fiennes  
Producers – Katie Holly, Sophie Fiennes, Beverly Jones, Shani Hinton  
Executive Producers – Christine Langan, Joe Oppenheimer, Lizzie Francke, Keith Potter, Francesca Von Habsburg, Danielle Ryan, Alan Maher, James Wilson, Émilie Blézat  
Editor – Sophie Fiennes  
Cinematographer – Remko Schnorr  
Musical Director – Ivor Guest  
Hats Designed by – Philip Treacy

## THE GRACE JONES BAND

Keyboards, Percussion, Onstage MD	Charles Stuart
Keyboards	Don-E McLean
Percussion	Paulo Goude
Lead Guitar	Louis Eliot
Bass Guitar	Malcolm Joseph
Drums	Andrew McLean
Background Vocals	Hannah Khemoh, Aleysha Gordon

## FEATURED STUDIO MUSICIANS:

Drums	Martin Slattery
Bass Guitar	Adam Green
Keyboards	Uziah 'Sticky' Thompson
Lead Guitar	Creative Consultant
Percussion	Original Staging Concept
Sly Dunbar	Oisin Byrne
Robbie Shakespeare	Eiko Ishioka

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## **MUSIC CREDITS:**

### **JONES THE RHYTHM**

Written by Bruce Woolley, Simon Darlow, Trevor Horn  
& Stephen Lipson Courtesy of The Island Def Jam  
Music Group under license from Universal Music  
Operations Ltd Published by Sony/ATV Music  
Publishing UK Ltd & Perfect Songs Ltd  
Administered by BMG Rights Management UK Ltd

### **SLAVE TO THE RHYTHM**

Performed by Grace Jones  
Written by Bruce Woolley, Simon Darlow, Trevor Horn & Stephen Lipson  
Published by Sony/ATV Music Publishing UK Ltd & Perfect Songs Ltd  
Administered by BMG Rights Management UK Ltd

### **WILLIAMS BLOOD**

Performed by Grace Jones  
Written by Wendy Melvoin, Lisa Coleman & Grace Jones  
Published by Bloodlight Inc.,  
Administered by Kobalt Music Publishing Ltd & Chrysalis Music Ltd, a BMG Company

### **THIS IS**

Performed by Grace Jones  
Written by Grace Jones & Leslie Winer  
Published by Bloodlight Inc.  
Administered by Kobalt Music Publishing Ltd & Gertrude Music,  
Administered by Electric Pacific Songs

### **LA VIE EN ROSE**

Performed by Grace Jones  
Written by Louiguy & Edith Piaf  
Published by Chester Music Ltd  
trading as Noel Gay Music Co  
Courtesy of Island Records under license from Universal Music Operations Ltd

### **WELL WELL WELL**

Performed by Grace Jones  
Written by Barry Reynolds & Grace Jones  
Published by Universal Music Publishing Ltd & Kobalt Music Publishing Ltd

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## **WARM LEATHERETTE**

Performed by Grace Jones

Written by Daniel Miller

Published by Blue Mountain Music Ltd

Administered by Kobalt Music Publishing Ltd

## **NIPPLE TO THE BOTTLE**

Performed by Grace Jones

Written by Sly Dunbar & Grace Jones

Published by Universal Music Publishing Ltd

## **I NEED A MAN**

Performed by Grace Jones

Written by Paul Andrew Slade & Pierre Papadiamandis

Published by Riano courtesy of Budde Music

## **PULL UP TO THE BUMPER**

Performed by Grace Jones

Written by Dana Manno, Sly Dunbar & Robert Shakespeare

Published by Universal Music Publishing Ltd

Courtesy of The Island Def Jam Music Group

Under license from Universal Music Operations Ltd

## **HIS EYE IS ON THE SPARROW**

Performed by Marjorie Jones

Written by Civilla D Martin & Charles Gabriel

Published by 1905 Word Music LLC

Administered by Warner Chappell

## **LOVE IS THE DRUG**

Performed by Grace Jones

Written by Bryan Ferry & Andrew Mackay

Published by BMG

Rights Management UK Ltd

## **MY JAMAICAN GUY**

Performed by Grace Jones

Written by Grace Jones

Published by Universal Music Publishing Ltd

Courtesy of Island Records

Under license from Universal Music Operations Ltd

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## **HURRICANE**

Performed by Grace Jones

Written by Grace Jones & Adrian Thaws

Published by Bloodlight Inc

Administered by Kobalt Music Publishing Ltd  
& Domino Music Publishing Co Ltd