

Songbirds
Hiphopbattle.com Review

Who would have thought that prisoners had talent? After all, they are a different breed, aren't they? *Songbirds*, directed by Brian Hill, unveils a side of the female prisoner that the average person probably never considers. What provoked them? What made them do the things they did? The answers to these questions are often given to the public, but through the eyes of the media, not the prisoners themselves. The uniqueness of the delivery is what sets this documentary apart from the rest.

Songbirds was filmed at Downview Prison in Surney, England. The film featured five inmates who were convicted of various crimes from murder to drug trafficking. Sounds like a typical prison documentary, but quite extraordinary. In this film the interviews were done prior to filming with a poet present. The poet then took the women's words and composed poems. The poems were then set to music and prisoners themselves performed the songs. What makes this different from any other musical... it was **real**. You could not help but feel the prisoner's pain while watching their performance.

An interesting point worth mentioning is that all but one of the women's stories had a common theme. Whether it was their father, brother, husband, or a boyfriend; they all had negative experiences with a man that they felt played a huge role in their lives of crime. The interview style used allowed the audience to see the body language and expressions of the women in a new way. From a women's perspective, it was almost as if you could put yourself in their shoes.

One limitation of the film was that while women of color were seen throughout the film, but their stories weren't presented. I'm sure it would have provided a different perspective for the viewers. *Songbirds* is a brilliant display of truth and creativity. **Grade A**

Tearsanee Carlisle