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**We know where we're going, we know where we're from: Filming *Babylon*  
**(Franco Rosso, 1980)****

Franco Rosso's film *Babylon* attempts to realistically depict the black toasting DJ culture that developed in south-east London during the late 1970s. Filmed entirely on location, the film presciently foreshadows the race riots that took place in Brixton, St Pauls, Bristol and Handsworth, Birmingham in 1981. Although the British government had greatly restricted immigration by the 1970s, approximately 83,000 people from the Commonwealth settled in the UK between 1968 and 1975. Many blacks lived in run-down inner-city areas. These riots were a direct result of the socio-economic problems affecting these communities. Indeed, after the Brixton riots, the Scarman Report found that racial disadvantage is a fact of current British life.

Taking account of this socio-cultural context, my paper tells the story of the production of the film, and considers its mixed critical and public reception. For example, I will explore the reasons why so many middle-class West Indians were upset with the language used in the film (Rosso insisted that the Jamaicans speak in patois – the producer Gavrik Losey reflects that this decision perhaps led to the film being largely overlooked by the public). Building on interviews with Losey and other key figures, the paper also questions the film's realist aesthetics, and reflects on how far it captures an authentic picture of black urban youth. In conclusion, locating the film within a corpus of films about black Britain, I will argue that *Babylon* can now be read as a highly rich text that explores (and asks important questions about) key aspects of the postcolonial experience in Britain and its representation in film at the historical moment when Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Party came to power.