

Six String Sanctuary

Nonconformist discussions about the music and vibes that connect our lives.

Saturday, September 19, 2009

One that slipped between the cracks

I read somewhere that Jim Carroll was such a good schoolboy basketball player that he could hold his own against the likes of New York City phenom Dean "the Dream" Meminger. That good?

Maybe I should have watched "The Basketball Diaries." My problem is that when the movie came out in 1995 I quickly learned that Leonardo DiCaprio didn't have the game to play the role of Carroll. And there's nothing worse than watching a movie referencing sports that can't provide some semblance of realism on the court or playing field.

The movie, of course, was about more than a young white basketball player with game. It was about the kid's frightening descent into heroin addiction and the ugly, toxic world he finds himself in before finally escaping. In other words, it's the story of Jim Carroll, who beat the long street odds of the big city and became an acclaimed poet and writer, punk rock star and NYC cult figure.

When Carroll died last week of a heart attack at age 60, Patti Smith was among those sharing memories and eulogies of her longtime friend. Which prompted me to track down the movie soundtrack (now how hard is that these days?) There are some excellent cuts, including "Catholic Boy" and "People Who Died" by Carroll's band, and "Riders on the Storm" by the Doors. Still...

Have you seen "The Basketball Diaries"? Reviews generally pan the film while applauding DiCaprio's performance. He was only 20 at the time, and already an Academy Award nominee for his first role in "What's Eating Gilbert Grape?" Given what he's done since, do you think maybe he is our best actor today?

It seems like the perfect time to go back and watch it. Or maybe I'll just close my eyes, turn on the soundtrack and imagine Jim Carroll, the flashy white kid with game, blowing past the great Dean Meminger for an easy basket.

Posted by Jim Smith at 5:52 AM 

1 comments:

 [mtp4610](#) said...

I'll have to look up some more info on Carroll. Only knew him from NRT covering "People Who Died" I used to be a staple of their