

Author's honesty makes book entertaining

Tricia Ireland
Staff Writer

-Wednesday, May 3, 1995

"The Basketball Diaries"

By Jim Carroll
Penguin Books, 1978

In his youth, Jim Carroll was a pretentious little smart-ass. That's what makes his old diaries, which have been published as books, appealing.

Last Friday, one of Carroll's books was released as a movie. It is called "The Basketball Diaries." In honor of the frequently expressed [and often true] cliché, "The book is better than the movie," a review of "The Basketball Diaries" -- book form, follows.

What makes "The Basketball Diaries" great is its pureness and honesty. This is a book about real life. It is told from the point of view of a real child, to whom everyone who was ever a child can relate.

The diaries chronicle three years of Carroll's life as a teenager in the 1960s.

There is no climax, no real ending, not even a plot. Just a boy going from day to day, playing basketball, getting high, hocking purses from old ladies in the park, writing . . .

The streets of New York are tough on Carroll, but he thinks he's on the top of the world. Carroll is obnoxious, precocious, and yet, strangely likable. He isn't afraid to reveal himself or his city. His diary entries are sincere.

With its down to earth manner, "The Basketball Diaries" is fairly reminiscent of J.D. Salinger's "The Catcher in the Rye."

Carroll writes with a style that is fast-paced and energetic, self-assured, plucky and lyrical.

Young Carroll, with his cool lingo, seems to assume that his readers will relate to his experiences. This is a big compliment for a writer to pay his audience.

"The Basketball Diaries" is an inspired work about a boy who is common to us all -- who sees the world for what it is, who lives life the best he can, and who, when it comes right down to it, just wants to be pure.

Copyright (c) Wednesday, May 3, 1995 by The Orion