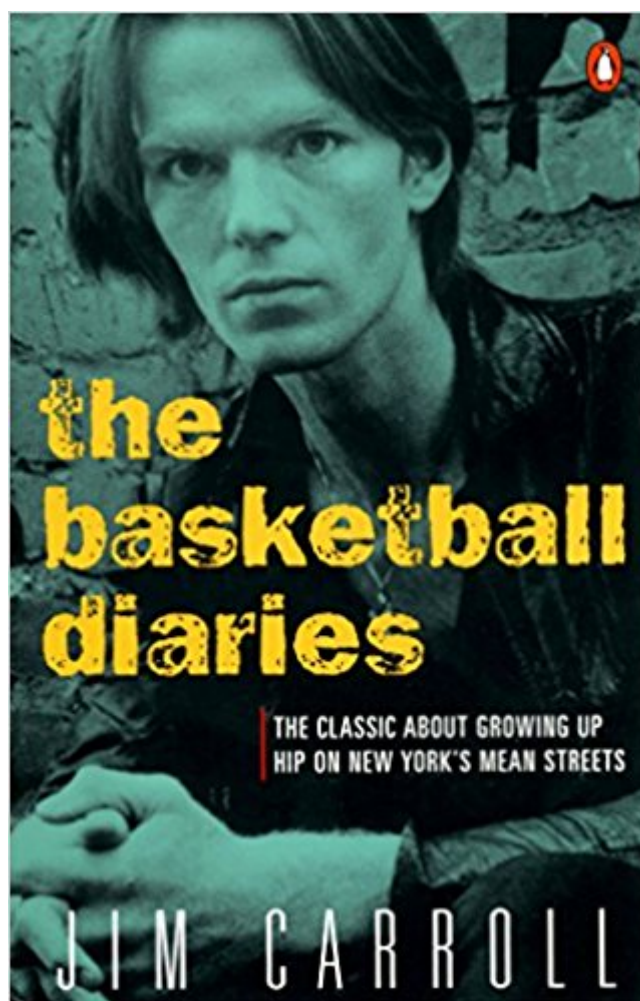


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The Basketball Diaries: The Classic About Growing Up Hip On New York's Mean Streets



Synopsis

The urban classic coming-of-age story about sex, drugs, and basketball — Jim Carroll grew up to become a renowned poet and punk rocker. But in this memoir of the mid-1960s, set during his coming-of-age from 12 to 15, he was a rebellious teenager making a place and a name for himself on the unforgiving streets of New York City. During these years, he chronicled his experiences, and the result is a diary of unparalleled candor that conveys his alternately hilarious and terrifying teenage existence. Here is Carroll prowling New York City--playing basketball, hustling, stealing, getting high, getting hooked, and searching for something pure. The Basketball Diaries was the basis for the film of the same name starring Leonardo DiCaprio. "I met him in 1970, and already he was pretty much universally recognized as the best poet of his generation. . . . The work was sophisticated and elegant. He had beauty." -- Patti Smith

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

• "Filled with a kind of vitality. . . a remarkable account of New York City's lower depths." • "New York Times" His terse wit, with its archly contrived naïveté, transforms The Basketball Diaries, a tale of teenage rebellion, into a contemporary classic." - Newsweek • "A generational hit." • "Esquire

Jim Carroll's bestselling memoir The Basketball Diaries was first released in 1978 and adapted as a film in 1995. Carroll's work includes several collections of poetry as well as a second memoir, Forces Entries: The Downtown Diaries 1971-1973. As the leader of The Jim Carroll Band

he released three albums as well as several spoken word recordings. He died in New York City on September 11, 2009.

Whether you believe any of these stories actually occurred is really not the point of a contemporary reading of this classic Kerouac/Ginsberg era troupe through New York City's emerging drug sub-culture. Jim Carroll, in all of his hip early '60s rap and rhetorical escapades, delivers a stunningly irreverent but amazingly still relevant tome about maturation in the blighted streets and overwhelmingly potent drug society of the early 1960s New York counter-culture era. In this profound "diary," we watch as a pre-eminently street-smart 13 year old weed-smoking, LSD popping and occasional Heroin seeking basketball hero deteriorates into a 16 year old junkie, resorting to whatever means possible to get money for his next fix. The obvious and pre-eminent contemporary reason for taking this short work on is to compare it with the 1995 blockbuster film of the same name starring Leonardo DeCaprio. The comparable titles is where the similarities end however...the book and the film are completely different. And in this reviewer's opinion, and as is almost always the case, this book far exceeds the movie. Starting in the Fall of 1963, we're immediately thrown into Carroll's world of mid-town Manhattan as he romps with a variety of like-minded youth and city scum. With a constant theme of drug searching overwhelming each entry, Carroll extols in very clear and contemporarily charming 1960's hip New York language his escapades getting high, having sex, getting into small but growing criminal activity and becoming a general nuisance. The basketball entries are very cool also... at one point he's at a youth tournament where they've ousted "Lewie" Alcindor (later Kareem Abdul-Jabber) for being too good; also Carroll hangs with Earl Manigault (The famous "Goat" from Harlem) and other "Spades who can leap so high they can take a quarter off the top of the backboard and leave change." But as his drug use grows, his basketball skills diminish to the point where it's hardly mentioned by the end of the book. If there is any criticism, I'd say that the aura that this book has exuded over time as being great literature is definitely a farce...this isn't great writing at all (although Carroll does go on to publish books of poetry and novels which I haven't read), it's draw is the stark reality of its subject and background. The total irreverency and sensibility of being lost and downcast are so prevalent here and so pronounced that they literally turn the pages for you. Be aware though of the explicit manner in which Carroll describes his desperate longings for "the nod," especially toward the end of the work...it is absolutely true that the strung out addict will do anything to get that fix. Carroll pulls no punches in performing these acts nor telling about them. Taken in the correct context, this is an amazing work full of meaning and emotion while fully symbolizing a time and place that's become

culturally historic. Whether hippie, sociologist, historian or someone looking for an off-beat but still mesmerizing read, "The Basketball Diaries" is the for you.

A college classic. This isn't great literature by any stretch of the imagination, but every disaffected 19-year-old boy who's ever read it has come away changed. Also, reading it now as a middle-aged grown-up, I am certain that many parts of the diaries were edited later, and are close to bulls***. I lived in NYC back then, and it's not quite how things went down. But still, I would recommend gifting this book to any college student who's the least bit hip. I read it in 1979 or so, and 35 years later it still sizzles.

Someone found out I was reading this genre and told me to watch the movie. I got the book instead because with children it is hard for me to find time to watch movies. I know it's going to be a five star rating when I am ordering all the other books by this author through the library and interlibrary loan before I'm even finished with the first. I can't wait to read the follow-up to this piece, Forced Entries. It's interesting how almost everyone starts about the same on junk and ends up the same, spending all day everyday trying to cop, getting money to cop and/or being too sick to hardly move. What a miserable existence that seems so easy to slip into.

This is the classic addiction memoir, a nice antidote to the James Freys and Nikki Sixxs pushing bathetic, crypto-Christian lies about the evils of drugs. An edited collection of the diaries Jim Carroll kept when he was a teenager, they detail his life growing up in mid-60s New York City, shooting heroin, snatching purses and selling himself to gay guys for drug money. Carroll is anchored by his skills at playing basketball, as an athletic scholarship lifts him out of the slums and into a posh private school, where he continues his hustling and smack-injecting ways. Carroll's prose style is relentlessly frank and fast, spilling every detail of his hustles, highs and bangs in delicious detail. However, his rapid fire, Kerouac-esque method of writing in huge multi-page paragraphs got on my nerves after a while. Like Kerouac's On the Road, The Basketball Diaries is intended to be read while you're still young and searching for a philosophical pier to anchor your boat to. Additionally, the book doesn't really end, but trails off into nothingness as Carroll spirals into robbing people at knifepoint to pay for his heroin addiction. Even with these flaws, though, The Basketball Diaries is a classic of American literature for a reason. If you're looking for an honest and gritty memoir of teenage alienation and struggle, check this one out.

So yeah, I buy this book since I've been meaning to read it since childhood. I picked it up used here on for like 6 bucks after shipping. Once I got it and cracked it open, what do I discover?! A penned message from the man himself, Jim Carroll, that reads "1992 - Happy reading." Wow, what a surprise! So cool. RIP Jim Carroll, you are sorely missed.

Jim Carroll was a great writer especially considering the fact that most of this was written when he was a teenager. The seller sent this promptly and in perfect condition. This book is great and very deep and personal. It really teaches about things that can be very dangerous and unhealthy and how one can lose themselves in something they think they have control of. It tells a lot more than the film. If you like the film or didn't like the film you should enjoy the book. Great writer. Great seller experience.

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