

STREET SCENE

'Basketball Diaries' Carroll brings poetry to area

By CHRISTINA FUOCO Staff Writer

Poet-musician Jim Carroll, who scored a hit with the song "People Who Died," has gotten the music bug once again.

Carroll left the music industry years ago for what he called, the sobering life of a writer. But his interest was piqued when he was asked to write original music for the film "The Basketball Diaries," his autobiographical tale of drugs, sex, crime and basketball starring Leonardo DiCaprio as Mark "Marky Mark" Wahlberg.

He joined forces with Trudy, a Seattle band that includes former members of Soundgarden and the Screaming Trees, and producer Lenny Kaye to record the three-song demo.

"It was fun because I was able to write from the point of view of a 15-year-old kid again," Carroll said via telephone from his New York studio. "The lyrics had to be germane to the movie. It had lines like 'I'm a divine disgrace but I can jam in your face.'"



Waxing poetic: Jim Carroll, reads his poetry at two local venues

The songs didn't end up on the soundtrack, but it made an impression on his mind.

Born and raised in New York

City, Carroll came from a working-class Catholic background, the son of a third-generation Irish-American solo-keeper. Basketball and writing became twin obsessions by the time the tall redhead entered his teens.

Music seeped into his consciousness as well, by artists ranging from the Everly Brothers and Roy Orbison to Bob Dylan and Phil Spector. Later, Carroll was a devoted follower of The Velvet Underground, who became a key influence in his own musical endeavors.

Carroll's basketball talents combined with his academic abilities, landed him a scholarship to Trinity, a private New York high school. He was tagged sports editor of the school paper. Inspired by Jack Kerouac's semi-autobiographical "On the Road," Carroll had already been keeping his own journal.

In 1970s, on the cusp of his 20s, excerpts from "The Basketball Diaries" were published in the Paris Review. It was published in its entirety from omnibus to 1978, Bantam in

1980, and Penguin in 1987.

He delved into music in the late 1970s after kicking his heroin habit. In October 1980, he released his first of three records, "Catholic Boy" that featured the title track and "People Who Died." (Carroll recently re-recorded "Catholic Boy" with Pearl Jam for "The Basketball Diaries" soundtrack.) After the third album, he left the music industry.

During an hourlong conversation with Carroll, he went back and forth about his future music career. He's considering an offer from an Atlantic Records subsidiary to record an album. But right now his priority is his writings.

"Rock and roll is great, but I am still at a point in my life where I have to move into a more serious, not in the sense of my life, I can't rely on that ecstatic youth energy anymore," said Carroll who is now clean and attending Narcotics Anonymous meetings.

Right now he's working on a fictitious story and he already has an idea for another book.

"These novels are a real gift and blessing. It would be a literary sin to not really fulfill that gift from the muse or from my own schizophrenia or wherever the voice comes from that tells you these things."

Carroll will be in town for two spoken-word performances - Friday, June 7, at the Blind Pig in Ann Arbor, and Saturday, June 8, at the Magic Stick in the Majestic complex in Detroit.

He's going to read from a variety of his works including new poems and sections from the book "The Basketball Diaries." Since the release of the movie "The Basketball Diaries" his shows have been packed.

His audience recently doubled in Canada where a 12-page short story that Carroll wrote about his recovery, called "Curtis's Charm" has also been made into a movie. The film, from producer Atom Egoyan ("Exotica") won

"Best Canadian Film" at the Toronto International Film Festival in September 1995. It's due to hit art houses in the United States later this year.

"I walked into a radio station to do an interview before a show in Toronto and there were about 100 kids, between 13 and 17, who were there waiting for me. I thought, 'Is (Lemonheads singer) Evan Dando coming here?' I really didn't think they were there to see me. All these kids had seen the movie and read the book. I really like that."

Jim Carroll reads his works of 9:30 p.m. Friday, June 7, at the Blind Pig, 206-208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. Tickets are \$12.50 in advance for the 19 and older show; and at 9 p.m. Saturday, June 8, at the Magic Stick in the Majestic complex, 4140 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Tickets are \$12.50 in advance for the 18 and older show. For more information, call (313) 986-8555 or (313) 933-POOL.

Celtic Spirit of the West adds a symphonic sound



CHRISTINA FUOCO

Spirit of the West's title of its latest U.S. album "Two Headed" (Discovery) is taking on a literal meaning as the band begins its summer tour.

The Celtic-influenced Canadian pop band has put itself in two frames of mind for its U.S. and Canadian tours. Here, the band is touring in support of "Two Headed" (released Tuesday, June 4, in the U.S.) while in Canada Spirit of the West is pushing "Open Heart Symphony," an album it did with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra released on May 21.

"It's a very weird year for us," said lead singer/guitarist John Mann. "It's so strange doing interviews in the states where we're talking about 'Two-Headed' which, for us, is an album that came out a year ago (June 1995). We're also, at the same time, doing interviews in Canada for the symphony album."

"We definitely are very two-headed in that respect."

There isn't a U.S. release date for "Open Heart Symphony" because "Two-Headed" was just released.

Formed in 1983, the group was originally conceived as a Celtic-influenced folk trio, thanks to guitarist/vocalist Geoffrey Kelly's Scottish heritage. He moved to Canada when he was 9 and returned to his native country 10 years later. There, he became enamored with Scottish music, the flute and tin whistle.

"Our early records are very, very folkie. As the years went on, we started to more and more acknowledge the fact that we listen to a lot of different music. We do have (C.D.) by bands like the Chieftains, but we also have Jawbox and Shudder to Think - a variety of alternative music," Mann said.

"Two-Headed" has a much

more acoustic sound than its last album "Faithful," and "Open Heart Symphony" takes that a step further.

"We chose to keep our instrumentation acoustic. We found listening to a lot of other albums with rock groups paired with symphonic orchestras that the electric guitars tend to obliterate the entire sound."

Spirit of the West performs at Sunday, June 9, at The Shelter below St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. Doors open at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$8 in advance; \$10 at the door. For more information, call (313) 961-MELT.

Best bet: Acoustic/mystic folk music group Monster Island featuring Warren DeFever (Princess Dragon-Mom, His Name Is Alive), Matt Smith (Volebeats, Outrageous Cherry), Cary Loren (Hoffroy All Men), Erika Hoffman (Gozuki, Ohio), and The Wade (Ohio, The Ohms) performs at 7 p.m. Sunday, June 9, at Greg Hall in the Fisher Mansion, 383 Lenox, Detroit. Vegetarian hors d'oeuvres will be provided by the on-site Gowinda restaurant. The band - recently invited to record for Thurston Moore's Ecstatic Peace! label - describes itself as "somewhat related to Indian Ragas, the inner percussion of Pharoah Sanders, and non-traditional folk bands like Ghost, The Incredible String Band, Moroccan and Gamelan music and lyrical/symbolist poetry." Some of the instruments played by the band are sitar, tamboura, African xylophone, mbira, kora, harmonium, 12-string guitar, sakuhachi, clarinet, sax, ting-shaw, assorted bells, chimes and toy samplers. This summer Monster Island members will be touring with their respective bands: His Name Is Alive will have a new CD on 4AD; Gozuki will be touring to promote its new release "The Trail of the Lone-some Pine" (March); Destroy All Monsters will have a new CD out on Sympathy for the Record

Industry; and Outrageous Cherry just released a CD collection of covers. Tickets are \$5 at the door, or in advance at Car City Records in St. Clair Shores, The Record Collector in Livonia, and the Book Beat in Oak Park. For more information, call (610) 968-1190.

Misc: The techno/rock band God Lives Underwater will contribute original music to "MTV's

Slamscape," the new 32-bit video game for the Sony PlayStation system, set to debut this fall.

"We needed a band that had a feel for this," said Tony Calandra, MTV's manager of interactive products. "They're a hot up-and-coming band, and besides, they are seriously into video games." American Recordings, GLU's label, explained that in the game "players will blast and

ram through waves of enemy freaks and foes in a lightning-fast slam-jet. ... As players rescue trapped lives they must capture enemy nodes at maximum-amp, while wiping out fright-mare clowns on stilts and vicious Shreddy Bears, and facing the dreaded DangerRanger. ... The offspring has signed a long-term contract with Columbia Records. The new

album will be released in the fall on Columbia, but on its former label Epitaph in Europe.

If you have any questions or comments for Christina Fuoco, you can write to her care of The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150, or via e-mail at cfuoco@aol.com, or you can leave her a message at (313) 953-2047 ext. 2130.

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