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Wednesday, September 30, 2009

Memories of Jim - Part 3

PART 3

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NOTE: This begins my road stories. No particular order. I'm not going to write about anything said or done in confidence. I'm sure Jim doesn't mind me naming the names I name it this story. In fact, he's probably getting a chuckle out of it....

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Pre-Basketball Diaries movie, Jim was not an easy sell at universities. It had been a while since his last book or album, and the kids wanted what was hot. I also represented Henry Rollins, and it bugged Jim that Henry got more bookings and commanded a higher price tag. Sure there were times I would come across a doctoral candidate writing a thesis on Jim and ridiculously overcharge them, but for the most part I needed to put my sales and marketing skills in overdrive if we were going to get gigs.

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I put together a package tour that featured Jim headlining with Professor Griff and Don Bajema as the openers. Griff was a member of the legendary rap group, Public Enemy. He was their "Minister of Information" and led their security force the S1Ws. At the height of their popularity, he was kicked out of PE for making anti-Semitic remarks to reporters. This was huge news at the time and in the lecture business controversy = sales. He publicly apologized many times for the remarks and the interview tape clearly shows the comments were taken out of context. I liked Griff and believed he was sincere. His spoken word shows were uneven but his presence broadened the appeal of the package. Jim didn't think much of his work, but liked him personally and appreciated the "edge" he brought to the bill.

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Don Bajema is a tremendously gifted writer, actor and spoken word artist. He wrote two incredible books "Boy in the Air" and "Reach" that were published on Rollins' 2.13.61 imprint. (Get them. They are on amazon for \$2 or something. I will reimburse you if you are not satisfied) I caught Don blow Rollins away when opening for him at Irving Plaza and signed him immediately. A lot of acts were reluctant to have Don open for them because he was so talented and intense, but Jim respected him and never feared competition from anyone on the spoken word stage.

... ..

I booked the show at my alma mater, Fredonia State College and there was no way I was going to miss it. Sixty miles southwest of Buffalo, the weather was as horrible as I remembered. Of course, we were hit with a blinding snowstorm but somehow we all made it to the gig on time. It was a great show and I was proud to have been responsible for bringing it there.

... ..

After the gig, Griff split with some of the leaders of the local Black Student Union and Jim, Don and I went to a late dinner at Perkins' Pancake House. The dinner conversation was an interminable drag. Jim and Don were going on and on about Burroughs, about the writing craft, and why they were both better than Henry Rollins. Being the non-performer and the agent I dutifully pretended to listen and care. In the car, they kept going. In the lobby, they kept going. Finally in the hotel elevator, I got the balls to liven things up. Out of nowhere I blurted, " So Jim, none of that 'nothing is true' bullshit, who famous have you REALLY fucked?" He wasn't taken aback at all and answered willingly.

... ..

"Well, there was Shelly Duvall....I fucked Jane Fonda at the Chelsea Hotel back when she was married to Gore Vidal...and of course there was Nureyev." At that very instant the elevator doors opened to Jim's floor, he confirmed the morning pick-up to the airport and nonchalantly strode to his room. Like it was a sitcom, the instant the elevator doors closed Don and I turned to each other and simultaneously gasped "NUREYEV??"

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