

Independent 'Flint Star' a detailed look at city's basketball dreams

By Jon Styf | Published 12/03/03 12:00am | Updated 08/28/09 6:02pm

Very little of the MSU experience is bigger than seeing the Flintstones play.

Charlie Bell, Jason Richardson, Kelvin Torbert, Morris Peterson and Matt Trannon can finish like very few others, and Mateen Cleaves sets them up in the documentary "Flint Star."

□ The movie takes an in-depth look at the town and the importance of basketball to its culture. Although it doesn't have the focus of a documentary such as Hoop Dreams, it does have the flair of the And 1 Mix Tape Tour, though these players play with referees.

For much of Flint, the lack of automotive jobs has been devastating. So, the remaining few have based their hopes on the game of basketball. With a 12.9 percent unemployment rate, it has become the rallying cry for a city on the downfall.

The interviews in the film can get long and uninteresting at points in the uncut version, but the message is clear. Whether it's Chicago Bulls forward Eddie Robinson or former Spartan Cleaves, they remain proud of the community that has 29.4 percent of its citizens in poverty.

The main conflict that is brought up in the film is the controversy over whether athletes give anything back once they leave the city. Some of the Flint natives can understand it, but most are upset that some professional athletes don't give to their home town, suggesting that their "ghetto pass" be revoked for the offense. The film does a good job of showing both viewpoints.

Young people in Flint, as Cleaves attests, see basketball as their only chance to get out of the city and make a living. So, he has worked hard enough to make all of that happen.

But on the other side, Continental Basketball Association player Desmond Ferguson talks about how long he'll be able to take playing for the Flint Fuze before he has to either move on to the NBA or give up the game he loves.

The movie interviews basketball stars and fans from ages 4 to 60 about how important basketball is to culture and their dreams.

With the success stories also come tragedy and heartache. And in Flint's history, there are 40 heartbreaks for every success story. Players and coaches talk about the drugs, guns and grades that have brought many of the players of the past down.

For every Latrell Sprewell, Peterson, Richardson or Glen Rice, there are countless examples of players who didn't make it.

As much as the interviews can get long and the action is lacking during the movie, the DVD's extra footage make up for all of the excitement that the movie lacks.