

## Basketball legend to hold local book signing

Thursday, February 01, 2007

**Kareem Abdul-Jabbar writes his seventh book, which tackles the history of the Harlem Renaissance, spanning from the 1920s until the 1940s.**

By Sean Caffey / Special to The Malibu Times

With six MVP awards, six championship rings and the most points by any player in NBA history, it would be easy for Kareem Abdul-Jabbar to rest on his laurels.

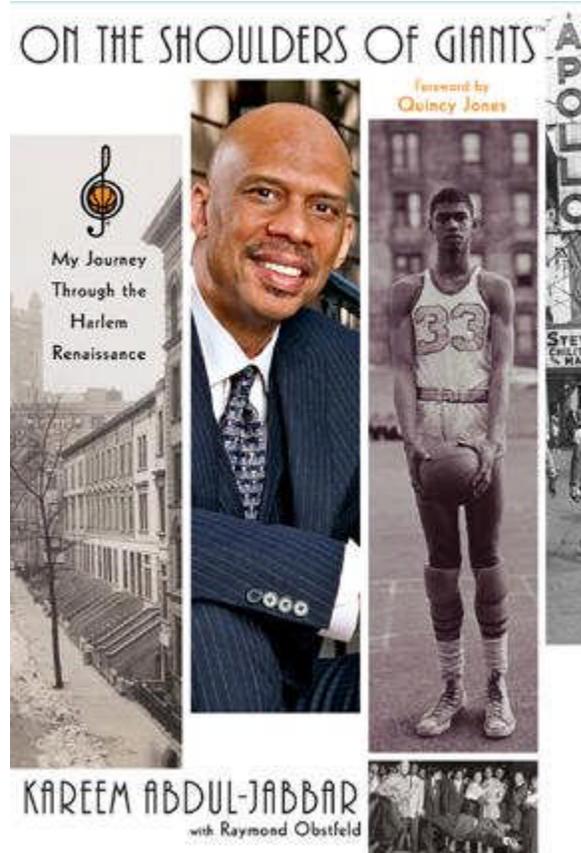
However, far to the contrary, the Basketball Hall of Fame legend continues to pursue numerous passions, including work as an accomplished author, with his latest title, "On the Shoulders of Giants: My Journey Through the Harlem Renaissance" (Simon and Schuster) set for a Feb. 2 release.

"This book is my way of showing young people that history is anything but a boring recounting of the past; it's a powerful tool to help shape our futures," Abdul-Jabbar said. "My hope is that this book will present the Harlem Renaissance in such a way as to inspire them."

Scheduled to appear at Diesel, A Bookstore in Malibu on Feb. 11 for a book signing, Abdul-Jabbar said that many young people growing up in urban environments are focused on the wrong things and are looking for a fast way out.

To deal with these issues, he said: "It has to do with what they can do to contribute to making their environment or community better. There are too many people in the inner city who have the attitude to 'get rich quick or die.' It's a crisis right now-kids can't wait to get a 3-carat diamond in their ear. It's about understanding what's wrong and what they can do to fix it."

Abdul-Jabbar's previous works include "Giant Steps, Kareem," "Black Profiles in Courage," "A Season on the Reservation" and "Brothers in Arms." "Giant Steps" was on the New York Times best-sellers list, and "A Season on the Reservation" retells his stint



*The legendary basketball player Kareem Abdul-Jabbar will appear in Malibu to sign his book, "On the Shoulders of Giants" Feb. 11.*

as the coach of the Alchessay Falcons, a high school basketball team at the White Mountain Apache Reservation in Whiteriver, Az.

"On the Shoulders of Giants" tackles the history of the Harlem Renaissance, spanning from the 1920s until the 1940s—a seminal period for Abdul-Jabbar, a Harlem native. (Born Ferdinand Lewis Alcindor Jr. April 16, 1947, he legally changed his name to the Muslim version in 1971.) The book outlines the cultural contributions of the acclaimed African American authors, athletes and artists who thrived during this period and influenced Abdul-Jabbar and his peers.

One theme throughout the book involves the importance of music, particularly jazz, during Abdul-Jabbar's formative years and to this day.

While he said he does not see an immediate connection between music and his success as a basketball player, Abdul-Jabbar, whose father was a jazz musician, said he does feel it may have influenced him as a player.

"In my mind, there's no obvious transfer [between music and basketball], but there's a connection in terms of trying to get the exuberance and creativity that goes into your steps and your moves," Abdul-Jabbar said. "Chick Corea [the composer] is a friend of mine, and he once told me that from watching me play he could tell that I studied music."

Abdul-Jabbar said he wasn't singularly passionate about basketball while growing up, and it was actually his second choice in terms of big league sports.

"If I hadn't played basketball, I would have probably tried to do my best to be like [Jazz pianist and composer] Bud Powell, but I didn't practice the piano enough because I wanted to play baseball," he said. "I wanted to play for the Brooklyn Dodgers; that would have been like heaven for me."

Out of the more than 38,000 points scored during his illustrious basketball career, a large percentage of those were accumulated with one of the most unstoppable shots in the history of the game—the "Sky Hook." Few have been able to emulate this shot (the most successful and notable mimic was Abdul Jabbar's own teammate on the "Showtime" Lakers, Magic Johnson).

"[The 'Sky Hook is] not necessarily passé, but people see Michael Jordan or Dr J and they want to be like them," Abdul-Jabbar said.

But he added that the artistic nature of the shot is more likely to be understood by a jazz dancer than the average basketball player.

Lakers Head Coach Phil Jackson was quoted regarding Abdul-Jabbar's latest writing effort: "Working with him daily we've shared our love of jazz and he has not only the knowledge of its history, but its place of import in a community that he grew up in during the latter stages of the Harlem Renaissance. I've been behind those shoulders when he's

turned for that sky hook and this will be another score for Kareem."

Abdul-Jabbar will sign copies of his book Feb. 11, 3 p.m. at Diesel, A Bookstore; 3890 Cross Creek Rd. More information can be obtained by calling 310.456.9961.