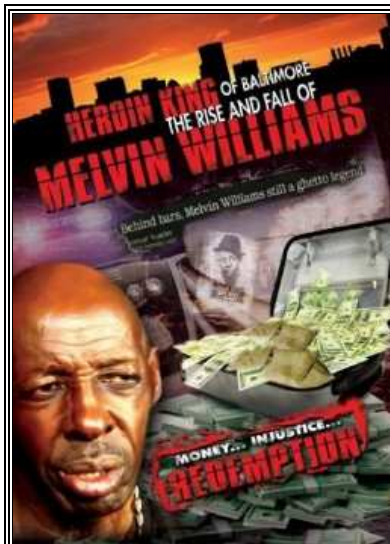


Heroin King Of Baltimore: The Rise And Fall Of Melvin Williams (2013)



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Genres: Biography (Non-Fiction), Documentary, Drugs, Law & Crime

Sometimes in life it's good to get a different perspective. It's good to see someone who has been in a worse position than you, so that you can appreciate what you have just a little bit more. Every once in a while it's good to see someone like that make the most out of the second chances they've been given as well. It's empowering, enlightening and cause for celebration. Melvin Williams is one of those types of people and his documentary is quite fascinating to watch.



Review by Bill Wolford Added: June 05, 2013

Melvin Williams was a child genius, and a professional gambler by age twelve. By teaching himself how to control dice, playing cards, and being a pool shark, he was a millionaire by the age of fifteen. He was a force to be reckoned with and a powerful figure on Pennsylvania Avenue in Baltimore. After Martin Luther King Jr. was gunned down, the City officials would call on Williams, now age twenty-seven, to help stop the riots. The police were left bewildered that someone like Williams could get the rioters to stop and go home when they could not do that themselves. They now saw Williams as a threat because "Someone who could stop a riot, could certainly start one." The powers that be planned to frame Williams and put him in the penitentiary. For Williams, this would mark the beginning of a twenty-six year struggle behind bars, and trying to clear his name for being framed by a hypocritical government.

Now Williams could have saved himself a lot of grief had he not made the choice to become the "Heroin King of Baltimore", a decision he made after he was released from prison. He had been put there through the combination of a rat informant, and a crooked police officer placing narcotics in his pocket. Melvin had the choice to let it go, and be a free man. He chose to become the king of what they falsely accused him of in the first place, and like all his other endeavors, he became the best at what he was doing. Once again, it was the result of an informant that got him put away again, this time for over twenty years. Since his release, Melvin has gone the straight and narrow path, teaching people about staying away from the lifestyle he belonged to and spreading his message in the classroom. He has been the subject of several films over the years, and has even had a supporting role in the T.V. series "The Wire", playing a minister. Will Melvin Williams continue on his current path of law abiding citizen? Only time will tell us that.

Eyes Wide Open films presented a fairly decent documentary about the life of someone who I had never heard of until I watched the program. At a short sixty minutes, we are thrown right into the story. It was a little frustrating at points because I didn't know the time frame of the events going on for quite a while. Then there are the re-enactments. They are short, and littered throughout the film, but seeing cell phones being used in the mid-seventies, along with body piercings and tramp stamps didn't do much for authentication. It was good to see that Williams told the story himself, and is on camera for a lot of the movie's running time. The narrator of the film isn't used too much, and that was a bonus as he doesn't have the voice for it. It turns out he is also the director and producer, so too many hats were worn by him. Williams could have carried the story by himself. The only other annoyance was some of the music. It's an instrumental rap style music, which pretty much fits the story, but at points it's so loud that you have to strain to hear what people are saying. I found the story as a whole mildly entertaining, and had hoped that there would be some extras on the DVD, but there are none to be found. Shot in full frame, the picture looks pretty good for all it needs to be. It's a good time waster at only an hour. Check it out. 6/10.

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