

John Something

Aesop Rock

We had a visiting artist in the winter of '96
Who came to talk about his paintings and the shit that make him tick
I think his name was John Something
John Something
If, at the assembly, you're allowed to cut the class
I was sunk into the bucket, yellow puffy on my lap
Bring on John Something
John Something

Hot blooded art freaks take the auditorium
Three quarters boorish, one quarter primordia
Keen to absorb the stories of veteran picture-makers
Even if an unfamiliar name and face or mystery flavor
Say, John Something who was punctual to the podium
Visibly uncomfortable, having trouble focusing
Noticing we're noticing, he pardons the glitch
Says, "I'm sorry but it's vital I depart from the script"
To where? You had one job
John Something, something's wrong with John Something
Something's on his mind, he been searching for the words
Even standing at the plate, I ain't anticipate the curve
He go, "Last night I saw this new documentary
And I can not understate the extent to which it's affected me"
I'm on the edge of my seat
He said it's called "When We Were Kings"

This was 1996
He was there to show some photos that would demonstrate his gift
I think his name was John Something
John Something
If, at the assembly, you were seeing something new
I'm a new fan before even seeing what he do
Bring on John Something
John Something

When We Were Kings is a documentary feature
On the '74 US heavyweight boxing championship
That's commonly referred to as the Rumble in the Jungle
Where you come to punch or die, as neither party's crying uncle
The champ, George Foreman, vs. the kid, Mohammad Ali, in Zaire
And other politics involved in the affair
Including rare footage leading up to the event
Plus, interviews with VIPs, remembering the effects
So Mr. Something up there, present as it gets
Talking Ali and his confidence, begetting his success
But almost referenced as a magic or some extrasensory "X"
That he had witnessed and was duty-bound to tell to someone else
Us, and truly, I was hung on every sentence
Though it probably lasted longer than intended, it felt genuine
If a little strange
Thirty minutes in, we have yet to see what you paint, look

January '96
He was there to share his work, maybe guide us through the mist
I think his name was, hmm
John Something
If, at the assembly, you were tripping off the tangent

But also like, "I need to see this flick, it sounds fantastic"
Or so says John Something
John Something

Low on time
John starts blowing through his slides
They were ultimately fine
But the takeaway is praise for this entirely other mind
I'm at the movie theatre, this was Boston, 1996
Twenty years of age, I'm an '80's Mike Tyson kid
We heard about that legendary clashing of the titans
But could never have contextualized the metrics or environment
Until, 90 minutes of history
And images and music, I was riveted, infinity
That walk out different than you slithered in
Every atom in you shifting, christened in the river shit
And I still revisit it, this week, winter came
Cued it up, hit play, it felt like someone visited
Any time I pay it forward
I say, "This was recommended by one of my favorite artists", um

This person who in 1996
Gave the only artist lecture I've remembered ever since
I think his name was James, uh
John Something
If, at the assembly, and were headed for the theatre
You should put your hands together for the greatest ever speaker
Who may or may not be named John
John Something