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Late 'punk poet' Jim Carroll had strong Seattle music ties (part 1 of 2)

September 16, 6:54 PM | Seattle Local Music Examiner | Greg Roth

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Part 1 of a 2 part series (Part 2 will run on Sunday, September 20th)...

With the sad death of Patrick Swayze and the MTV Video Music Awards featuring "Kaynegate", The death of legendary performance artist/singer/songwriter and poet, Jim Carroll, on September 14th, by a sudden heart attack, somehow got lost in the mix in the last few days.

Carroll, who's "no holds barred" style of prose married with hard edged rock music, garnered a fiercely loyal following and influenced many or the newer generation of artists today.

It could be said that Carroll was hard core rap before the genre ever officially existed. Carroll was an artist years ahead of his time and used his art to uncover the underbelly of the human condition during an era, when others chose to look away. Given the fact that Carroll was not a top 40 or mainstream artist, many folks may not be familiar with a lot of Carroll's work.

People who died...

Perhaps one of most Carroll's most popular songs and the closest thing that the artist had to a mainstream hit was the song, "People who Died" (video below) The song received heavy airplay on FM Radio in 1980 and 1981.

The Basketball Diaries...

Carroll wrote "The Basketball Diaries", a 1978 memoir. The book is an abridged version of the collection of the diaries that Carroll kept between the ages of twelve and sixteen. With the



Locally renowned artist Robert Roth from "Truly" pictured with the late Jim Carroll while they worked together over 11 years ago, the two remained friends throughout the years since

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Late 'punk poet' / artist Jim Carroll had strong Seattle music ties (part 2 of 2)

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backdrop set in "The Big Apple", the diaries detailed his daily experiences and chronicled the artist's basketball career, as well as profoundly capturing the story of his addiction to heroin, which began at the young age of 13. The book was made into a film, with [Leonardo DiCaprio](#) playing the part of the late artist.

Jim Carroll and the Seattle connection...

What a lot of folks may not know is that Jim Carroll had strong Northwest ties with one particular local musician [Robert Roth](#). Roth, currently heads the band "[Truly](#)", that features drummer, [Mark Pickeral](#), formally of "[Screaming Trees](#)" and [Hiro Yamamoto](#), formally of "[Soundgarden](#)".

The group is in the studio working on their first LP in over 11 years. Roth released the critical acclaimed solo LP "[Someone Somewhere...](#)" 4 years ago. In addition, Roth also auditioned for "[Nirvana](#)" back in the early 90's when they were a 4 piece band. The group decided to remain a three piece and never replaced their 2nd guitarist.

Roth and "Truly" opened for [Ray Davies](#) from "[The Kinks](#)" and the "[Sex Pistols](#)" in Spain last year. Also, Roth's songs have appeared in various films including the 1992 [Cameron Crowe](#) movie, "[Singles](#)", which featured [Bridget Fonda](#), [Matt Dillon](#) and [Eddie Vedder](#) from [Pearl Jam](#). The [soundtrack](#) from the film included several popular Northwest artists at the time, including: "[Tad](#)", "[Mother Love Bone](#)", "[Mudhoney](#)", "[Screaming Trees](#)", "[Alice in Chains](#)" and [Chris Cornell](#).

Two artists meet...

Robert Roth first met Jim Carroll in 1994, when his band "[Truly](#)" was in the final days of recording their Capitol Records debut, "[Fast Stories...From Kid Coma](#)". Truly's attorney at the time, Rosemary Carroll, who was also Carroll's attorney, as well as his ex-wife, told Roth that (Jim) Carroll was looking for a songwriter to collaborate with, so he could contribute songs to the soundtrack for "[The Basketball Diaries](#)".

Carroll and Roth collaborate on movie soundtrack...

Roth and Carroll co-wrote and recorded two songs for the soundtrack. The songs were titled, "[Falling Down Laughing](#)" and "[Hairshirt Fracture](#)". In what seems to be some sort of strange and ironic twist, the songs were not used in the film. It seems that some internal politics were at play. Apparently, Island Records wanted to stack the soundtrack with "fresh faces" to sell CDs, and they left Carroll and Roth's songs off the soundtrack of the movie. "[The movie's music supervisor \(Karyn Rachtman, sister of former "Head bangers Ball" host Riki Rachtman\) bragged openly that she had never read the book or listened to any of Jim's records. I always felt that these songs were perfect for the film and really captured the vibe of the book](#)". Roth said, in a matter of fact but non-bitter tone.

Internal politics play role in songs not being used on soundtrack...

It does seem a bit perplexing that a movie would be written about a particular artist and yet, the powers that be, chose to not even use the Carroll's own songs in a film based on the artists early years that inspired his later work. Roth continued, "[She \(Rachtman\) did not like Carroll's voice so the two song's \(Roth and Carroll wrote together\) never made it into the movie or onto the Soundtrack album](#)." However, the two numbers did end up on Carroll's 1998 album, "[Pools of Mercury](#)", which is a unique collection of spoken word and music.

Since that time Carroll was somewhat of a "Truly lyrical consultant". Carroll even penned a few lines for Truly's follow up to "Kid Coma", "[Feeling You Up](#)", released in 1997.

Tribute to a fallen fellow artist and friend...

The news of Carroll's death hit Roth pretty hard. In speaking with him, it is obviously apparent that he had great admiration for Carroll and his work and very much valued their friendship. Roth wrote an emotional and moving eulogy and tribute to the late artist on [TheHuffingtonpost.com](#), this past Monday, September 15th.

"Jim was a friend of mine and we worked together on various music projects. IMHO he was the



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best, pure poet/writer in the last 100 years. Please find his most recent collection of poems 'Void of Course' (1997). He wrote Basketball diaries when he was a kid and he got better and better with age. He read then and we played to a 1500 people at a sold out Seattle Opera House in Sept. 2000. I feel so privileged to have known him and worked with him.

He had lightening quick wit and would tell story after story. Anyone who has been lucky enough to speak with him will tell you same. Just having a meal together was like getting a free reading. The observations, humor and the connecting of cultural dots flowed endlessly out of him. I seriously doubt that the novels he was working on were a gag, as one poster, who met Jim a couple times theorizes. I heard many of the details about both books over the years.

A lot of 'Basketball Diaries' was written in the early to mid-sixties, yet wasn't published until the late seventies. Some things that are worthwhile take time. Anyway, he was and is very much loved appreciated. He inspired many to write and even many more to laugh at life's cruel ironies, peculiar beauty and this worlds "Wicked Gravity". We love and miss you man... "more than all the others... this one is for you my brother!"

On Sunday, September 20th, Part 2 will Roth's interview of Carroll that was featured in the now defunct ["The Rocket"](#) magazine. The interview is currently featured on Carroll's web site [Catholicboy.com](#).

In addition we will delve into the collaborative process between the two artists, as well as highlight the sold out shows that Roth and Carroll performed together at The Crocodile Cafe and Seattle Opera House in 1998 and 2000.

Additional links:

LA Times: [Jim Carroll dies at 60: poet and punk rocker wrote about travails in 'The Basketball Diaries'](#)

CNN: ['Basketball Diaries' author Jim Carroll dies at 60](#)

Rolling Stone: ["Basketball Diaries" Author, Punk Icon Jim Carroll Dead at 60](#)

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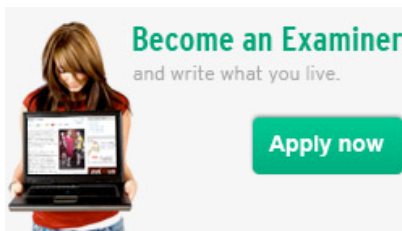
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