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Jim Carroll 1950-2009

Celebrated Irish-American writer and musician dies in New York

By John Curtin

Jim Carroll, the Irish-American poet and musician who became an underground celebrity as a teenager, died of a heart attack while working in his Manhattan home on Friday, September 11, according to his former wife Rosemary. He was 59.

Carroll, the son and grandson of Irish-American bartenders, grew up in New York City and attended the prestigious Trinity High School on a basketball scholarship, and received recognition as a high-scoring guard for the school team.

He entered the New York literary scene in 1967 at age 17 with the publication of his first book of poems, *Organic Trains*. His writing brought him to the attention of legendary pop culture icon and artist Andy Warhol, who hired him to work on his staff in the late 1960's.

Carroll's writing was largely influenced by his experiences in the drug world, and his most famous book, 1978's *The Basketball Diaries*, is a compilation of various diary entries he made during his teen years, which detail his addiction to heroin that began when he was just 13-years-old.

He published two more books of poetry in the seventies, *4 Ups and 1 down*, and *Living at the Movies*. In 1978, with the encouragement of poet and punk singer Patti Smith, formed the Jim Carroll Band, whose 1980 album *Catholic Boy* included the cult hit "People Who Died." The band released two more albums, 1982's *Dry Dreams*, and 1983's *I Write Your Name*, before Carroll returned to writing.

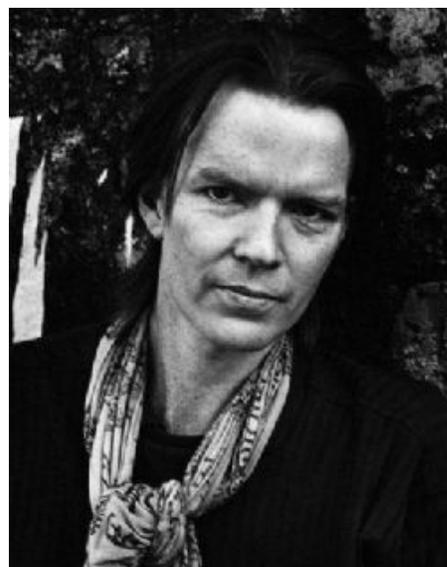
During his career, he collaborated with a number of bands and musicians, including Lou Reed, Blue Oyster Cult, Pearl Jam, Boz Scaggs, and Rancid. He also recorded a number of spoken word albums, including 1978's *Rimbaud Lectures* and 1998's *Pools of Mercury*. In the eighties, he continued writing, publishing a new poetry collection, *The Book of Nods* in 1986 and a second book of journals, *Forced Entries* in 1987.

Forced Entries received wide acclaim, although it didn't reach the critical or commercial success of *Diaries*. In 1995, *Diaries* was made into a film, starring Leonardo DiCaprio as Carroll. Carroll also appeared in the film, and contributed to the soundtrack.

His emergence into mainstream culture grew from this as a result, and he appeared as a frequent guest on MTV, Good Morning America, PBS, and the syndicated entertainment program Extra, among many others. Carroll's poetry, prose, and music were all well reflective of his upbringing in the 1950's and 60's, mixing his drug use with his Catholic education and the post-hippie, punk rock culture of his contemporaries.

In turn, his work has influenced many writers, musicians, and artists, both inside and outside the mainstream. J.O'Barr's 1981 graphic novel, *The Crow* (later adapted as a film starring the late Brandon Lee), used uncredited quotes of Carroll's work in its dialogue, and also featured a character bearing an uncanny resemblance to him. Irvine Welsh's novel *Trainspotting* (also adapted for film, starring Ewan MacGregor), was directly influenced by Carroll's writing about addiction.

Carroll recently completed a second novel that will be published by Viking, according to Rosemary Carroll. He is survived by his brother Thomas, of Stony Point, NY.



Jim Carroll