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Jim Carroll: "People Who Died" Singer, Poet Dead at 59

[Karen](#), 09.14.09, 02:02pm

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A respected underground writer, poet and musician for decades, Jim Carroll gained widespread mainstream attention when Leonardo Di Caprio starred in 1995's *The Basketball Diaries*, a film based on Carroll's 1978 autobiography detailing his turbulent teenage years and struggles with drug abuse growing up.

A fixture of Andy Warhol's legendary '70s art scene, Carroll formed the punky Jim Carroll Band and scored a minor hit with his 1980 single "People Who Died." Largely an cult hit, the song is essentially a list of people who died and how juxtaposed against strangely upbeat music.

In 1994, Carroll penned a moving tribute to a fallen star in the form of "[8 Fragments for Kurt Cobain](#)," a poem which declares, "Genius is not a generous thing/ In return it charges more interest than any amount of royalties can cover."

While his musical collaborations with the likes of [Sonic Youth](#) and [Patti Smith](#) are noteworthy, Carroll's lasting achievement remains his ability to blend high and low art by intertwining the worlds of underground art, poetry, literature and punk/[rock](#) music.

Carroll passed away September 11, 2009 of a heart attack at his New York home. He was 59.

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