

Poetry Foundation



harriet

a blog from the poetry foundation

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TRAVIS NICHOLS

Jim Carroll, R.I.P.

Jim Carroll—poet, novelist, musician, diarist, impresario—died on Friday at his home in Manhattan. He was 60 years old.

The tributes and reminiscences have come in from various sources—from English footballers to New York musicians to everyday readers—all noting what a tremendous presence Carroll was both onstage and off.

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The New York Times:

“I met him in 1970, and already he was pretty much universally recognized as the best poet of his generation,” the singer Patti Smith said in a telephone interview on Sunday. “The work was sophisticated and elegant. He had beauty.”

*

Tom Clark:

“Jim had by that time already begun haunting the Poetry Project at St. Mark’s in the Bowery Church. He loved the poetry of Frank O’Hara, and writing under a rush of Frank’s influence, at seventeen produced his own first slim chapbook, *Organic Trains*. Ted Berrigan had taken Jim under his wing. Poetry not basketball was where Jim wanted to go in his life.”

*

Carrie Brownstein of Sleater-Kinney on NPR:

“He was tall and lithe, with a ghostly, otherworldly mien. Carroll was reading poems with no back-up band, no team, no amp to crank to up to 10. But he didn’t have any problems covering the stage, reaching the corners and permeating the room.”

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Rolling Stone:

“Carroll also contributed an untitled poem to the pages of *Rolling Stone*, which we have reprinted here:

It’s sad this vision required such height.
I’d have preferred to be down with the others, in the stadium.
They know the terror of birds.

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"The book hit bestseller lists when it was made into a movie in 1995 starring Leonardo DiCaprio. At book signings with DiCaprio, however, 'it was Carroll the crowds clamored for,' Lewis MacAdams wrote in *Entertainment Weekly*."

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New Music Express:

"Vampire Weekend frontman Ezra Koenig also wrote about Carroll's death on his Twitter page , saying: 'I spent a lot of time listening to my dad's 45 of 'People Who Died' back in the day.'"

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English footballer Matt Lawrence in *The Mirror*:

"'At 13 years of age, Jim Carroll writes better prose than 89 per cent of the novelists working today.' – Jack Kerouac

If Jack 'On The Road' Kerouac describes a writer in such glowing terms, then a light should immediately flicker in your brain.

Do not pass go. Do not collect two hundred pounds."

*

American Songwriter:

"And to most, he's not even a footnote. Though being a New York-driven artist, he did warrant an obit in today's *New York Times*. But that's not what matters here. What stands out is the way anyone who heard the vicious lashing, thrashing had it burned into their skin, the psyche: the liberation of not just kicking out the jams, but the way exactitude in an almost musical insurrection made the songs hit that much harder."

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And The Catholic Boy fansite has an extensive archive of performance videos and interviews.

Jim Carroll interview 1/18/91 Cleveland Ohio