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Basketball Diaries' Jim Carroll dies at 60

September 14, 10:23 PM Lexington Rock Music Examiner Erik Rust

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The man who inspired the 1995 film [The Basketball Diaries](#) starring Leonardo DiCaprio died of heart failure on Friday, September 11th. [Jim Carroll](#), a veritable legend of the New York City punk rock movement as well as a respected writer, staked his claim to fame by celebrating the seedy, junkie lifestyle of his wayward youth. Carroll was a diarist, poet, spoken word performer, athlete, and rock musician who has played with Pearl Jam, written about Kurt Cobain, and even been featured on the E.T. soundtrack.

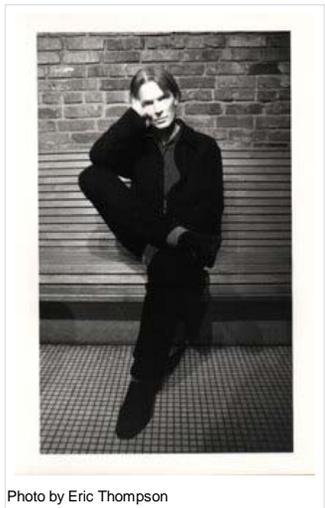


Photo by Eric Thompson

[Carroll](#), who published his edgy memoir *Basketball Diaries* in 1978, constantly wrote from a gutter's eye view and frequently re-visited the sordid subjects of drug abuse, violence, petty crime, self-prostitution and a generally nihilistic sense of existence. New York City regularly served as a backdrop for Carroll's grimy visuals and misadventures by marrying a Jack Kerouac style persona with the sneaky, survivalist leanings of a stray cat. Carroll was also an extremely talented all-star basketball player (hence the title of his '78 diary) which lent a bizarre angle to his otherwise thuggish adolescence.

With his dabbling in the New York underground, Carroll became acquainted with Andy Warhol and punk icon Patti Smith who encouraged him to join the fray and form a band of his own. The Jim Carroll Band combined their leader's street prose lyrics (often delivered in a Lou Reed talk/sing fashion) with the bands strutting, cocksure punk rock and debuted with 1980 LP [Catholic Boy](#). Widely regarded as a NYC rock classic, the album featured the near-hit "People Who Died" with Carroll rattling off a list of city denizens and the countless ways they met their untimely demises over a driving rock stomp. This song somehow made its way on to the soundtrack for the Steven Spielberg film *E.T. Extra Terrestrial* in 1982.

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Very interesting interview with Jim Carroll on NBC's today show after 1999 school shooting



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