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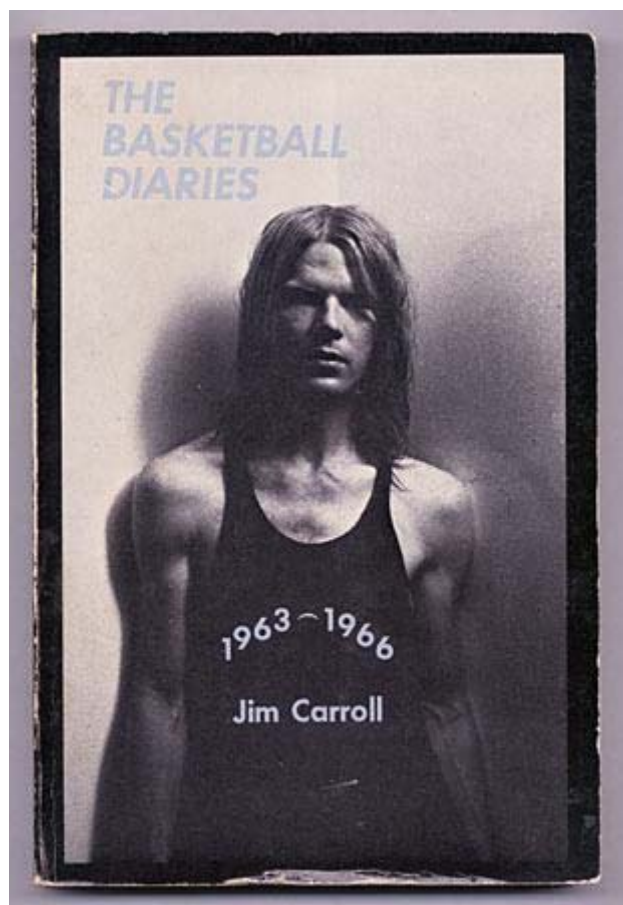
## Chris Weige

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## Remembering Jim Carroll

September 21st, 2009 [Comments](#)



From [guardian.co.uk](http://guardian.co.uk) | [ben myers](#):

With the [death of Jim Carroll last week](#), [America](#) has lost one of its singular and most under-rated poetic voices. As depicted in his most popular work [The Basketball Diaries](#), Carroll grew up on New York's Lower East Side, the son of three generations of Irish-American bartenders, with the fair Irish looks to match. He

was also an unlikely [poetry](#) prodigy and a man of contrasts: at the age of 12 he started keeping a diary that documented his dual teenage existence as an-all star basketball player at an elite private school, and his emerging heroin addiction and the street life that surrounded the junkie scene.

Inspired by the likes of Rimbaud and [Frank O'Hara](#), in 1965 he began attending workshops at St Mark's Place and published his debut [Organic Trains](#) a year later at the age of 16. Extracts from The Basketball Diaries appeared in the Paris Review – a huge achievement for a 16-year-old, especially one who was also occasionally working as a Times Square rent boy and mugger to finance his heroin addiction.

It was poet [Ted Berrigan](#) who took Carroll under his wing, introducing him to the likes of Burroughs and Kerouac, who remarked that “at 13 years of age, Jim Carroll writes better prose than 89% of the novelists working today.” Carroll's ascension coincided with a cultural explosion centred on downtown [Manhattan](#) in the late 60s/early 70s, an era that spawned [Andy Warhol](#), Velvet Underground, [Robert Mapplethorpe](#) and [Patti Smith](#).

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