

## Jim Carroll, escape artist

*A writer comes back from the edge*

By Joseph Menn  
Contributing Reporter

Jim Carroll appreciates the value of an accessible metaphor.

Here, then, is one for this moment in his life: Jim Carroll is on the way back from the edge, and he is as compelled to describe his recovery from heroin addiction and the narcissism of the New York-Andy Warhol scene as he did to describe the way he climbed there from the streets.

Carroll knows a gripping image when he sees, or hallucinates, one. He doesn't have to look beyond his own brilliant and tortured life for the material that now fills a second novelistic diary, two volumes of critically acclaimed poetry, and three influential New Wave rock albums.

Raised in a tough Irish neighborhood on the upper West Side of Manhattan, Carroll first injected heroin into his "virgin veins" at 13. He lied, cheated, stole, hustled. He also played first-rate basketball, earning a scholarship to an old-money prep school where he sold drugs and fell in love with poetry.

Through it all — the deaths of teenaged friends, brief stays in jail, flirtations with death — the fragile-looking, intense Carroll kept an anecdotal diary of his adventures and his growing up. "The Basketball Diaries" was published in whole only after Carroll established himself as a poetic prodigy in the '60s. It is the unique record of a wise-ass kid who needed to write discovering why and how he would.

Even before the appearance of his first book of poems, "Living at the Movies," when he was 22, Carroll was an integral part of the grandeur and high camp that defined the New York artistic scene of the '60s and early '70s. Adorned with long, light red hair, wandering blue eyes and a crucifix, Carroll took the wrong drugs at the right parties and hung out at Warhol's club, Max's Kansas City, where Lou Reed and the Velvet Underground played two times a night, six days a week.

The 36-year-old Carroll, in Boston last night to read from his



Globe staff photo/Thomas Landers

Writer and rock artist Jim Carroll



