

# Ex-Petty bandmate Howie Epstein dies

The Associated Press

SANTA FE, N.M. — Howie Epstein, a former bass player for Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers, died of what authorities suspect was a drug overdose. He was 47.

Investigators were told Epstein had been using heroin, said Maj. Ron Madrid of the Santa Fe County Sheriff's Department. Epstein was driven to St. Vincent Hospital by his girlfriend, who described him as "under distress." He died Sunday.



Epstein

Epstein had been a respected musician and producer for more than 20

years. In addition to his work with Petty, he played on some of Bob Dylan's albums in the 1980s and produced a Grammy-award winning album for folk singer-songwriter John Prine called "The Missing Years."

He was singer Carlene Carter's longtime boyfriend, producing two of her albums, one of which was nominated for a Grammy.

"I'm devastated," said Carter, the stepdaughter of country singer Johnny Cash and daughter of June Carter Cash. "I loved him very much. My kids thought of Howie as their father." She said they split last May.

Epstein teamed up with Petty in 1982 and also worked with Roy Orbison, Del Shannon, John Hiatt, Stevie Nicks and Eric Anderson.

"We are deeply saddened at the news of Howie's passing. ... The world has lost a great talent and a kind and gentle soul," according to a statement on Petty's Web site.

Epstein and Carter were arrested in June 2001 in Albuquerque with 2.9 grams of black-tar heroin and drug paraphernalia in a vehicle that had been reported stolen.

Epstein was not charged in that case. Carter pleaded no contest to a charge of heroin possession and was sentenced to 18 months probation.

Epstein, who was born in Milwaukee, is survived by a 15-year-old daughter and two brothers.