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Larry Norman, 60; Christian rock pioneer

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February 29, 2008

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In the Newspaper

Larry Norman, a pioneer of Christian rock music and a member of the Gospel Music Hall of Fame, died of heart failure Sunday at his home in Salem, Ore., said his brother, Charles. He was 60.

Norman earned his biggest commercial hit as lead singer of the folk-rock band People! The band's cover version of the Zombies song "I Love You" was an international hit and peaked at No. 7 on the Billboard chart in June 1968.

 AUDIO
Excerpt of "Shutdown" by Larry Norman
(MP3 audio)



Musician
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on the sidewalk preaching to the runaways and the druggies and the prostitutes." Larry Norman was born April 8, 1947, in Corpus Christi, Texas. His family moved to San Francisco when Norman was young, and he developed an interest in the music of Elvis Presley. He accompanied his father on Christian missions to prisons and hospitals and was inspired to write rock songs that included spiritual messages, Charles Norman said.

Charles Norman said his brother practiced what he preached, even interrupting taxi rides while on tour to help homeless people.

Norman was inducted into the Gospel Music Hall of Fame in 2001, and cover versions of his songs have been recorded by Petula Clark, Sammy Davis Jr. and DC Talk, among others.

Norman moved to Salem in the 1990s.

Norman left the band the day its debut album was released, when some members began experimenting with Scientology.

FOR THE RECORD:

Norman obituary: The obituary of Christian rock singer Larry Norman in Friday's California section reported that the song "I Love You," which he recorded as a member of the band People, reached No. 7 on the Billboard chart. The song peaked at No. 14. —

Though Norman never again hit the Billboard Top 10, his solo career proved durable and influential.

His first solo record, the 1969 release "Upon This Rock," is considered the first Christian rock album. He later started his own label, recording additional solo albums, including 1972's "Only Visiting This Planet," which featured arrangements by Beatles producer George Martin and the track "Why Should the Devil Have All the Good Music."

Norman was dubbed the "father of Christian rock," but he didn't gain widespread acceptance from the religious establishment.

"The churches weren't going to accept me looking like a street person with long hair and faded jeans," Norman said in an interview with CCM magazine. "They did not like the music I was recording. And I had no desire to preach the Gospel to the converted. I wanted to be out on the sidewalk preaching to the runaways and the druggies and the prostitutes."

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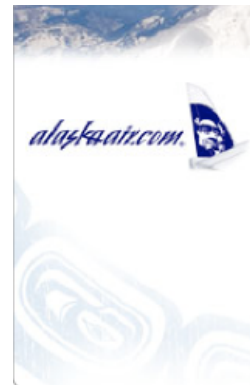
In addition to his brother, Norman is survived by a son, Michael; his mother, Margaret; and two sisters, Nancy Overmeyer and Kristy Norman.

A public memorial service will be held at 10 a.m. Saturday at the Church on the Hill, 2707 Maranatha Court, Turner, Ore.

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