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RIP: Larry Norman, The Most Amazing Artist You've Never Heard Of

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Larry Norman, the most amazing artist you've never heard of has died. I found Norman's 1976 record "Only Visiting This Planet" on vinyl when I was a kid and was amazed at Norman's creative genius-later I wrote a chapter on him in my book *The Rock & Roll Rebellion*.

Norman will be mentioned in obits as the Father of Christian Rock, but that's a misunderstanding of who he was. Someone once said "I'm too saved for the Sinners and the Saved don't want me around" and that best described Norman's amazing life and career.

He first cracked the pop charts in the late 60's with his band People and their smash hit "[I Love You](#)," but became disgruntled when Capitol Records wouldn't let him call his album "We Need A Whole Lot More Jesus and A Lot Less Rock & Roll" and put a painting of his Master on the cover. That led Norman to quit the band and go solo, recording for MGM Records, but they too tired of his religious imagery and Norman soon formed his own label, Solid Rock Records. The Christian world was freaked out by the blond hippie and had little use for his music and despite his association with the term "Christian Rock" he was always an outsider and always strived to make his records for everybody.

While Christian Rock is sometimes assailed as formulaic and derivative, Norman was anything but and his admirers included Paul McCartney, Bob Dylan, The Pixies, Van Morrison, John Mellencamp and Sammy Davis, Jr. among others.

Martin Luther, no slouch of a songwriter himself once said "Why should the Devil have all the good tunes," and Norman took that line and wrote a memorable song "[Why Should the Devil Have All The Good Music](#)" which included these lines:

"I want the people to know that He saved my soul but I still like to listen to the radio/They say rock and roll is wrong give you one more chance/I say I feel so good I gotta get up and dance/There's nothing wrong with playing blues licks/If you gotta reason tell me to my face/Why should the Devil have all the good music"

Norman further alienated many churchgoers with his song "[Why Don't You Look Into Jesus](#)" which went: "Gonorrhea on Valentine's Day/You're still looking for the perfect lay/You think rock and roll will set you free/But honey you'll be dead before you're 33"

And only the eclectic Larry Norman could write a song about his Master Jesus, comparing him to a U.F.O. and singing this memorable line: "If there's life on other planets than I'm sure that He must know and He's been there once already and has died to save their souls"

Norman gave the world one last gift as he lay dying dictating these words shortly before his heart gave out. Who wouldn't want to go out like this?

"I feel like a prize in a box of cracker jacks with God's hand reaching down to pick me up. I have been under medical care for months. My wounds are getting bigger. I have trouble breathing. I am ready to fly home... I won't be here much longer. I can't do anything about it. My heart is too weak. I want to say goodbye to everyone...My plan is to be buried in a simple pine box with some flowers inside... I want to say I love you. I'd like to push back the darkness with my bravest effort...Goodbye, farewell, we'll meet again Somewhere beyond the sky. I pray that you will stay with God. Goodbye, my friends, goodbye."

[Here is Vintage Norman:](#)

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