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Christian rock pioneer Larry Norman, 60, dies

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In 1990, CCM magazine voted his "Only Visiting This Planet" as the greatest Christian album ever recorded. But Norman never gained 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," he said in an interview with CCM. "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."

Norman found fans in other places, however, including Frank Black, frontman of the alt-rock band the Pixies. Black (real name: Charles Thompson) now lives in Eugene.

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"Larry was my door into the music business, and he was the most Christlike person I ever met," Black said in a statement Monday.

Larry Norman was creating until the end. He and Charles were working on a cover of Lee Hazelwood's 1963 album, "Trouble Is a Lonesome Town." Collaborators include Black and Isaac Brock, frontman for Modest Mouse. Charles Norman, who has his own band, Guards of Metropolis, said the album will come out later this year on his label, Slackertone.

In a message posted on his Web site, written the day before his death, Norman said he knew death was imminent.

"I feel like a prize in a box of Cracker Jacks with God's hand reaching down to pick me up," Norman wrote, adding that he planned to be buried in a "simple pine box with some flowers inside."

Norman is survived by his son, Michael; his mother, Margaret Norman; his brother, Charles; and two sisters, Nancy Overmeyer and Kristy Norman.

The Oregonian's Grant Butler and The Associated Press contributed to this story.

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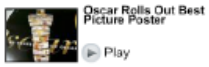
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