

# Larry Norman

**Larry Norman, the singer, songwriter, and producer known as the “father of Christian rock music,” died aged 60 of heart failure in February 2008. Norman was an eccentric visionary whose songs drew controversy from both the conservative religious establishment and the secular music press for his lyrical mix of radical religious, political, and social themes.**



His 1969 solo album *Upon This Rock* was the first Christian rock record, and his milestone 1972 release *Only Visiting This Planet* is considered one of the best albums in the genre. His music was an influence on such artists as U2, John Mellencamp, and the Pixies.

At the age of nine, Larry began writing and performing original rock and roll songs at school, experimenting and incorporating a spiritual message into his music. Upon moving to San Jose, California, he began recording for Capitol Records with his band *People!* in 1966 and for the next 2 years performed concerts supporting The Doors, The Who, Janis Joplin, and Jimi Hendrix, among others. *People!* scored a Billboard Chart hit in 1968 with a cover of The Zombies' song "I Love You." Norman left the band the day *People!*'s debut album was released.

His solo albums recorded in the 1970s on his own independent label *Solid Rock*, and the albums of other artists he discovered and produced, laid the foundation for what would eventually become the contemporary Christian rock/pop music industry, a genre which largely shunned him and his music. Norman's early social positions caused a stir among many conservative Christians, "The churches weren't going to accept me looking like a street person with long hair and faded jeans. They did not like the music I was recording. And I had no desire to preach the gospel to the converted," Norman once said.

Time Magazine called Norman "the most significant artist in his field." Over 300 cover versions of his songs have been recorded by artists such as Petula Clark, Sammy Davis, Jr., Frank Black, and Cliff Richard. His songs have also been recorded by contemporary Christian artists like DC Talk, Rebecca St. James, and Audio Adrenaline. He performed for The White House, twice; and in Moscow at the 80,000 seat Olympic Stadium. He headlined venues like The Hollywood Bowl, The Sydney Opera House, The Palladium and London's prestigious Royal Albert Hall, which he sold out six times, once filling it twice on the same day. In the last 40 years Norman has released nearly 100 solo albums.

In 2001 Norman was inducted into the Gospel Music Hall of Fame alongside Elvis Presley. At the time of his death he was working on an album with Frank Black and Isaac Brock of *Modest Mouse*, which has been released in 2013.

It was a life changing experience for Lisa Weyerhaeuser the night "The father of Christian Rock", Larry Norman, came to perform at her school near Illinois in America. Armed with his folk guitar and wearing his signature black leather jacket, Larry Norman sang a sweet song of salvation that was filled with words of simplicity and intensity. Lisa interviewed Larry for her school paper at the end of that concert and Larry became a friend and mentor for life. Lisa Weyerhaeuser went on to open for Larry and sing backup in many of his concerts. Larry also producing Lisa's cd "Caught in Time" which has especially been re-released for the UK Tour. Larry's mentoring and acquaintance continued to influence Lisa's music and now after many years of friendship Lisa Weyerhaeuser is honoured to feature in the Larry Norman UK tribute tour on which she will sing Larry's brilliant edgy songs and share some stories of her comradeship with Larry Norman.