

'A Champion for Real': Christian Singer Carman Dies at 65

Christian singer Carman Liciardello, known throughout his 35-year career as "Carman," died in a Las Vegas hospital Tuesday, Feb. 16, after a series of complications resulting from surgery to repair a hiatal hernia, per a statement from his publicity firm. He was 65 years old and had intended to begin a 60-city tour later this month.

The official announcement of his death reads in part:

Born January 19, 1956 in Trenton, New Jersey, Carman began his musical career playing drums in his mother's band at the age of 15. Carman holds the world record for having the largest audience to see a single Christian artist. He set the record for the largest concert at Texas Stadium with more than 71,000 fans and led more than 80,000 fans in worship in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Among his many awards, Carman received the House of Hope of Humanitarian Award for his positive influence in the lives of American youth in 2006, other noted recipients of this award include Ronald and Nancy Reagan and Billy Graham. The Gospel Music Association honored Carman with induction into the GMA Gospel Music Hall of Fame in 2018. Billboard named Carman "Contemporary Christian Artist of the Year" in 1992 and 1995, and in 1993, his album, Addicted to Jesus, earned the distinction of Contemporary Christian Album of the Year. Carman was Grammy-nominated multiple times as the Best Pop Contemporary Gospel Artist. His recording, "A Long Time Ago in a Land Called Bethlehem" was nominated for "Album of the Year" by the Recording Academy in 1986.

In 1985, the release of his first No. 1 song, "The Champion," solidified his place in music history and defined his soul-winning career as one of endurance, grit, dedication, and

pure talent. Anyone who knew Carman knows that he counted only this as his greatest lifetime achievement—winning millions of souls to Christ.

Matt Felts, Carman's manager, states: "When Carman resumed touring again a few years ago, he was concerned that no one would care that he was back. He was wrong. Every night fans packed out venues and his ministry was as powerful as it ever was. This world has lost a light in the darkness but today Carman saw first hand the fruit of his labors.

Carman's musical style was uniquely his own, described as "part evangelist, part Vegas showman." The combination of story, song, testimony and narration that characterized such hits as "Lazarus, Come Forth," "The Champion" and "Revival in the Land" garnered him 15 gold and platinum albums and videos and more than 10 million records sold. But his gospel focus remained strong. "After all the singing, dancing, clapping and preaching, throngs of people would stream down to the counseling area to accept Christ—many times as many as 5,000 in an evening," his website states.

As Charisma News reported Jan. 28, Carman requested prayer after his recent surgery led to pneumonia and other issues. His bouts with cancer proved the willingness of his fans to support him in prayer, and they rallied to intercede for him in what would be his final illness as well. As the news of his death spread, friends and fans were quick to express their condolences.

Recording artist Toby Mac, who began his music career with hip-hop trio DC Talk, thanked Carman in his tweet:

We remember you are grateful for the times we had with you. You were so kind to me, Michael and Kevin. When we were young punks, you welcomed us. You are home now. A Champion for real.

— TobyMac (@tobymac) February 17, 2021

And fellow worship artist Danney Gokey noted that Carman “re-wrote all the rules.”

Carman passed away. He was a legend in our camp and in our genre. He re-wrote all the rules—I remember listening to his albums as a kid. RIP Carman

– Danny Gokey (@dannygokey) February 17, 2021

Pastor, TV host and Executive Vice President of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference Tony Suarez posted a portion of one of Carman’s music videos on Twitter, noting, “Rest well, sir. You inspired us!”

*This old #Carman song has played in my mind, many times, the last several years.
Rest well sir. You inspired us!*

– Tony Suarez (@revtonysuarez) February 17, 2021

And Bethel worship artist Sean Feucht of the ongoing “Let Us Worship” movement offered his prayers as well:

His legendary songs “The Champion” & “Lazarus Come Forth” marked me deeply growing up.

Praying for his family tonight. RIP to a great one!

– Sean Feucht (@seanfeucht) February 17, 2021

Carman, who married for the first time at age 61, is survived by his wife, Dana, and extended family.

Please join the Charisma News staff in praying for Carman’s family and all who loved him. {eoa}

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