

Andraé Crouch: Celebrating the Life and Legend

The music world has lost a legend. Gospel singer and songwriter Andraé Crouch died Thursday after being admitted to the hospital last weekend following a heart attack.

In his 72 years on earth, Crouch worked with stars like Michael Jackson, Madonna and Barbra Mandrell. He was also a frequent guest on CBN's *The 700 Club*.

His death caps decades of an influential life and ministry.

Crouch earned his position as the father of modern gospel with hits like, "Soon and Very Soon," "Through It All" and "Can't Nobody Do Me Like Jesus."

It's a legendary career that began when the California native wrote his first hit at just 14, not long after overcoming a stuttering problem.

His speech impediment started when he was nearly kidnapped outside his parents dry-cleaning business at just 3 years old.

"My folks saw him carry me across the street because they heard me let out a yell," Crouch recalled in a 2006 interview. "And the guy dropped me. And I remember then is when I started stuttering."

Crouch and his twin sister Sandra grew up singing in the church their parents started, and music proved to be the key to ending his stuttering.

"With the wisdom of my father, he said, 'Andraé, you never stutter when you sing. Why don't you act like you are singing when you answer a question,'" Crouch said.

"That is the way I started singing and that is the way I got

out of stuttering," he explained. "So, everything sounded like music."

Crouch called his music ability a miracle. He was a master on the piano without ever studying it—or reading music. At just 11, his father called him to the front the church, told him to play and he did.

An incredible career followed.

He made countless hits with his group, Andraé Crouch and the Disciples, followed by 18 solo albums, nine Grammy awards, and an honorary "artist-in-residence" award from Regent University's International Center of Worship.

Still, at the height of his music career Crouch slowed down on singing and began preaching. He joined his sister to pastor New Christ Memorial Church after they lost their mom and dad to cancer in 1992 and their older brother a year later.

It's a calling Pastor Crouch said God had to literally knock him down in the middle of worship to accept.

"I heard his voice say, 'Okay, Mr. Through It All, Mr. Soon and Very Soon, Mr. Take Me Back.' He named songs and said 'You will not get up from this floor until you tell Me yes,'" Crouch recalled.

His music career may have slowed down in the 1990s. But he was inducted into the Gospel Music Hall of Fame in 1998 and he earned a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in 2003.

"So whenever anybody passes that and they say, 'Who was Andraé Crouch?' They can say he sang about Jesus Christ. That is the part that I am thankful about," Crouch said.

Meanwhile, his music legacy lives on.