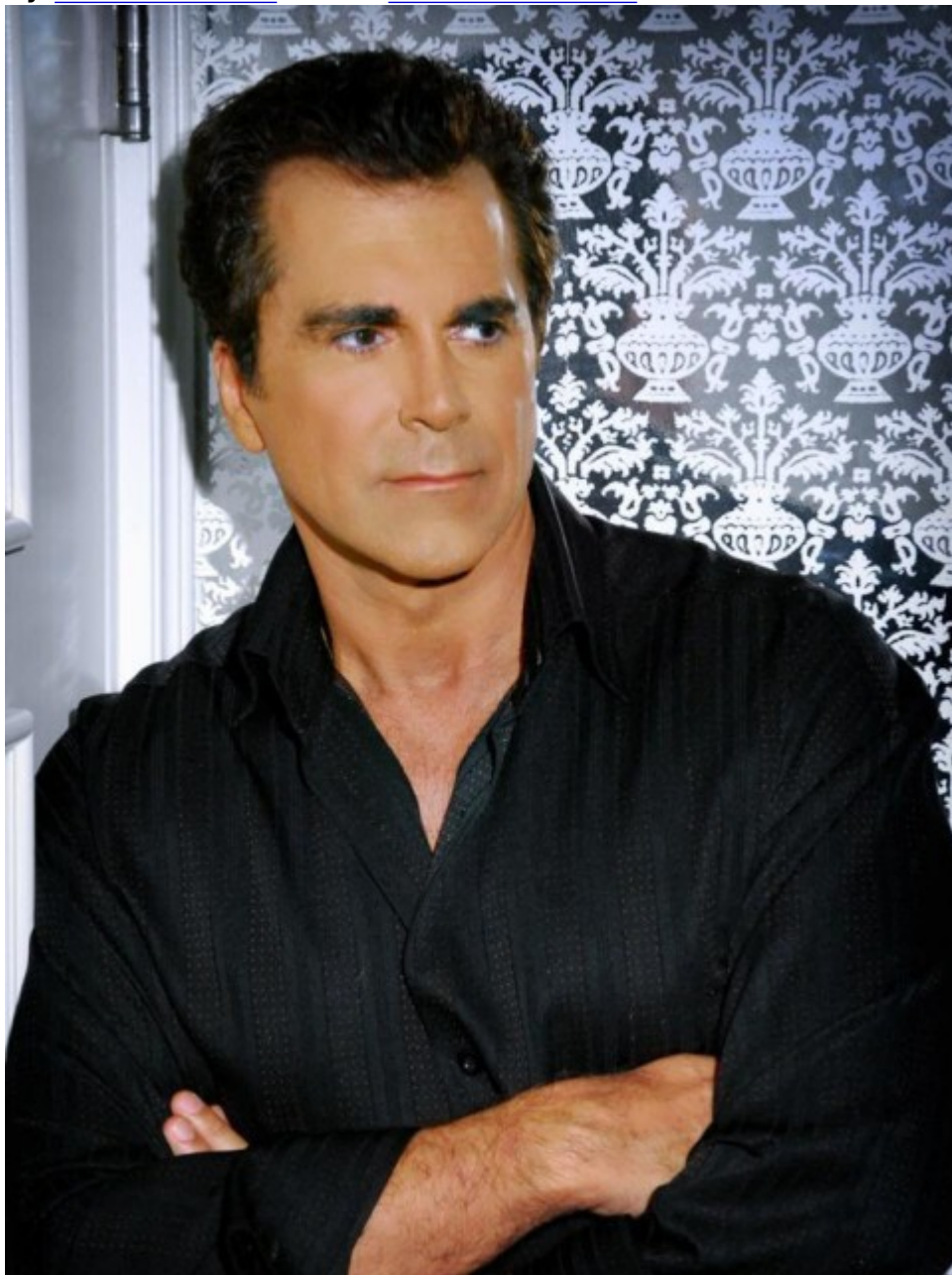


Gospel Music Hall of Famer Carman dies at 65

by [Bob Smietana](#) in the [March 24, 2021](#) issue



(Photo courtesy of Conduit Media Solutions)

Carmelo Domenic Licciardello, an evangelical performing artist known as Carman, died on February 16. He was 65.

The musician had been hospitalized in Las Vegas for complications after surgery to repair a hiatal hernia, according to a press release posted on his Facebook page.

Carman came to fame during the mid-1980s heyday of contemporary Christian music with the release of his hit song “The Champion.” His 1991 record *Addicted to Jesus* was *Billboard’s* Christian album of the year.

Carman also produced several memorable videos that cast him in such roles as a western gunslinger in “Satan, Bite the Dust,” a sweaty revolutionary factory worker in “R.I.O.T. (Righteous Invasion of Truth)” and a Rod Sterling-like host in “The Courtroom.”

Carman said in a 1996 interview that the trappings of fame never distracted him from the ministry aspect of his music. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Carman did not charge for admission to his elaborate shows, relying on “love offerings” to pay the bills.

“When I’m standing up there in faith knowing that the Lord has sent me, totally trusting in him to provide,” Carman said, “I am a demonstration of that faith that I’m asking people to exhibit when it comes time for them to give their hearts to Christ.”

Carman sold millions of records during his prime, but by the early 2000s his music career had stalled. Fans rallied to his aid, though, after the musician announced he had cancer in 2013; they donated hundreds of thousands of dollars to fund a new music project.

He was inducted into the Gospel Music Hall of Fame in 2018. He had been planning to start on a 60-city tour later this year, according to his Facebook page. He credited his fans with helping spark his musical revival and his recovery from cancer.

“If God speaks to the people and the people put up the money, and they say ‘Go make music and minister,’ to me that means I’m going to be alive in a year,” Carman said in 2013. “These treatments I’m going through are going to work. Everything’s going to work, and I’m going to overcome this thing and reach a new generation.” —Religion News Service