

journey. At times I wished for more depth of insight about a particular location or conversation partner, but the breadth of the book is remarkable—from Charlotte, N.C., to Rome to Albania to Jerusalem.

Sacred Encounters offers valuable insight into the spiritual life and lessons of a single female pastor. Its biographical and historical material offer educational value, and its narrative—which includes travel mishaps and the promise of romance—keeps the reader engaged. It is a good find for readers of travel memoir, spiritual memoir, women's spirituality, church history, or contemporary Middle Eastern issues. ■

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FALLEN ANGEL (DVD)

By David Di Sabatino
Jester Media

Reviewed by Al Tizon

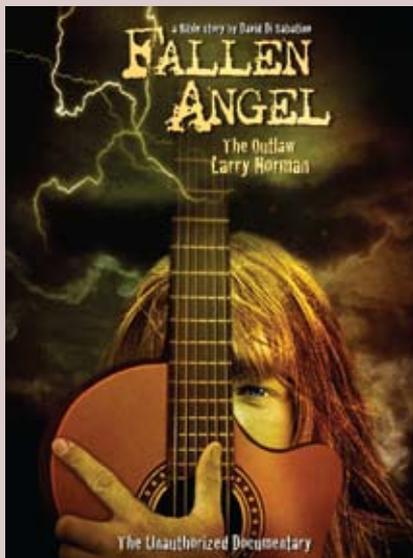
In 2006 director David Di Sabatino brought us *Frisbee: The Life and Death of a Hippie Preacher* (2006), a documentary about the first bona fide evangelist of the countercultural Jesus Movement of the 1960s and '70s. Now he brings us *Fallen Angel: The Outlaw Larry Norman* about the man who essentially provided the soundtrack for that movement. In both cases Di Sabatino portrays how these men served as conduits through which the Spirit of God powerfully moved people to faith in Christ, but also how flawed these human conduits were. Very flawed.

The cover of this latest offering on “father of Jesus Rock” Larry Norman, who died in February 2008, should bear the warning “May be harmful to Norman lovers,” because the trail of broken relationships, adultery, lies, and disingenuous business dealings does not jive with the (some say, self-generated) public image

of the Christian who was being persecuted by both church and world for his uncompromising faith.

Interviews with his first ex-wife, friends, members of the Solid Rock family of the 1970s, and former band members reveal a range of responses to these inconsistencies. While some have concluded that he was nothing more than a charlatan and a hypocrite, others say that he was a genuine brother in Christ who, despite being high-functioning and charismatic, had deep psychological and emotional problems that prevented him from establishing enduring intimacy with others.

“He died a lonely, broken man,” says Randy Stonehill. As Norman's closest friend, Stonehill appropriately dominates the interviews as he provides both fond memories and sobering insights into the man. In many ways, Stonehill and others who were most hurt by Norman turn out to be the real heroes in the film, as they found ways to extend Christlike forgiveness to the one whom, in one form or another, betrayed them. This explains in part why after watching it I reached for my Stonehill LPs and not Norman's to put on my turntable (that's right, a turntable), as the film evoked in me the need to walk down memory lane.



On a pure entertainment level, if one has any interest in the Jesus Movement of the 1960s through the '70s, this documentary is a must-see. The rare pictures and film footage will satiate any Jesus Music connoisseur. The inside scoop on what really happened in the Solid Rock community—an idyllic, artsy, avant-garde, Christian community experiment where something went terribly and suddenly and mysteriously wrong—is both compelling drama and good journalism. And the soundtrack, which Stonehill provided by redoing songs from his definitive *Welcome to Paradise* and *The Sky is Falling* albums, demonstrates that some of that early Jesus Music has actually appreciated through time.

There are some gaps in the story that Di Sabatino chose for some reason not to mention, such as anything about Norman's second marriage (to Stonehill's first wife, to add to the drama), which also failed, but not before the birth of their son Michael. There was also no mention of Phydeaux Records, the music company that Norman had started after Solid Rock went under. Despite these oversights, this film has no rival in peering into the deeply flawed Christian rock-'n'-roller named Larry Norman.

As one among many whom Norman impacted with his music (see my May/June 2008 *PRISM* postmortem tribute to him), I had a hard time watching this film. However, the hurt that truth brings will inevitably yield positive fruit. In fact, I'm beginning to taste it already, as I chew on the absolute scandal of God's grace, which not only shows mercy and forgiveness to the undeserving, but also uses those very same broken, sinful people to accomplish great things in the world. I suppose all of our heroes of faith would fall under this category. To the extent that this is true, Larry Norman is in good company. ■

Al Tizon directs ESA's Word & Deed Network and teaches at Palmer Seminary.