

CARL D'ERRICO
(January 3, 2023)

Carl D'Errico, acclaimed songwriter, composer, musician, and actor, has died at 84

He wrote the music for "It's My Life" by the Animals and collaborated with superstars Neil Diamond and Bruce Springsteen. Friend and lyricist Roger Atkins said: "He was a lovely human being."



Mr. D'Errico (left) poses with fellow singer/songwriter Neil Diamond. They two artists collaborated early in their careers while they lived in New York. Courtesy of the family.

by [Gary Miles](#)

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Carl D'Errico, 84, formerly of Philadelphia, acclaimed songwriter, composer, musician, and actor, died Tuesday, Jan. 3, at Bellevue Hospital in New York of complications after a fall.

A prolific [songwriter and score composer](#) for more than six decades, Mr. D'Errico [wrote countless tunes](#), scored numerous hits and, along with lyricist Roger Atkins, penned the 1965 smash "[It's My Life](#)." Beginning in the 1960s, he teamed with Atkins, Neil Diamond, Gerry

Goffin, Carole Bayer Sager, Estelle Levitt, Doc Pomus, and countless other writers to create music that was performed by such Rock and Roll Hall of Fame members as the Animals, [Bruce Springsteen](#), Gene Pitney, the Yardbirds, and the Police.

He wrote “[No Excess Baggage](#)” for the Yardbirds, “[Losing Control](#)” for Pitney, and “It’s My Life” for the Animals. “It’s My Life” features a distinctive bass guitar riff and compelling organ tones that, critics said, differentiate it from other British Invasion-era songs.

In October 1965, a [reviewer for Billboard](#) magazine said the song has an “offbeat lyric and slow-driving dance beat [that makes it] a top of the chart contender.” [Cash Box](#) magazine described it that same month as a “twangy, low-down blues-drenched ode.”

It reached No. 2 on the Canadian singles chart in 1965, No. 7 on the United Kingdom singles chart, and No. 20 on the Cash Box U.S. top 100. In a note of condolence to Didi, Mr. D’Errico’s wife of 48 years, Springsteen and his wife, musician Patti Scialfa, called the song “one of the greatest classics of the ‘60s and an anthem for every restless dreamer.”

He also wrote the hits “[If You Could Only Be Me](#),” “[Why Did I Lose You](#),” and “[I’m Gonna Make You Mine](#),” and popular artists such as Spanky and Our Gang, Jerry Butler, Shadows of Knight, Major Lance, Gregory Hines, Sally Field, and Tiny Tim sang his songs. “He was the easiest person to work with,” Atkins said. “He was open to my musical ideas and so receptive to me. Whatever we did, it always worked for me.”

Mr. D’Errico was associated with Diamond Records, April Blackwood, Screen Gems, Shapiro Bernstein, and other labels and producers. He composed in the 1960s with other emerging singers and writers at the celebrated Brill Building on Broadway in New York, wrote under the pseudonym Sonny Derr for a while, and composed music for fellow Philadelphian Joe Renzetti, Hall of Fame producer Don Kirshner, and many other collaborators.

He also played dramatic roles in and composed songs and scores for films, TV shows, and theatrical productions. Generally reserved, he performed live on the piano on special occasions and made notable appearances with Scialfa and singer David Johansen.

“He was a great piano player, but writing music was his favorite thing,” his wife said. Atkins said: “That was born in him. It was within him to write that music.”

Born July 13, 1938, in Philadelphia, Carl D’Errico was musical and played piano as a boy. Yielding to his father’s suggestion, he accepted an engineering scholarship to Drexel University. But he dropped out after his father died, earned a bachelor’s degree in music education at Temple University, and settled in to work as a piano teacher.

“But the music business was calling me, in my mind at that point, and so I had to follow my dream,” he told writer Mick Patrick in an [online interview](#). So he quit teaching and played piano and in bands around Philadelphia at weddings, bars, nightclubs, and anywhere he could get paid.

He moved to New York in the early 1960s and met Didi Lombardo, an artist, actress, model, and singer, in the bathroom during a party at his New York home in 1967. They married at City Hall in 1974, and, while they did not have children, Mr. D'Errico told Patrick: "It's a cliché, but true, that your songs become your children. However, we had a great dog, Puccini, who was very musical and sang, kind of a mellow howl, along with my songs in perfect time and in key."



Mr. D'Errico and his wife, Didi, met in the 1960s and collaborated on music, art, and community projects for the rest of their lives. Courtesy of the family

Mr. D'Errico enjoyed what he called his wife's "famous Sicilian dinners" with friends and colleagues, and playing piano as fellow church members [sang Gospel](#), soul and blues songs after Sunday services. In 2004, he and his wife created [DidiArt Angels](#), a nonprofit that provides free murals and paintings for hospitals, schools, senior centers, and other locations.

"He was compassionate, charismatic, and spiritual," his wife said. "He had a beautiful soul and looked into your heart, not to your outside. I loved the purity of his soul."

In addition to his wife, Mr. D'Errico is survived by other relatives. Two sisters died earlier.

Services were private.

Donations in his name may be made to the [Brain Aneurysm Foundation](#), 269 Hanover St., Hanover, Mass. 02339.



Mr. D'Errico was known for his selflessness, compassion, and talent. "He was a super guy," his friend and colleague Roger Atkins said. Courtesy of the family.
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