

EXCLUSIVE

'JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR' STAR DEAD AT 68

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Jeff Fenholt -- best known for playing the title character in the original Broadway theater production of "Jesus Christ Superstar" -- has died.

Law enforcement sources tell us Jeff died Tuesday, only 5 days before his 69th birthday. We're told Fenholt had recently been battling some health issues and was found dead at his home. Jeff's death is not being investigated under suspicious circumstances.

Jeff famously played Jesus in **Andrew Lloyd Webber's** rock opera, "Jesus Christ Superstar," which opened on Broadway in October 1971 and played at the Mark Hellinger Theatre for a widely successful run of more than 700 performances.

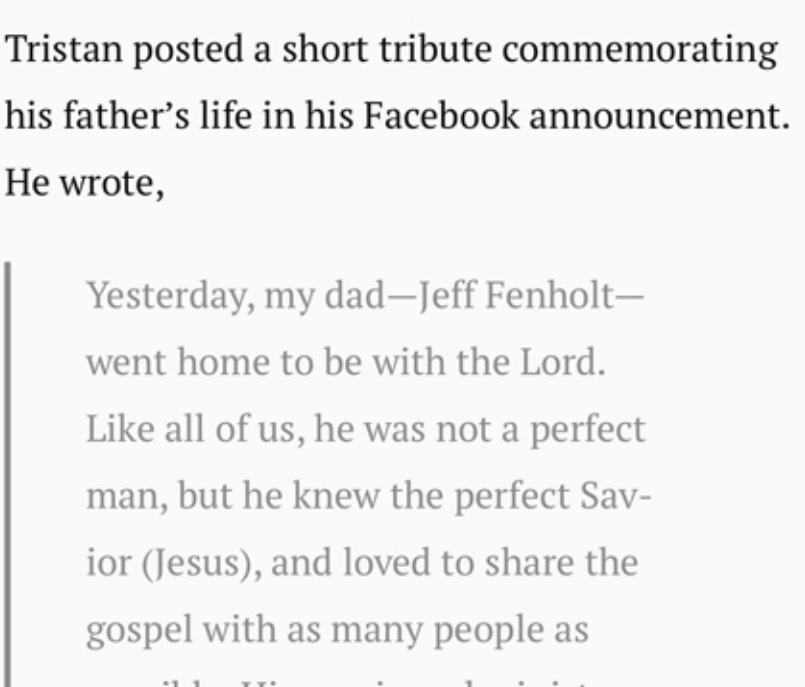


TIME.com

Right after the play debuted, Jeff was featured on the cover of Time Magazine in full costume, complete with a thorn crown on his head.

Jeff was also embroiled in controversy over his involvement with the English heavy metal band, Black Sabbath. Jeff claimed he was a singer in the band for a few months in 1985, and says the band used several of his melodies for their album, "Seventh Star," though he was not credited.

However, original Sabbath member **Tony Iommi** never confirmed Jeff was in the band ... and the official line from Black Sabbath is that Jeff merely "tried out" for a spot in the group.



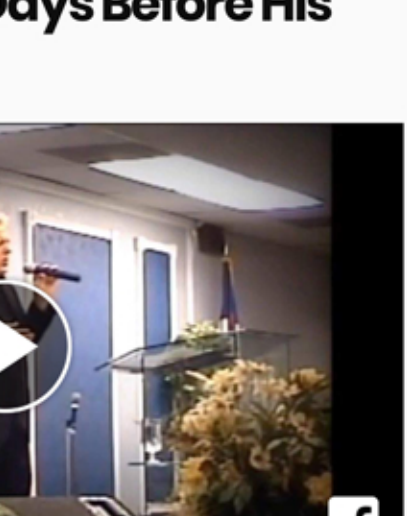
JEFF FENHOLT IN "JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR"

Getty

Jeff also gained notoriety as a Christian evangelist, and he says he made the conversion after becoming addicted to drugs and alcohol after the end of 'JCS' on Broadway.

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Jeff Fenholt Dead: 'Jesus Christ Superstar' Actor Was 68



Fenholt pictured during an appearance on CBN in 2009.

Jeff Fenholt has died at 68 years old, according to a [Facebook post](#) by his son, Tristan. Fenholt was known for his role in "Jesus Christ Superstar," as well as his involvement with Black Sabbath.

Tristan posted a short tribute commemorating his father's life in his Facebook announcement. He wrote,

Yesterday, my dad—Jeff Fenholt—went home to be with the Lord. Like all of us, he was not a perfect man, but he knew the perfect Savior (Jesus), and loved to share the gospel with as many people as possible. His music and ministry literally touched the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. He truly loved the Lord... and still does. I love you and miss you, Dad!
9/15/1950 — 9/10/2019

Per TMZ, Fenholt's cause of death has not been revealed, but he was found dead at his home on Tuesday, and had been battling with health issues leading up to his death.

In the hours leading up to his death, friends of Fenholt appeared to hear of his passing through alternate sources, as they tweeted it out prior to any news publication or confirmation. One friend [wrote](#), "I just learned that my friend Jeff Fenholt has gone on to be with the Lord. I had the pleasure of directing his shows on TBN for several years. He was always so much fun to be with. I spoke with him a few months ago as he shared some of his ideas for a new show. RIP Jeff"

Here's what you need to know:

1. Fenholt Died 5 Days Before His 69th Birthday



Fenholt was 68 years old at the time of his death, only five days away from turning 69 years old. Though Fenholt is known for the success of his later years, he actually had his first taste of fame when he was only 14 years old, when a song his band made, 'Goin Too Far,' became a Top 40 hit.

Fenholt's death comes a few months after the [50th anniversary tour](#) of *Jesus Christ, Superstar* premiered at the Hollywood Pantages Theatre in Los Angeles, earlier this summer.

The rock opera by Andrew Lloyd Webber first appeared on Broadway on October 12, 1971, with Fenholt playing the role of Jesus Christ. Other stars who originally appeared in the opera included Ben Vereen and Yvone Elliman, according to [Paybill](#).

2. Fenholt's Brief Run With Black Sabbath Is Still Controversial

Fenholt has claimed on a number of occasions that he was a member of the band Black Sabbath for several years in the mid 1980s.

However, per [Deadline](#), Sabbath member Tony Iommi noted in his memoir that Fenholt only tried out for the band and did a few demos with them. Iommi wrote, "*The New York Times* did a thing about him being with Black Sabbath and they wrote that he saw the light, rejected evil and all this bollocks. We were right back in the satanism thing because Fenholt was going on about it."

3. Fenholt Was a Notable Trump Supporter & Conservative on Facebook



Fenholt, who was known as a Christian evangelist, was a strong supporter of the Trump administration in his final years, and frequently posted on Facebook about his frustrations with issues like the immigration crisis. In one such post, he wrote, "I am sick of all the 3rd world urchins who have come into America and don't love our country."

Fenholt also posted a piece of misinformation in which a photo of a woman with a gun is falsely identified as Rep. Ilhan Omar. The caption for the photo reads, "Here is your precious Muslim congresswoman at a Al' Qaida training camp in Somalia. She is trying to have this picture blocked and me banned for posting it. Facebook has banned me twice because pic is considered offensive?"

In another status, he posted a meme of Melania Trump that reads, "The Most Stunning and Beautiful First Lady in American History!"

4. Fenholt Was an Evangelical Christian & Often Spoke About His Faith

Fenholt was an outspoken evangelical christian. Per [TMZ](#), he said he made the conversion to an evangelical faith after he became addicted to drugs and alcohol near the end of his *Jesus Christ Superstar* run.

Fenholt shared a video about the "end times" on September 1, just over a week before his death. He also frequently posted about socialism and marxism, writing in one post,

I wonder how he likes Hell ?
Synagogue of Satan.
Karl Marx and The Bolsheviks were Jews in name only.
This is why the Jews were initially targeted in Germany WW2;
They were Communists who had overthrown Russia and were attempting to overthrow Germany and Europe.
Now they're targeting America and Europe again for Communism.
Does history repeat itself; let's hope not.

5. Many Mourned the Former Broadway Star on Twitter Following His Death

After reports of Fenholt's death first broke, many began to pay tribute to the former Broadway star on Twitter. Singer Bryan Duncan [tweeted](#), "WOW.. Jeff Fenholt died. He stared as Jesus Christ in the 1971 Original Broadway Cast of Jesus Christ Superstar. I was on TBN a few times with him in later years. Don't think he was that old."

Tim Rice, a lyric writer for a number of hit Broadway shows, [tweeted](#), "Another sad loss from the ranks of those who helped Andrew and me enormously in our early days in musical theatre. Jeff Fenholt, the first ever JCS on Broadway, has died too early. RIP Jeff and thank you."

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