

Charisma Celebrates 15th Anniversary

Oral Roberts, Petra, Marilyn Hickey, Phil Driscoll head lineup of special guests

How does a magazine objectively report its own television special? Adelle Banks, religion editor of the *Orlando Sentinel*, solved that problem for us with her news story which appeared in the *Sentinel* on September 2, the morning after the special was videotaped. She captured the diversity and intensity of the first-time event. We received permission from the *Orlando Sentinel* to reprint her article here.

Dressed in everything from tuxedos to jeans, more than 5,000 people filled Calvary Assembly of God in Winter Park, Florida, on September 1 for a glitzy celebration of the 15th anniversary of *Charisma* magazine.

The gala, which lasted about three hours, introduced the audience to some of their favorite Christian musical and pulpit stars and then a bit about the ups and downs of television production. Two hours of the special event were aired on the Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN) and other networks on September 15 and several later dates.

Stern commentaries on the ways of the secular world were intertwined with music from performers such as Phil Driscoll, a trumpet player from Cleveland, Tennessee, and Tony Melendez, a man from Chino, California, who plays the guitar with his feet.

Ben Kinchlow, former co-host of "The 700 Club," served as the host for the event, which at times seemed like a Christian version of the Grammy Awards.

When Driscoll was announced as the favorite Christian instrumentalist of *Charisma* readers for the fifth consecutive year, he said humbly, "I don't know what to say except without God I wouldn't be here, and I wouldn't be free."

He then said, "I think we need to be ballistic for Jesus Christ" and burst into "Jesus is the rock that rolled my blues away."



Charisma editor Stephen Strang (center) asks what God is saying to the church today. Answering were (from left to right) Oral Roberts, Doug Wead, Jamie Buckingham, Beverly LaHaye, Marilyn Hickey, Jay Sekulow and Frances and Charles Hunter

Thurlow Spurr, producer of the event, purred with pride about the lineup of famous speakers that appeared. "There's never been a group of people on a panel like this," he said. "Johnny Carson, eat your heart out!"

During a discussion of challenges facing the church, led by publisher Stephen Strang, Oral Roberts decried racism, and Jamie Buckingham talked about how he recently battled cancer. Beverly LaHaye, president of Concerned Women for America, spoke against abortion and euthanasia. "We're letting people today play the role of God when it comes to the value of life," she said. "It is time now for us Christians to cry out against this in our society."

When Evie and Pelle Karlsson and their two children waited for tape to accompany their singing of "Celebrate the Family," Evie turned to her family and ad-libbed, "Isn't it wonderful to serve the Lord you guys?"

Some stars who couldn't be there in person performed or spoke briefly via video.

One of the most popular videos was from Carman. In the video, an ugly, big-eared attendant to Satan informed his horned and caped master about the evil happening on earth—killing of the unborn and the devil's specialty, drunken driving. But the attendant warned his master about the threatening work of charismatic Christians.

"They're praying for revival," Satan was told.

The crowd cheered.

Editor's Note: *The Florida Mass Choir, Mom and Pop Winans, Petra, the Imperials, Ballet Magnificat, Charles and Frances Hunter, Jay Sekulow, Marilyn Hickey and Doug Wead complete the evening's lineup of special guests.*

Host Ben Kinchlow presented six "Readers' Choice" awards to the following musicians: Carman, favorite Christian male artist; Sandi Patti, favorite Christian female artist; Petra, favorite Christian group; Phil Driscoll, favorite Christian instrumentalist; Carman, album of the year ("Revival in the