

# Book focuses on the Carpenters

Andrew Dalton  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES — “Every sha-la-la-la, every wo-o-wo-o still shines,” the Carpenters’ sang in “Yesterday Once More,” their hit 1973 tribute to the songs of the past.

It could be the tagline of a new book on the work of Richard and Karen Carpenter, which seeks to set aside the noise surrounding the duo and focus on their harmonic creations.

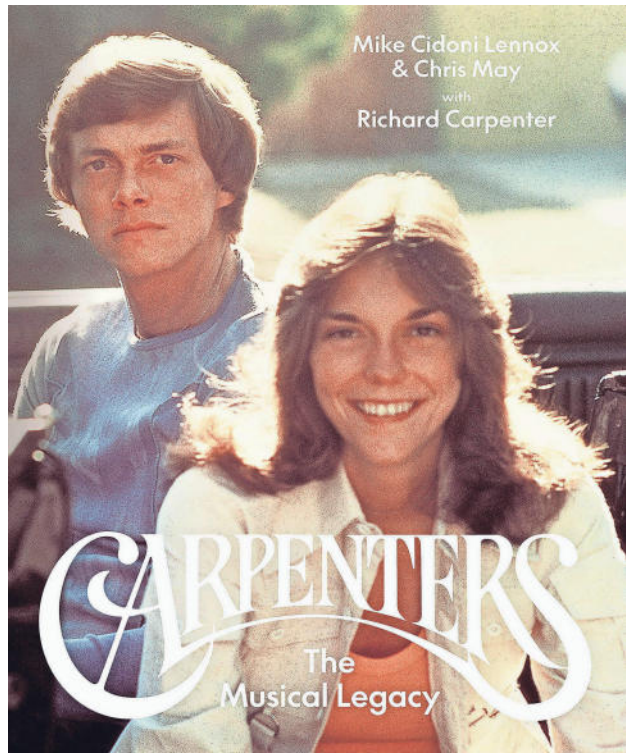
“Carpenters: The Musical Legacy” (Princeton Architectural Press), coming 50 years after the duo’s earliest hits, was co-written by Richard Carpenter, along with Associated Press journalist Mike Cidoni Lennox and Chris May.

Carpenter has passed on many retrospective projects, after facing decades of questions about his sister’s inner life and her death in 1983 from heart failure, a complication of anorexia, at age 32. This was a chance to do something different.

“It was the focus on the music itself, that’s primarily it,” Carpenter told the AP as he sat at his piano in his Southern California home. “It touches on things that we hadn’t touched on before or that if we had, it had been ignored.”

It has the heft and visual history of a coffee table book, but it’s also a nearly note-for-note musical biography of the pair that goes back to their childhood lives in New Haven, Connecticut, where Richard Carpenter found the seeds of the group’s sound in his father’s records and a toy jukebox.

He cites some unexpected influences, including another man-and-woman duo, Les Paul and Mary Ford, whose early experimenting with vocal overdubs and layered harmonies electrified him.



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“It made a profound impression on me, that ooh-ah, ooh-ah. I was maybe 5 or 6,” Carpenter said. “I had no idea how all this was done. I just knew it was different and that I really liked it. And many years later, of course, it came up in my mind while I was arranging a lot of things that I wrote the harmonies for.”

He credits a less famous name with a well-known sound, choral arranger Judd Conlon, whose work appeared in Disney’s “Peter Pan” and “Alice in Wonderland.”

“His arranging style for multi-vocals was tight,” Carpenter said. “They were very close harmonies, which had a great big effect on me.”

The book makes clear that their elaborate, multi-layered recordings were made while the young duo maintained touring and TV appearances.

It gives an accounting of nearly every rainy day and Monday they spent in a hectic 1970, the year “(They Long to Be) Close to You” became their breakthrough hit. Somehow amid it all they recorded their third album, 1971’s “Carpenters,” known to fans as the tan album and regarded by many as their best.

The Carpenters were often derided as makers of schmaltzy throwaway hits. But the book argues they were great creators of fully formed albums, with an incredible run of records between 1970’s “Close to You” and 1973’s “Now & Then,” the concept album that solidified their global stardom.

“We had so many hit singles, and usually right in a row, that we tended to be dismissed again by our detractors as a singles band,” Carpenter said. “We sold millions of albums.”

Carpenter’s ear for finding hits, often in unlikely places, was as essential as his ear for making them.

He found “Superstar,” the Carpenters song probably most beloved of younger generations, when he heard Bette Midler sing it on “The Tonight Show.” He came across “We’ve Only Just Begun” in a bank commercial before they made it a hit.

When he heard them, he knew just what to do with them.

“If the song hit me, whether it was one of mine or say one that I’d heard, like ‘We’ve Only Just Begun,’ or ‘Rainy Days and Mondays’ or ‘Superstar,’ if the song had it, my arrangement just took place immediately,” Carpenter said.

And he knew a song was useless if it didn’t match his sister’s stunning alto voice.

“I could give you a list of songs that I heard on the radio that I went right out and bought and yet knew would not work for Karen and me,” he said. “That we were brother and sister just had a whole lot to do with it.”

He also reconsidered his musical catalog on the forthcoming “Richard Carpenter’s Piano Songbook.” He reimagines several of the band’s biggest hits for solo piano on the album slated for a January release.

Amid all the looking back, Carpenter recently made his first visit in some 30 years back to what was once the studios of A&M Records in Hollywood. It now belongs to Jim Henson Company and the Muppets, who have changed it very little. It was an emotional trip.

“We spent so much of our lives there that it was just like returning home,” he said.



Richard Carpenter poses at his home in Thousand Oaks, Calif., on Sept. 10. A new book on the Carpenters takes a look back at nearly every rainy day and Monday of the duo’s career. DAMIAN DOVARGANES/AP

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## BLUE ZONES PROJECT - SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

### Self-Care During the Holidays: Don’t Forget to Practice Gratitude

by Kara O’Dempsey – Blue Zones Project

The holiday season is upon us, which for many, means a growing to-do list of shopping, cooking, decorating and gift wrapping. It is easy to get wrapped up (no pun intended) in the pressure to create “perfect” holiday memories.

Before we know it, the last bite of turkey has been eaten, the last present has been unwrapped and we are raising a glass to the new year, tired, stressed and undoubtedly feeling like a less healthy version of ourselves.

Consequently, we begin to point the finger at the delicious pies, cookies and stuffing that crept their way onto our plates, and strategize ways to improve our diet, fitness and sleep. Insert New Years resolution to lose weight here.

Fortunately, there’s a simple yet powerful practice that can help you combat the added stress of the holidays and create a more joyous and healthy season. It’s free, it only takes a few minutes of your time, and it is scientifically validated to improve your overall wellness.

It’s gratitude.

Gratitude is a way for people to appreciate what they have instead of focusing on what they lack. Appreciating what you have can ignite an optimistic mindset, defusing feelings of guilt, frustration and envy.

Numerous studies have revealed that showing and practicing gratitude can improve your overall physical and

mental health in numerous ways. In “The Science of Gratitude” (2018), the Greater Good Science Center outlines the following as benefits of practicing gratitude.

- increased happiness and positive mood
- more satisfaction with life
- less materialistic
- less likely to experience burnout
- better physical health
- better sleep
- less fatigue
- lower levels of cellular inflammation
- greater resiliency
- encourages the development of patience, humility, and wisdom

It’s important to note that practicing gratitude goes beyond saying “thank you.” While this two word phrase is always a polite and welcome practice, gratitude is not just an action. It is a mindset.

For some, a grateful mindset comes naturally. For others, it is something that needs to be cultivated.

Here are a few ways you can start to grow gratitude on a regular basis:

Write a thank-you note. It sounds simple, but the power of putting pen to paper to say thank you is real. Make a habit of sending one thank-you note a month.

Keep a gratitude journal. Write down three things for which you are grateful for at the end of each day. Not only does

this improve your attitude, but studies also suggest that people who list the things they are grateful for before bed, report better sleep. For free journaling lessons, visit <https://bit.ly/3mN5a43>.

Meditate. Mindful mediation involves focusing on the present moment. Use this time to focus on what you’re grateful for. Even just a few minutes of mediation can increase your feelings of gratitude.

Share your gratitude with others. Make a holiday tradition of going around the table and saying what you are thankful for. Sharing your feelings with others not only makes us feel closer, but it also models family values and positivity.

Simply put, gratitude is a superpower emotion with numerous health benefits. So, as you gather this holiday season, be sure to keep gratitude at the forefront of your mind. Try to put down your to-do list and take out a gratitude journal. Try to remember everything you have and not what you need to do. Your mind and body will thank you.

Brought to Southwest Florida by NCH Healthcare System, in collaboration with Sharecare, Inc., Blue Zones Project is part of Southwest Florida’s well-being improvement initiative that encourages changes in the community that lead to healthier options. For more information, visit [southwestflorida.bluezonesproject.com](http://southwestflorida.bluezonesproject.com).