

Gone too soon - Michael Jackson 1958-2009

Pop star Michael Jackson, who bridged the gap between black soul and white pop music, has died in Los Angeles, according to media reports. He was 50.

Jackson suffered cardiac arrest at his home Thursday afternoon, and paramedics were unable to revive him.

Hundreds of fans and media gathered outside Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles after reports began circulating that he had been transferred there.

His family were also reported to be on their way to the hospital.

There had been recent reports that Jackson was in poor health, and his London concert series, billed as a farewell to London, was postponed by a few days.

However, the concerts quickly sold out, a testament to the enduring appeal of the singer, known as the "King of Pop."

Jackson left an indelible mark on pop music, largely on account of his 1980s hits such as Beat It and Billie Jean.

His music set the world dancing, with a catchy beat and innocuous lyrics.

He also set a new standard for music videos with the creative and gripping Thriller, a horror-film spoof that Jackson wrote and produced with John Landis in 1983.

He won two Grammy Awards for the Thriller video, and MTV named it the best video ever made.

In recent years, he was much in the news for his financial and legal troubles, including the auctioning of personal items and the battle over his Neverland ranch.

His odd personal appearance and relationship with his children also detracted from his image.

But he remained one of pop's most successful musicians, winning 13 Grammy Awards and selling 750 million albums worldwide...Thriller spent 37 weeks at top of pop charts

Born in Gary, Ind., in 1958, Michael Jackson began his music career at the age of five, joining his brothers Jackie, Tito, Marlon and Jermaine as the lead singer of the family pop music group, the Jackson Five.

The group played at nightclubs in the Gary area, and young Michael soon made a name for himself as a singer and dancer of exceptional ability.

In 1968, the Jackson Five signed with Motown Records and moved to California. The group ruled the charts in the late 1960s and early '70s, and its first four singles, I Want You Back, ABC, The Love You Save and I'll Be There, all became No. 1 American hits. The Jackson Five recorded 14 albums and Michael Jackson recorded four solo albums with Motown.

In 1978, Jackson made his film debut in The Wiz, playing the Scarecrow, with Diana Ross in the lead role of Dorothy.

Jackson's first big solo success was the 1979 album Off the Wall, which spawned a record-breaking four No. 1 singles in the U.S. and earned Jackson his first American Music Award.

His 1982 album Thriller made him a musical phenomenon. Produced by Quincy Jones, it spanned a number of pop genres and reigned for 37 weeks on top of the charts.

It produced seven hit singles, and the videos that accompanied them made Jackson's signature moonwalk one of the best-known dance moves in the world. His Bad, Dangerous and HIStory albums also were bestsellers.

In the 1980s, he racked up industry awards, honours from the United Negro College Fund and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, as well as a reputation as one of the world's most beloved entertainers.

He was a key player in the all-star 1985 benefit single We Are the World, written by Jackson and Lionel Richie, which raised \$60 million US for hunger relief in Africa.

Survived by three children, two ex-wives

But, in recent years, Jackson became better known for his troubled life, and his legal and financial problems, which included battling a variety of lawsuits from former business associates and creditors. In 2003, Britain's ITV network broadcast a documentary called Living with Michael Jackson for which British journalist Martin Bashir interviewed the

controversial pop star over a period of eight months. ABC purchased the rights to broadcast it to American audiences on 20/20.

Revelations about Jackson's personal life in the documentary were one of the factors that resulted in his trial on charges of child molestation. He was later acquitted of all charges.

The months Jackson spent in court took their toll on him. He felt betrayed by Bashir, whom he had grown to trust, and he was forced to watch many former friends testify against him.

In recent years, there were talks of a comeback tour and another album, but neither materialized.

Jackson had two brief marriages — to Lisa Marie Presley, whom he married in 1994, and to Deborah Rowe, whom he married in 1996.

Rowe is the mother of his son, Prince Michael Jackson Jr., and his daughter, Paris Michael Katherine. Jackson's second son, Prince Michael II, was born in 2001, to an anonymous surrogate mother. CBCnews