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Jackson estate success is a thriller



Phil Walter/Getty Images

Michael Jackson performs on stage during his 'HIStory' world tour concert at Ericsson Stadium November 10, 1996 in Auckland, New Zealand.

by ***Stacey Vanek Smith*** (</people/stacey-vanek-smith>)

Monday, March 31, 2014 - 14:30

Full disclosure: I love Michael Jackson. Deeply, completely and unironically.

In fact, one of my first major musical memories was requesting [Beat It](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oRdxUFDoQeo&feature=kp) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oRdxUFDoQeo&feature=kp>) at our 6th grade roller skating party. It was a great party -- Brian Something-or-other asked me to skate and, although I cannot now remember his last name, I *do* remember the amazing feeling of skating with a guy I was crazy about, to a song I was crazy about, in a black velvet sweatshirt I was crazy about and thinking to my 12-year-old self that life does not often get much better than that.

So, I will always love Michael Jackson's music. At least the old stuff. Not so sure about the [ten albums that are going to be released \(http://music-mix.ew.com/2010/03/16/michael-jackson-sony-deal/\)](http://music-mix.ew.com/2010/03/16/michael-jackson-sony-deal/) between now and 2017. Seriously, *ten* albums? The first of these, *Xscape*, will go on pre-sale tomorrow on iTunes. It supposedly has eight songs we've never heard before... meaning there are 80 Michael Jackson songs sitting around that we've never heard before?! 80 songs? Even post-mortem, Michael Jackson is making me feel lazy.

He's also wiping the floor with me (and most everyone else) financially. The man is earning \$1 billion a year. [Billboard did a great breakdown of all of the places MJ's money is coming from \(http://www.billboard.com/articles/news/957679/how-michael-jackson-made-1-billion-since-his-death?page=0%2Co\)](http://www.billboard.com/articles/news/957679/how-michael-jackson-made-1-billion-since-his-death?page=0%2Co). Namely: Music sales, music publishing deals, DVD sales from *This Is It* (<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1477715/>), a [hit show in Vegas \(http://www.cirquedusoleil.com/en/shows/michael-jackson-one/show/about.aspx?cid=ps:mj1_us-nv-01_2014:mjone-las-vegas-2014:google:{creative}:tks:skg&keyword={keyword}\)](http://www.cirquedusoleil.com/en/shows/michael-jackson-one/show/about.aspx?cid=ps:mj1_us-nv-01_2014:mjone-las-vegas-2014:google:{creative}:tks:skg&keyword={keyword}) and a bunch of huge record and ad deals with Sony.

In researching this piece, I watched a lot of old Michael Jackson videos on YouTube. The video for [Remember The Time \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LeiFFogvqcc\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LeiFFogvqcc) = Mind. Blowing. Eddie Murphy as the jealous Pharoah? Where was this man's Oscar? Iman as the gorgeous Pharoahette ... torn between her deep love for Michael Jackson and ... well, actually, she doesn't seem torn at all. Poor Eddie Murphy. I mean, MJ is an *amazing* dancer, but he's in this weird see-through skirt and black slacks and a shiny gold breast-plate looking ... you know, not exactly like a *man's man* and he's just out-and-out walking off with Eddie Murphy's woman.

To me, this demonstrates a couple of things.

Number one: Women *love* a man who can dance (or skate... that was, as I remember, a large part of Brian Something-or-other's appeal).

And number two: never underestimate Michael Jackson. The man is no longer alive and he is still out-earning, out-producing and out-dancing us all.

9 other artists who had posthumous success

By Shea Huffman

Michael Jackson isn't the first artist to have continued success in their career after death. Popular musicians often resonate with audiences long after their passing, and their record sales sometimes see a sizeable bump shortly after they die, especially if it happens suddenly or tragically. Here is a look at artists that have continued to top the charts, or at least consistently sell albums, after their death:

Note: Sales figures are limited by the fact that Nielsen SoundScan only began tracking album sales in 1991.

Elvis Presley

Died: 1977

Album sales since 1991: 31.2 million

"The King" helped popularize rock 'n' roll and became one of the first true music superstars. He continues to be one of the best-selling artists of all time.

Janis Joplin

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Died: 1980

Album sales since 1991: 4.4 million (solo); 57.6 million (The Beatles)

If you include his time with The Beatles, John Lennon has sold more posthumous records than any other artist. Shortly after his death, Lennon's album *Double Fantasy* shot to the number one spot on Billboard's charts, and included the top song, *(Just Like) Starting Over*.

Jin

Died: 1970

Album sales since 1991: 15.5 million

Jimi Hendrix, considered to be one of the best rock guitarists of all time, only released several albums in his lifetime. Albums of unreleased material and recordings of live shows have surfaced over the years, however, with a number of hit songs.

Bob Marley

Died: 1981

Album sales since 1991: 25 million

The Jamaican musician responsible for hits like *I Shot the Sheriff* and *One Love* had deep roots in the beginnings of the reggae genre.

Freddie Mercury

Die

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own for his

Died: 1994

Album sales since 1991: 24.9 million

The lead singer and songwriter of Nirvana was responsible for some of the most influential and popular alternative rock before his suicide. After his death, Nirvana went on to release two No. 1 albums, *MTV Unplugged in New York*, and *From the Muddy Banks of the Wishkah*.

Tupac Shakur

Died: 1996

Album sales since 1991: 32.2 million

The controversial rapper has seemingly been more prolific in death than he was in life. With [seven albums \(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tupac_Shakur_discography\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tupac_Shakur_discography) of previously unreleased material topping the charts decades later, fans have predictably spawned conspiracy theories surrounding his death.

The Notorious B.I.G.

Died: 1997

Album sales since 1991: 11.9 million

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