

'No foul play' in Michael Jackson death

Saturday, 27 June 2009

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Police also want to speak to Jackson's doctor who witnessed his collapse.

Jackson's body has been released to his family but no funeral details have been made public.

Seven hours after the post-mortem examination was completed, Jackson's family was allowed to claim his body, seemingly managing to elude the media crowd outside the coroner's office.

The body has been taken to an undisclosed location.

Announcing the results of a three-hour autopsy, Los Angeles County Coroners spokesman Craig Harvey said there had been no indication of any external trauma or foul play, but he said the cause of death had been deferred.

"It means that the medical examiner ordered additional testing such as toxicology and other studies," Mr Harvey said.

These would take between four to six weeks, he said.

"We know he was taking some prescription medication," Mr Harvey said, without specifying which.

Unconfirmed reports suggest the singer had been taking a daily dose of Demerol, a painkiller also widely known as pethidine.

Jackson, who had a history of health problems, collapsed at his Los Angeles home around midday on Thursday.

A recording of the telephone call made to emergency services has been released, in which the caller said Jackson was unconscious and had stopped breathing.

His personal doctor - who witnessed his collapse - was trying to revive him, the caller said.

The singer was pronounced dead two hours later at the UCLA medical centre. Jackson's brother, Jermaine, said he was believed to have suffered a cardiac arrest.

Former Jackson family lawyer Brian Oxman told US TV that he had been concerned about the star's use of pain relief medication.

He told ABC's Good Morning America programme that Jackson took prescription pain relief for injuries sustained earlier in his career.

"It caused him great pain. He just didn't like to feel such discomfort. He started taking pain medication. It became part of his life," he said.

A spokesman for the Los Angeles Police Department said investigators had briefly spoken to Jackson's personal doctor, named by US media as Dr Conrad Murray, but they wanted to speak to him again.

Police also said a car owned by a doctor had been towed away from Jackson's home.

A spokeswoman said the doctor was not under criminal investigation, but that the car could contain "medications or other evidence that may assist the coroner in determining the cause of death".

The star had been due to stage 50 concerts at the O2 arena in London, beginning on 13 July.

Entertainers, world leaders and fans have continued to pay tribute to the star.

Across the world, people have been voicing shock and disbelief at the news of his death. In Hollywood, thousands of people filed past his star on the Walk of Fame.

A White House spokesman said US President Barack Obama considered Jackson a spectacular performer, but said he felt parts of his life were "sad and tragic".

Former Beatle Paul McCartney described Jackson as a "massively talented boy-man with a gentle soul".

Biggest seller

Jackson began his career as a child in family group The Jackson 5.

He went on to achieve global fame as a solo artist with smash hits such as Billie Jean and Bad.

Thriller, released in 1982, is the biggest-selling album of all time, shifting 65m copies, according to the Guinness Book of World Records.

He scored seven UK number ones as a solo artist and won a total of 13 Grammy awards.

"For Michael to be taken away from us so suddenly at such a young age, I just don't have the words," said Quincy Jones, who produced Thriller, Bad and Off The Wall.

"He was the consummate entertainer and his contributions and legacy will be felt upon the world forever. I've lost my little brother today, and part of my soul has gone with him."

The singer had been dogged by controversy and money trouble in recent years, becoming a virtual recluse.

He was arrested in 2003 on charges of molesting a 14-year-old boy, but was found not guilty following a five-month trial.

The star had three children, Michael Joseph Jackson Jr, Paris Michael Katherine Jackson and Prince Michael Jackson II.

Jackson's former wife Debbie Rowe is the mother of two of the children, and there is already speculation about who will gain custody of them.

He is survived by his mother, Katherine, father, Joseph and eight siblings - including Janet, Randy, Jermaine and La Toya Jackson.

MICHAEL JACKSON 1958-2009

Michael Jackson in 1972

Full name: Michael Joseph Jackson

Born: August 29, 1958, Gary, Indiana, US

Also known as: The King of Pop, Wacko Jacko

Biggest hits: I Want You Back, Don't Stop Til You Get Enough, Billie Jean, Bad, Black or White, Earth Song

Sold: 750 million albums

Earned: \$700 million (estimated)

Source: BBC