

Did David Bowie Prophecy His Death in Last Music Video?

Legendary British rock star David Bowie, who framed hits such as “Ziggy Stardust” with daringly androgynous displays of sexuality and glittering costumes, has died aged 69 after a secret battle with cancer.

A chameleon and a visionary, Bowie straddled the worlds of hedonistic rock, fashion and drama for five decades, pushing the boundaries of music and his own sanity to produce some of the most innovative songs of his generation.

“David Bowie died peacefully today surrounded by his family after a courageous 18-month battle with cancer,” read a statement on Bowie’s Facebook page dated Sunday. Bowie’s son, Duncan Jones, confirmed the death.

Mourners laid flowers and lit candles beside a memorial to Bowie in the Brixton area of south London where he was born, and tributes poured in from some of the biggest names in music, including the Rolling Stones, Madonna and rapper Kanye West.

“The Rolling Stones are shocked and deeply saddened to hear of the death of our dear friend David Bowie,” the Stones said. “He was an extraordinary artist, and a true original.”

Madonna said on Twitter: “Talented. Unique. Genius. Game Changer. The Man who Fell to Earth. Your Spirit Lives on Forever!”

British Prime Minister David Cameron said he had grown up with Bowie’s music and described his death as “a huge loss”.

In a music video accompanying Bowie’s new Blackstar album, which was released on his 69th birthday last Friday, the

singer was shown in a hospital bed with bandages around his eyes.

Born David Jones in south London two years after the end of World War Two, he took up the saxophone at 13 before changing his name to David Bowie to avoid confusion with the Monkees' Davy Jones, according to Rolling Stone.

He shot to fame in Britain in 1969 with "Space Oddity", whose lyrics he said were inspired by watching Stanley Kubrick's film "2001: A Space Odyssey" while stoned.

Bowie's hollow lyrics summed up the loneliness of the Cold War space race between the United States and the Soviet Union and coincided with the Apollo landing on the moon.

"Ground Control to Major Tom. Take your protein pills and put your helmet on ... For here am I sitting in my tin can. Far above the world. Planet Earth is blue. And there's nothing I can do."

"Space Oddity Ziggy"

But it was Bowie's 1972 portrayal of a doomed bisexual rock envoy from space, Ziggy Stardust, that propelled him to global stardom. Bowie and Ziggy, wearing outrageous costumes, makeup and bright orange hair, took the rock world by storm.

"Ziggy played guitar, jamming good with Weird and Gilly," according to the lyrics which Bowiesang with a red lightning bolt across his face and flamboyant jumpsuits.

"Making love with his ego Ziggy sucked up into his mind. Like a leper messiah," according the lyrics.

Bowie, ever the innovator ahead of public opinion, told the Melody Maker newspaper in 1972 that he was gay, a step that helped pioneer sexual openness in Britain, which had only decriminalized homosexuality in 1967. Bowie had married in 1970.

He told Playboy four years later he was bisexual, but in the 1980s he told Rolling Stone magazine that the declaration was “the biggest mistake I ever made” and that he was “always a closet heterosexual”.

This was a period which saw Bowie sporting an array of fantastic costumes, some reportedly based on the chilling Kubrick film “A Clockwork Orange”.

Now one of the top transatlantic rock stars, Bowie continued to innovate, helping to produce Lou Reed’s “Walk on the Wild Side”, delving into America’s R&B and working with John Lennon.

“He always did what he wanted to do. And he wanted to do it his way and he wanted to do it the best way,” said Tony Visconti, the U.S. producer who helped lift Bowie to stardom.

“He was an extraordinary man, full of love and life. He will always be with us. For now, it is appropriate to cry,” he said.

“Let’s Dance”

Bowie reinvented himself again in the mid-seventies, adopting a soul and funk sound, and abandoning stack heels for designer suits and flat shoes.

He scored his first U.S. number one with “Fame” and created a new persona, the “Thin White Duke”, for his “Station to Station” album.

But the excesses of a hedonistic life were taking their toll. In a reference to his prodigious appetite for cocaine, he said: ““I blew my nose one day in California. “And half my brains came out. Something had to be done.”

Bowie moved from the United States to Switzerland and then to Cold War-era Berlin to recuperate, working with Brian Eno from Roxy Music to produce some of his least commercial and most

ambitious music, including “Low” and “Heroes” in 1977.

In 1983 Bowie changed tack again, signing a multi-million-dollar five-album deal with EMI. The first, “Let’s Dance”, returned him to chart success and almost paid off his advance.

“If you say run, I’ll run with you. If you say hide, we’ll hide. Because my love for you. Would break my heart in two,” he sang in Let’s Dance.

He starred on Broadway in “The Elephant Man” at the start of the decade and appeared in an array of films including “Merry Christmas, Mr Lawrence”, “The Snowman”, “Absolute Beginners” and Martin Scorsese’s “The Last Temptation of Christ”.

His love-life fascinated gossip columnists and his marriage to stunning Somali supermodel Iman in 1992 guaranteed headlines.

Bowie kept a low profile after undergoing emergency heart surgery in 2004. It was not widely known that he was fighting cancer.

“Look up here, I’m in heaven,” he sings from a hospital bed in the video accompanying his last album.

“I’ve got scars that can’t be seen. I’ve got drama, can’t be stolen. Everybody knows me now. Look up here, man, I’m in danger. I’ve got nothing left to lose.” {eo}

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