

Throwback: The Isley Brothers-Livin In The Life

The Isley Brothers began their careers as youths in their hometown of Cincinnati, Ohio as a gospel quartet accompanied by their mother on piano. Vernon, Ronald, Rudolph and O' Kelly sang together until Vernon died in a bicycle accident in 1955 making Ronald the lead singer. Their first significant moment as a commercial R&B act came with ["Shout"](#) in 1959 a song inspired by Jackie Wilson's "Lonely Teardrops." The song increased in popularity over time because of all the artists that covered it including The Beatles in their stage show. ["Twist And Shout"](#) came from this time period of '59-62 but hit records were few and the band started its own T-Neck label in 1964. ["Testify"](#) was their first release and it included a pre-superstar Jimi Hendrix but its local hit status was not enough to stop them from closing the label and signing to Tamla-Motown. The time spent on Tamla produced their biggest Billboard accomplishment with ["This Old Heart Of Mine"](#) but after two more years they were released from their contract because they believed they were not getting the best material that Hitsville USA had to offer. After leaving Motown in 1968 and touring the UK they returned to the states and revived their T-Neck imprint with the classic ["It's Your Thing."](#) Ernie Isley, Chris Jasper, Everett Collins and Marvin Isley joined the group that year and the band hit a goldmine of 50 singles over the next nineteen years. The '70's and '80's brought forth endless staples of pop rock soul funk from them including ["Summer Breeze," "Fight The Power," "Love The One You're With," "Lay Lady Lay," "Don't Say Goodnight," "Make Me Say It Again Girl," "It's Disco Night"](#) and too many more to mention. "Livin In The Life" comes from the 1977 album *Go For Your Guns* which contains some of their most essential work

like ["Voyage To Atlantis"](#) and ["Footsteps In The Dark Part 1 & 2."](#) In 1986 O'Kelly Isley passed and his brothers Ronald and Rudolph recorded the Angela Winbush produced album *Smooth Sailin'* the following year and dedicated the song "Sending A Message" to him. *Spend The Night* would be the last time Rudolph and Ron would record together because Rudolph joined the ministry. In 1992 the group was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and moved on with Ron, Ernie and Marvin. The band went through a reinvention of Ron's image as Mr. Biggs with help from R.Kelly in 1996 and the album *Mission To Please* garnered new fans from a younger generation. Ernie and Ron were the only original members left and there was more success with Mr. Biggs in the form of *Eternal* in 2001, *Body Kiss* in 2003 and *Baby Makin' Music* in 2006. Their last recording was the holiday collection *I'll Be Home For Christmas* in 2007. Ernie Isley has been working on a solo album and Ron Isley is currently serving time for tax evasion with a release date of April 2010.