

# R.I.P. George Michael

[youtube id="izGwDsrQ1eQ"] George Michael died today at the age of 53 according to his publicist "peacefully at home." Michael became a pop icon in the '80's initially as one-half of the duo Wham! with Andrew Ridgeley and then as a solo star. "Wake Me Up Before You Go- Go" and "Everything She Wants" introduced Wham! to the world and they were immediately embraced by America. The video for "Careless Whisper" established Michael as a romantic and sex symbol and garnered success for him in the pop and R&B markets. Michael started his solo career in 1987 by recording the Grammy-winning duet "I Knew You Were Waiting" with Aretha Franklin. Michael's *Faith* album was his debut solo album and it had six top five singles and earned the Grammy for Album Of The Year in 1989. His popularity extended well throughout the '90's and he released three albums and one EP during the decade. Michael took a break from recording after the release of the covers album, *Songs From The Last Century* and returned in 2004 with well-received *Patience*. In 2014, *Symphonica*, an album of mostly live recordings from his 2011 *Symphonica* tour, was released. At the time of his passing, he was working on a new album producer and songwriter Naughty Boy.

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## Throwback: George Michael -

# Careless Whisper

Georgios Kyriacos Panayiotou was born in Bushey, Hertfordshire a town in the Hertsmeare borough of Hertfordshire in the East Of England. His parents moved to England when he was a child and by the time he was a teenager they relocated to the village of Radlett where he attended the Bushey Meads School. The school is where he met Andrew Ridgeley and started his first band a ska outfit named The Executive that consisted of five people including Ridgeley's brother. When that band failed to succeed he and Andrew became the duo Wham! Their first album *Fantastic* went to number one in the UK and enjoyed such hits as ["Young Guns \(Go For It\)"](#), ["Wham Rap \(Enjoy What You Do?\)"](#) and ["Club Tropicana."](#) *Make It Big* was their second album and major breakthrough thanks to ["Wake Me Up Before You Go-Go"](#) and ["Everything She Wants."](#) "Careless Whisper" was on that album and it was Michael's first solo single that was actually written when he was seventeen. Not long after the success of "Careless Whisper" and his second solo single ["A Different Corner"](#) Wham disbanded but not before they did a highly publicized tour of China. Michael released his first album *Faith* in 1987 and made history by becoming the first white man to record a duet with Aretha Franklin ["I Knew You Were Waiting For Me."](#) ["I Want Your Sex"](#) was a controversial song that was banned from many US and UK radio stations and MTV would only air the video late at night. "Faith" the single became a number one hit and became just as iconic of the '80s as "Careless Whisper" and "I Want Your Sex." ["Father Figure,"](#) ["One More Try"](#) and ["Monkey"](#) also came from this album. *Listen Without Prejudice* was the follow-up to *Faith* and it was unique because the single "Freedom 90" was a prelude to Michael's coming out and featured a video that didn't make him star instead putting models like Naomi Campbell and Cindy Crawford, Christy Turlington and Linda Evangelista as the people in the

spotlight of the lens. A collaboration cover of Elton John's ["Don't Let The Sun Go Down On Me"](#) was recorded during one of George's Wembley Stadium shows was released in 1991 and all of the revenue went to an AIDS and children's charity. His musical contributions to AIDS awareness projects continued with "Too Funky" from the [Red Hot and Dance](#) album in 1992 and duets he performed with Lisa Stansfield and Queen for the Freddie Mercury tribute concert that raised money for Mercury's Phoenix Trust. Michael performed a concert with Princess Diana in the audience to raise more AIDS awareness on World AIDs Day December 1, 1993 but he wasn't ready to record again because he wanted to end his relationship with Sony Records. They went to court and a judge ruled in the company's favor initially but Michael got his wish and signed two new deals with Virgin Records internationally and SKG for North America in 1995.

["Jesus To A Child"](#) was debuted at the European MTV Awards that prior year and it was his first new material in three years. *Older* was his third studio album with a 1996 release it contained ["Fastlove"](#) a dance-styled track that received a very successful video treatment. The album became Virgin's fastest selling album and his biggest one in his native land. A career retrospective *Ladies And Gentlemen The Best Of George Michael* was released in 1998 and quickly went platinum. There was another duet with an American diva when he sang ["If I Told You That"](#) with Whitney Houston in 1998. In 1999 he joined forces with Mary J. Blige to do a cover of Stevie Wonder's ["As"](#) that became popular with the dance crowd. For his fourth album he decided to cover some of his favorite songs with the end result being *Songs Of The Last Century*. His version of The Police's ["Roxanne"](#) was a hit and ["Brother Can You Spare A Dime"](#) was noted for the collaboration he did with Luciano Pavarotti at one of the Pavarotti and Friends shows. *Patience* in 2004 would be his return to original material and he expressed his views on the Iraq war with the song ["Shoot The Dog."](#) His appearance on Oprah that year is when he first spoke

publicly about his homosexuality. *Twenty-Five* was the celebration of his almost three decades in the music business and came in two different CD forms and a separate DVD release. The tour behind the album was his first in fifteen years with three legs of it going through Europe and North America from 2006-2008. In 2008 he made his acting debut on the American TV show *Eli Stone* and also appeared on *American Idol*. In December he released the song ["December Song"](#) for fans to download free from his website in hopes they would donate to charity. In June he shared the stage with Beyonce in the UK on her song ["If I Were A Boy."](#) Michael was contracted to write his memoirs in 2008 by HarperCollins.