

# Hot Hollywood

● JANUARY 16, 2017

**G**eorge Michael had faith in art. As the pop great once mused, “I still believe that music is one of the greatest gifts that God gave to man.” And to the world, Michael will always remain one of those gifts. On December 25, Michael, just 53, died at his Oxfordshire, England, home. His boyfriend of nearly two years, Fadi Fawaz, found the “Careless Whisper” singer “peacefully in bed,” the hairstylist tweeted the next day. As celeb pals from **Elton John**

JUNE 25, 1963–DECEMBER 25, 2016

## GEORGE MICHAEL

to **Chris Martin** sang in tribute, fans found comfort in his music — streaming of Michael’s hits increased by more than 3,000 percent in just one day. Later this month, a source says, he will be laid to rest next to his mother in London’s Highgate Cemetery: “There will be a burial for family and close friends, and a larger public memorial.”

**GIVING BACK** Rising to fame as the frontman of 1980s duo Wham!, Michael discarded his teen-idol image for a solo career driven by material both introspective and sexually charged. Privately, the perpetually stubbled Grammy winner was a dedicated philanthropist. After his death, numerous examples of his generosity came to



“I never minded being thought of as a pop star,” Michael (with Fawaz, right inset, and in 2007, below) said in 2004. “I just wanted people to know I was absolutely serious about pop music.”

light: He volunteered at a homeless shelter, paid \$18,000 for a stranger’s IVF treatments, contributed to a counseling service for young adults; and supported the Terrence Higgins Trust to help fight AIDS. (His first love died in 1993 from an AIDS-related brain hemorrhage.)

**BEHIND THE MUSIC** Michael himself hid his sexuality until he was arrested in 1998 for engaging in a lewd act with an undercover policeman in a Beverly Hills restroom. (“Why didn’t I just sit down with a journalist and say, ‘I’m gay?’” he asked **Oprah Winfrey** in 2004.) More troubles followed. After a 2008 arrest, he admitted to smoking crack cocaine. And in 2015, he checked into a Swiss rehab facility. More recently, as the manager at Michael’s local pub told a U.K. paper, the star was a near-recluse, looking “self-conscious” in public.

**THE LEGACY** Still, he had planned a comeback for 2017. In a November 2 Facebook post, Michael revealed he was working on a documentary about his career (on Showtime in March) and would reissue 1990’s *Listen Without Prejudice Vol. 1*. And he hoped to start a family, says an insider: “He wanted to adopt or go through a surrogate.” Now a majority of his reported \$129 million fortune will go to his sisters, says a source close to his legal team. His music will endure. As Michael once said, “I’ve achieved what every artist wants, which is that some of their work will outlive them.”

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