R.I.P. David Bowie, AIDS Advocate and Legendary Artist

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Rock icon David Bowie is dead at age 69, just two days after his January 8 birthday on which he released his 25th album, Blackstar. He had been battling cancer for 18 months, reports Rolling Stone.

With a career spanning six decades and countless personas, styles and genres, Bowie and his art transcended easy categorization. According to Billboard, he had 61 top 40 singles, five No. 1 singles and nine No. 1 albums (so far!), with "Changes," "Fashion," "Fame," "Heroes" and "Let's Dance" among his most influential tracks. He starred in films such as The Hunger, Labyrinth and The Man Who Fell to Earth and appeared on Broadway (The Elephant Man) and television as well.

He also advocated and raised funds for HIV/AIDS causes. He performed benefit concerts with Elton John and Annie Lennox. In 1981, he recorded "Under Pressure" with Queen frontman Freddie Mercury, who later died of AIDS-related illness. Bowie's last live performance, The New York Times reports, was in a 2006 fundraiser for international HIV charity Keep a Child Alive.

He was born David Robert Jones on January 8, 1947, in a London suburb, but became famous as David Bowie, aka Ziggy Stardust, The Thin White Duke, Major Tom and a host of other theatrical identities.

Bowie married his first wife, Mary Angela Barnett, in 1970. They divorced 10 years later. In 1992, he married Somali-American model Iman, who is an ambassador for Keep a Child Alive. He has two children, one from each marriage.

In the 1970s, Bowie told the press that he was gay and, in a different interview, bisexual. He later told Rolling Stone that "the biggest mistake I ever made was telling that Melody Maker writer that I was bisexual. Christ, I was so young then. I was experimenting." And later, Bowie said he regretted recanting the statement.

On news of his death, social media has been awash with outpourings and tributes from celebrities and fans alike.

Below is a video of Bowie and Lennox performing “Under Pressure” at the 1992 Freddie Mercury tribute concert. At the top of this post is the video for “Blackstar” and at the bottom is his last video, for “Lazarus,” both from the album released on his 69th birthday, his final musical gift to us.

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