

MC Hammer Biography

MC Hammer was the man who truly brought rap music to a mass pop audience. Armed with a flamboyant wardrobe (particularly his trademark baggy parachute pants) and a raft of sampled hooks lifted straight from their sources, Hammer's talents as a dancer and showman far exceeded his technique as an MC. Still, he had an ear for catchy source material, and that helped his second album, **Please Hammer Don't Hurt 'Em**, become the best-selling rap album of all time. Even if he was never able to duplicate that level of success, and even if his street credibility was virtually non-existent, Hammer still broke down numerous doors for rap music in the mainstream, demonstrating that hip-hop had the potential for blockbuster success in the marketplace.

MC Hammer was born Stanley Kirk Burrell in Oakland, CA. on March 30, 1962. A member of a strongly religious family, he landed a job as a bat/ball boy for the Oakland Athletics baseball team, where he entertained fans by dancing during breaks in the game, and earned the nickname "Hammer" for his resemblance to all-time home run leader "Hammerin" Hank Aaron. An aspiring ballplayer himself, he failed to catch on with a professional organization following high school, and enlisted in the Navy for three years. Long a fan of funk and soul, he became interested in hip-hop upon returning to civilian life, and began performing in local clubs; with the financial help of several Athletics players, he also started his own record label, Bust It, and recorded a couple of popular local singles. After impressing a Capitol Records executive with his already elaborate live show, he was signed to a multi-album deal

The phenomenon of **Please Hammer Don't Hurt 'Em**, released in 1990, featured the single, "U Can't Touch This," that blatantly copped most of its hooks from Rick James' funk classic "Super Freak," yet Hammer's added catch phrases (and young listeners' unfamiliarity with the original song) helped make it a smash. "U Can't Touch This" dominated radio and MTV during 1990 in a way few rap singles ever had, and won two Grammys (Best R&B Song, Best Solo Rap Performance). The next two singles, "Have You Seen Her" and "Pray" eventually pushing sales of **Please Hammer Don't Hurt 'Em** past the ten-million mark and making it the number one album of the year.

After two more albums that failed to reach **Please Hammer Don't Hurt 'Em**'s success, Hammer was let out of his contract. In 1996, Hammer filed for bankruptcy, his taste for luxury having gotten the better of his dwindling income; his mansion was sold at a fraction of its cost. The crisis prompted a religious reawakening, and he began to write new material with an emphasis on spirituality and family.

Following the September 11, 2001 attacks, Hammer released the patriotic album **Active Duty** on his own WorldHit label and donated portions of the proceeds to 9/11 charities.

MC Hammer has a television show on the Trinity Broadcasting Network. Hammer is an advisor to stealth Internet start-up Dance Jam.