

**Music**

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# Rudolph Isley, founding member of the Isley Brothers, dies at 84

**Singer left the pioneering group in 1989 but had appeared on hits such as Shout, Summer Breeze and Fight the Power**



📷 Rudolph Isley, centre, who has died at 84. With brothers O'Kelly (left) and Ron (right), he founded pioneering soul group The Isley Brothers, whose career has spanned over six decades. Illustration: Chris Ware/Getty Images

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## Nadeem Badshah

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Rudolph Isley, one of the founding members of R&B family band the Isley Brothers, has died at the age of 84.

His lawyer, Brian Caplan, confirmed the news to the website Pitchfork, saying: "Rudolph Isley, a founding member of the world-famous Isley Brothers, died peacefully in his sleep on the morning of 11 October 2023.

"He died at his home, with his devoted wife Elaine by his side. They had been married for 68 years. Rudolph was a deeply religious man who loved Jesus."

Rudolph was born in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1939. He sang with his brothers O'Kelly, Ronald and Vernon Isley, forming the group the Isley Brothers in 1954, but they briefly quit performing in 1955 after Vernon was killed while riding his bicycle.

They later reformed as a trio, leaving gospel music behind and arriving in New York in 1957 to embark upon a pop career that would stretch over six decades. Their first hit was 1958's Shout, later covered by Lulu, and during this period the Isley Brothers picked up a young guitar player from Seattle named Jimi Hendrix.

Hendrix left in 1965 to find fame of his own, and the Isleys signed with Berry Gordy's Motown label. While they enjoyed some hits with songs This Old Heart of Mine (Is Weak for You) and I Guess I'll Always Love You, the group exited the label in 1968, forming their own imprint, T-Neck Records and taking a turn towards funk and more enduring success.

The trio's younger brothers Marvin and Ernie Isley, along with brother-in-law Chris Jasper, joined the group in 1973, and

together they released the platinum-selling album 3 + 3.

The group had a number of hit singles through the 70s and early 80s - including Summer Breeze, That Lady, Harvest for the World and Footsteps in the Dark, sampled on Ice Cube's Today Was a Good Day - before becoming a trio again in 1984, when Marvin, Ernie and Chris left to form the Isley-Jasper-Isley group.

Rudolph left the band in 1989 to become a Christian minister. The group continued on; now numbering Ron and Ernie, they released their most recent album - Make Me Say It Again, Girl - this year, featuring guest appearances from Beyoncé, Snoop Dogg and Earth, Wind & Fire.

As a sextet, the Isley Brothers were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1992, though O'Kelly had died six years earlier of a heart attack. Marvin died aged 56 in 2010 after complications caused by diabetes.

**\$278,559**

contributions

**\$1,500,000**

our goal

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**Betsy Reed**

*Editor, Guardian US*



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