

Michael Jackson

Cirque du Soleil to stage 'Michael Jackson show'

The acrobatic troupe Cirque du Soleil has announced that it will put on a live touring show featuring the songs by Michael Jackson next year.



The touring show, which will begin in North America before branching out around the world, will be a simulation of a Jackson concert

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That will be followed by a permanent production in Las Vegas in 2012 at a property owned by MGM Mirage Inc. Cirque and Jackson's estate will each own 50 per cent of the projects and share equally in the cost of putting them on. The estate will also receive royalties from the use of Jackson's music and other assets.

Jackson, who died at age 50 last June after a drug overdose, was described as a "huge fan" of the French Canadian performance group.

He saw their first tent show in Santa Monica, California, many years ago with longtime lawyer and now estate co-executor, John Branca. And he visited their Montreal headquarters in 2004, Cirque CEO Daniel Lamarre said.

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"He said he was an acrobat himself," Mr Lamarre said in an interview. "As an artist he had this amazing way of bringing some visual element to his performances."

Jackson even saw "Love," the Cirque show based on the legacy and music of the Beatles, shortly after it began at the Mirage casino in Las Vegas in 2006, and wanted to do his own version, said Jack Wishna, the president of consulting firm CPAmerica Inc. and a prospective business partner.

Ideas for Jackson's own Cirque show ranged from basing it on his hit video "Thriller" to him performing dozens of his No. 1 hits, Mr Wishna said.

"But he passed away and everything just went by the wayside," he said. "It's a little different now, but at least it'll still get on. The music will still be there."

The touring show, which will begin in North America before branching out around the world, will be a simulation of a Jackson concert, while the Las Vegas show will be more theatrical and more technologically advanced, Mr Lamarre said.

"The expectations of Michael Jackson fans around the world are going to be huge," he said. "And we have to deliver."

There are no plans for other members of Jackson's family to perform.

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