



Only a handful of artists have had a number one album. Even fewer can also boast a successful acting career in drama and comedy, as well as multiple Grammy awards. Only one can claim a record-breaking run in one of the

# The Rise of Justin Timberlake

by Spencer Linstead

biggest pop groups in history. Though it may sound like hyperbole, it's just true that Justin Timberlake is one-of-a-kind artist in a world filled with people aspiring to achieve what he has managed to do.



**I**t's tough to achieve that much in a lifetime, to commemorate the birthday of the current King of Pop, as well as the 20th anniversary of the formation of the legendary Boy Band, \*NSYNC, we've created a timeline from Justin's birth in 1981 to today to celebrate all the major moments that have shaped the successful career of the quintessential pop star of today. Take a stroll through the life of Justin Randall Timberlake and enjoy the major moments that shaped a career for the ages.

Looking back to the early 1990s, it seems unimaginable that a major group of entertainment talent in the late '90s and early 2000s came from one TV show that aired on the Disney Channel. The 1989 to 1996 edition of The Mickey Mouse Club helped to launch the acting and musical careers of Keri Russell, Ryan Gosling, Christina Aguilera, Britney Spears, and several others. In this highly competitive space to showcase acting chops, slick dance moves and pop vocals, it became clear that Justin Timberlake belonged among the top young talent in the entertainment industry. Timberlake was a prominent contributor on the show from 1993 to 1995 and used his two years as a launching pad for his musical success. He met JC Chasez while on the show, whose relationship with Justin led directly to the creation of \*NSYNC.

Building off the success of their stint on The MMC, Timberlake and Chasez sought out talent to create a boy band. They partnered with Joey Fatone, Chris Kirkpatrick, and Lance Bass to create \*NSYNC in 1995. To find their sound and build a following, the burgeoning group toured Europe throughout 1996 with Justin and JC as the lead singers. Eventually, the group decided it was time to come back to the United States and chase stardom in the American pop scene. In 1997, the group released their self-titled debut album stateside to much fanfare as the album reached No. 2 on the Billboard charts behind the strength of singles "I Want You Back," "Tearin' Up My Heart" — both produced

by then unknown Max Martin and "(God Must Have Spent) A Little More Time On You." The 16-year-old Justin Timberlake quickly became a teenage heartthrob as the group's album went on to sell 11 million copies.

After the massive success of their debut album and a legal dispute with their first record label that led to them joining industry giant Jive Records, fans were clamoring for more \*NSYNC. With the massive, chart-topping singles "Bye Bye Bye" and "It's Gonna Be Me," the boy band released their second album, *No Strings Attached*. The album was an unprecedented success, selling 2.4 million copies in its first week, breaking the record previously held by Michael Jackson's *Thriller* and establishing such a high mark that \*NSYNC's record would stand for fifteen years, until the release of Adele's *25*.

As the Boy Band boom was coming to a conclusion, \*NSYNC was still going strong. While touring for *No Strings Attached*, the band recorded what would be their final album, the aptly titled, *Celebrity*. The album sold 1.8 million copies in its first week, once again surpassing *Thriller*; but falling short of the lofty heights of *No Strings Attached*. The singles, "POP," "Gone," and "Girlfriend" were heavy on Justin singing the lead vocals while all others virtually fell into the role of glorified backup singers.

By this point, the group as a whole had reached the ether of the music world, all the members becoming individual stars in their own right. However, only Timberlake had reached true A-list stardom. After the breakup of one of the biggest boy bands in history, there was much speculation as to what would happen next with its breakout star. The answer was a solo album. In front of a national audience at the 2002 MTV Video Music Awards, Justin Timberlake performed his debut single, "Like I Love You." Justified, which came in November of that year, would again be another smash for Timberlake with tracks like the previously mentioned "Like I Love You," "Senorita," "Rock Your Body" and "Cry Me a River." The album would go on to sell more than seven million copies worldwide and earn

Timberlake two Grammys. While it was clear that the foray into solo artistry wasn't a success on the level of \*NSYNC, the spotlight shined on Timberlake brighter than ever before.

After the Super Bowl controversy, Justin decided to take a break from making music after ten years of consecutive recording and touring with \*NSYNC, as well as on his own. It was also discovered that Timberlake had developed vocal nodes in his throat that would prevent him from singing or even speaking loudly for several months.

In late 2006, Justin returned to the mic when he released *FutureSex/LoveSounds*, which revealed a more adult side. The Timbaland-produced project was Justin's first number one album, earning two Grammys while selling more than 600,000 copies in its first week. The singles "SexyBack," "My Love" and "What Goes Around... Comes Around" all reached the No. 1 on Billboard Hot 100. Justin would go on a world tour spanning the entire year of 2007 before announcing yet another hiatus from music, only coming back to be a featured artist on a few tracks.

After a six-year layover, Timberlake fans were finally treated to new music in the form of *The 20/20 Experience*, a contemporary R&B album produced by longtime collaborator, Timbaland. The first single "Suit & Tie" featured Jay Z who Timberlake would pair with for the biggest tour of the summer of 2013, The Legends of the Summer Tour. With "Suit & Tie" and "Mirrors" leading the way, *The 20/20 Experience Part One* was the highest selling album of 2013. He later announced that there was a second part to *The 20/20 Experience* and released that companion piece in September of 2013, which also debuted at number one. With his popularity back at an all-time high, MTV presented Justin with the Video Vanguard Award for his body of work in the music business. To commemorate this, Justin performed every major hit from his career, including a brief \*NSYNC reunion with all five of the guys performing

together for the first time since 2002. The performance became a major viral sensation and a culmination of his superstar career to this point. After the massive tour and publicity surrounding *The 20/20 Experience*, Timberlake decided to take some time off to spend with his first child, Silas, born in April 2015.

While spanning more than 20 years in the music industry, Justin Timberlake's career has been the gold standard that the newest pop sensations like Justin Bieber, Taylor Swift, Nick Jonas and others have all said they aspire to and for good reason.

Source : <http://uproxx.com>

**"Teen pop will  
NEVER DIE  
as long as  
there are teens  
and popular  
music."**

-J. Timberlake



"My TEENAGE YEARS were exactly what they were supposed to be..."

Everybody has their OWN PATH...It's just up TO YOU to walk it."