

# Ronnie James Dio, 67, Black Sabbath Vocalist

By BEN SISARIO

Ronnie James Dio, a singer with the heavy-metal bands Rainbow, Black Sabbath and Dio, whose powerful, semioperatic vocal style and attachment to demonic imagery made him a mainstay of the genre, died on Sunday in Los Angeles. He was 67.

His death was announced by his wife, Wendy, on his Web site, [www.ronniejamesdio.com](http://www.ronniejamesdio.com).

No cause was given, but in recent months Mr. Dio had spoken about suffering from stomach cancer, and his band Heaven and Hell canceled its summer tour because of his health.

A heavy-metal purist, Mr. Dio was known as much for his vocal prowess as for his Mephistophelean stage persona. He sang about devils, defiance and the glory of rock 'n' roll with a strong, mean voice that rose to a bombastic vibrato, and he is credited with popularizing the "devil horn" hand gesture — index and pinky fingers up, everything else clenched in a fist — as a symbol of metal's occult-like worship of everything scary and heavy.

Ronald James Padavona was born in Portsmouth, N.H., and grew up in Cortland, N.Y. He took his stage name in tribute to the gangster Johnny Dio, and he began his career in rockabilly bands in the late 1950s. By the early 1970s his group Elf became a regular opening act for the British band Deep Purple, and Mr. Dio gained his first wide exposure when Ritchie Blackmore, Deep Purple's guitarist, recruited him in 1975 to sing for his new band, Rainbow.

When Ozzy Osbourne was fired from Black Sabbath in 1979, Mr. Dio replaced him, staying until 1982. By then he had his own group, Dio. Its first album, "Holy Diver," was released in 1983, and its cover art was typical of the band's style, with a cartoonish painting of a red-eyed demon whipping a drowning priest with a chain. In various lineup configurations, Dio released material into the mid-2000s.

Mr. Dio briefly rejoined Black Sabbath in the early 1990s, sing-



ETHAN MILLER/REUTERS

Ronnie James Dio in 2002.

## A fondness for the occult and the glory of rock 'n' roll.

ing on its 1992 album "Dehumanizer," and in 2006 he began playing again with members of that band, naming the group Heaven and Hell after the title of the first Black Sabbath album on which he had appeared. Heaven and Hell toured widely and released one album, "The Devil You Know," in 2009.

Other than his wife, who was also his manager, he is survived by his son, Daniel, his father, Pat Padavona, and two grandchildren.

Over the years Mr. Dio became a symbol of the glories and the silliness of metal, and sometimes both at the same time. In the 2006 film "Tenacious D in the Pick of Destiny," a boy whose father has forbidden him to play metal prays in his bedroom to a poster of Mr. Dio sitting on a hellish throne; Mr. Dio, holding a medieval-style goblet, comes to life and urges the boy to forge his own way.

"You will face your inner demons," Mr. Dio sings. "Now go, my son, and rock."