**BRITNEY SPEARS - PRINCESS OF POP.**

"I know not everyone will like me, but this is who I am so if you don't like it, tough!"

-Britney Spears.

Unless you are living under a rock, you know who Britney Spears is.

She's the most famous 19 year old in the music industry. She has outsold and broken records set by artists years before she was even born. Her first record "Baby… One More Time" made her the youngest artist in Soundscan history to have a certified RIAA 12 times platinum record.

Every few days a potential star is launched onto an increasingly cynical music buying public. Manufactured groups and singers come and go with fashion, and few manage any sort of real, lasting success. Not so Britney Spears!

Britney's singing, dancing and natural stunning good looks made her the girl that every other girl wanted to be, and the girl that every boy wanted to be with.

Her records have sold and continue to sell millions of copies all over the globe, her singles are on high rotation being played constantly at radio everywhere, and her merchandising sales are going through the roof - there is nothing you can't buy without her face on it! Dolls, t-shirts, lunchboxes, pens, mugs and caps to name but a few. She is a phenomenon in all senses of the word, and a marketer's dream. She is the face of pop today.

Britney Jean Spears was born on the 2nd of December 1981, in Kentwood, Louisiana, U.S.A. Britney Spears began her career as soon as she could walk and talk. She has always loved singing, dancing, acting and performing. She started out taking ballet and basic tumbling classes. Very soon after, she was enrolled in a gymnastics class where she excelled in floor exercises and the uneven bars. Britney went on to compete at state level competitions and won several titles. She kept up with gymnastics until she was nine years old.

As a young girl growing up, she always knew she wanted to pursue a musical career and took her talents to her local church, where she performed "What Child Is This," and even on national television, with her appearance as a Star Search contestant.

At the age of 8, Britney auditioned for the popular children's variety show, Mickey Mouse Club, but was refused because of her young age. Luckily for Britney, one of the show's producers saw the young singer's talent, and helped her find an agent in New York City.

Britney spent the next three summers in New York, where she studied at the famous Off-Broadway Dance Center and at the Professional Performing Arts School. To add to the formation of a future international star, Britney appeared in commercials and Off-Broadway shows, one of which showcased Britney as an innocent 10-year-old who is really an evil bad girl. " I was playing this really bad child who seems real sweet but she's evil too. It was so much fun," she recalls.

Three years after her first Mickey Mouse Club rejection, Britney finally landed a spot as a "Mouseketeer" at the age of 11. Britney was already a seasoned performer in TV commercials, theatre and film. She also got her big break, finally making it onto the Mickey Mouse Show on which she starred for two years.

Joining a cast of talented teens on the show, Britney showed off her acting, dancing and singing talents on the show that also spawned the careers of fellow beauties Keri Russell and Christina Aguilera. After 2 years of living in Orlando with her family while doing the show, Britney moved back home to Kentwood after the show was cancelled, and returned to high school. Britney went back home with dreams over even more success.

Her one normal year as a fourteen-year-old high school student would be the last bit of normalcy in Britney's life.

"It was fun for awhile but I started getting itchy to get out again and see the world," she says.

She began to audition for record companies, singing live and unaccompanied to groups of executives. With a dream of pursuing a career as a singer and a desire to leave her small hometown, Britney set off to New York City yet again, this time destined to sign with a major record label.

Now a seasoned performer at age 15, an audition for an all girl vocal group led to her developing a solo career as a pop singer as well as continuing her high school studies with tutors. "I need a lot of help in geometry and Spanish!" she admits.

The lucky company who decided that young Britney had what was needed for stardom was Jive Records.

Britney finally signed with Jive Records, after an executive was fully impressed with the talent he heard on the demo tape.

Working with Eric Foster White, a producer who had previously worked with artists such as Boyzone and Whitney Houston, Britney's debut album was finally ready for its January 12, 1999 release date. Not long after, "Baby .." was released and the rest - as they say - is history.

Britney took America by storm back with her debut single ‘…Baby One More Time’, which smashed into the American Billboard charts at #1. Her debut album of the same title was released only a few weeks later also debuting at #1, making her the first ever female artist to have a simultaneous Billboard #1 single and album with a debut release. The impact was mirrored on charts throughout the world. Britney Spears had arrived on the music scene in a very big way.

With the high-energy video and infectious groove, ‘...Baby One More Time’ was welcomed by the World of pop music with open arms. A cover of ‘Rolling Stone’ (April Issue 1999) increased the frenzy. Britney was rocketed from pop-starlet to mega-star. She became a phenomenon across the World and was in demand from virtually every corner of the globe. Her 2nd single, ‘Sometimes’ - a soft summer ballad - was released in June 1999 and was warmly received by a rapidly growing fan base.

The album was certified RIAA 12 x platinum (it has gone on to sell more than 20 million copies).

The highlight of 1999 for Britney was performing a poptastic medley at the MTV Europe Music Awards in Dublin, where she was the undoubted star. She won all four awards for which she was nominated. The categories were Best Female Artist, Best Breakthrough Act, Best Pop Act and Best Song for ‘…Baby One More Time’.

After a massive summer tour across North America, Britney returned to the charts with another smash hit, ‘(You Drive Me) Crazy’.

Born To Make You Happy’, the fourth single to be taken from Britney’s debut album, was released in January 2000 and shot straight into the top of charts around the World, securing her status as a pop phenomenon.

Between recording her second album, Britney went on an extensive worldwide tour.

From the sweet melody of "From the Bottom of My Broken Heart," to the driving funk of "Baby One More Time," to the funky reggae beats of "Soda Pop," to her soulful take on the Jets hit "You've Got It All," Britney's lively, assured vocal style is intoxicating. "I want to an artist that everyone can relate to, that's young, happy and fun," she says.

Despite a refreshingly adolescent attitude, Britney's life has hardly been traditional. "I've done the prom thing, but it's only once a year," she notes about her unconventional teenage lifestyle. "I need to sing and I love to travel."

A huge Mariah Carey, Michael Jackson and Madonna fan, Britney has been scrutinized by the media with reports of a breast augmentation, and a love affair with England's most eligible bachelor, Prince William.

After the success of her first album, it wouldn't have suprised many onlookers if she'd disappeared, replaced by the next big thing in Girl-Pop.But she didn't! Britney came back with a second album, that had the same kind of infectious pop songs as the first, but now with a more sophisticated, sassy sound.

With the Britney Spears hype nowhere near over, she returned to the music scene in 2000 with her follow-up album, entitled Oops!... I Did It Again. With a hit video accompanying the hit title track (in which Ms. Spears has definitely done it again, this time in a red leather catsuit), a second worldwide tour in support of her album, and millions of fans, Britney has definitely accomplished what few artists ever accomplish, at the mere age of 18.

The album debuting at #1 in the U.S.A., Canada, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, France, Germany, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and 15 other countries worldwide.

The title track and first single was "Oops! I Did It Again". As Britney said herself - "I'm not really doing anything different this time around but I am really growing up, as a person and that just all flows with the overall sound and feel of this record. There’s no master plan! I’m just gonna be me and hope it all works out!"

It certainly did work out! Britney, armed with more maturity had produced an album that strengthened her position as the most successful (and most iconic) singer since the emergence of Madonna. The title track, which deals with romantic mis-intentions, was written and produced by longtime collaborators Max Martin and Rami and has already broken the record for first week adds at CHR/Pop radio with 155 adds.

"It’s an incredible song!" Britney declares, I think it’s even better than

"Baby One More Time!" Also incredible is the video whose futuristic/Barbarella concept was Britney's idea.

In regard to the emotional depth of the album, Britney asserts, “ I don’t want to just be some singer who sings a song just to sing it. When you sing a song with feeling and do your all, you connect, and that’s crucial to me. Especially since I think that the songs on this album are ten times better than on my first album, so I really want my fans to feel and hear how much these songs mean to me.”

Along with her rigorous schedule and the release of her successful 2X

Platinum home video “Time Out with Britney Spears” in late 1999, Britney

and her mother have written a book entitled Heart To Heart. As if that

weren’t enough, Britney has also created the Britney Spears Foundation

in conjunction with the Giving Back Fund. Its first endowment is the

formation of a performing arts summer camp for underprivileged kids in

Massachusetts. "I’m so happy to be able to give kids the opportunity to

learn about amazing world of dance and music that I’ve have been lucky

enough to make such a big part of my own life."

The 8 times platinum Oops!... I Did It Again spawned number 1 singles like "Lucky," "Stronger" (in which she performs a lap dance to a chair), and "Don't Let Me Be the Last to Know." One listen to "Oops!.. I Did It Again" and Britney will make a believer out of you - one more time.

The most noticeable aspect of the single, the video and the album is

maturity, which is just what Britney had in mind.

Britney - "People have to remember that when I did my first album I was only 16. I had never been in the studio, it was all new to me and so before I let people help me out and honestly I think that was because I was just so new to the music industry, not only because I was young. But making records and being part of the process and becoming more in charge of my sound was something I had to experience and grow with and on this album I’ve had the chance to do that. This album is closer to who I am. It’s funkier!"

That funkier spirit is loud and clear on up-tempo rump shakers like "Stronger" and "Don't Go Knockin’ On My Door" which find Britney in a frisky and fierce state of mind. But as she proved on her debut, Britney can deliver ballads with as much intensity as her more high energy cuts. On the aching "When Your Eyes Say It" (written by Diane Warren and produced by Steve Lunt and Robert Jazayeri) and the thoughtful "Don't Let Me Be The Last To Know" (penned by Shania Twain and Robert Mutt Lange and produced by Lange), Britney shows her depth. "I don’t want to just be some singer who sings a song just to sing it," Britney offers speaking to the emotional range of the album. "When you sing a song with feeling and do your all you connect and that’s crucial to me. Especially since I think that the songs on this album are ten times better than on my first album, so I really want my fans to feel and hear how much these songs mean to me." In keeping with that need to communicate is "Dear Diary", co written by Britney. Britney began writing melodies and songs while on the road and she has plans to learn guitar (she is proficient on the piano) in hopes of writing more songs in the future. "I think I’ve always had these songs that I've been writing in my head," Britney explains. "Now I feel ready to let people start to hear them."

The second single from the album, was ‘Lucky’ - a bittersweet tale of loneliness and stardom - containing the apt lyrical phrase “the World is spinning and she keeps on winning!” Britney’s ‘Oops!…’ World Tour was announced on May 12th 2000. Her fans couldn’t wait to see her perform. The shows packed 90 minutes full of her classic hits, energetic dance routines and magical costume changes. Fans were left in awe. Stronger’ - an attention grabbing slice of classic up-beat pop - and ‘Don’t Let Me Be The Last To Know’ - a smooth ballad, co-written by Shania Twain - , followed as the final singles from an exciting sophomoric record, that showed immense growth as a performing artist and a tight relationship with a sound that is undoubtedly ‘Britney!’ and now?…

Britney has appeared on screen and in print around the globe. ‘Time Magazine’ (International Edition), ‘Marie Claire’ (UK) ‘Elle’ (UK and Japan) and ‘Vogue’ (Spain) are some of the magazines that have embraced Britney’s charismatic image for their cover stories. MTV, CHANNEL V, FOX, M6, RTL, along with a countless number of other television networks and programs around the world, anticipate Britney’s new releases as fans would themselves.

Britney co-headlined at the Rock In Rio Festival in Brazil in January, 2001, performing to an audience of over 250,000. Also in January, Britney appeared with Aerosmith and \*NSYNC at Superbowl 35 during the half time show, performing Aerosmith’s classic hit "Walk This Way". Britney presented and won an award at the 2000 Billboard Music Awards and co-hosted and performed at the 2001 American Music Awards.

In 2001, the reigning Queen of Teen Pop shows us a fresh and more mature side. The new songs on her third album, ‘Britney’, reflect the changes in her life and her development from a teenage girl to a mature, young woman. Working with producers such as The Neptunes, on the first single ‘I’m a Slave 4 U’ has allowed her to move on to the next level. Other producers and songwriters on the album include Max Martin, Rami, Riprock ‘n’ Alex G, Dido, Josh Schwartz and Brian Kierulf of KNS Productions, Rodney Jerkins, Justin Timberlake and Britney Spears herself.

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2001 was a banner year for the pop star, as she co-hosted the American Music Awards with L.L. Cool J.; performed with Aerosmith, \*N Sync, Nelly, and Mary J. Blige at the Super Bowl; appeared on a spoken-word CD of the Pope's prayers; and signed a multimillion-dollar endorsement with Pepsi.

While she dances with factory workers in a warehouse, impressing even Viagra-enhanced Bob Dole and his dog, Christina Aguilera stars in a Coca-Cola commercial, fueling more than just a pop war.

Britney and her legions of teenage fans aren't her only admirers: it turns out her role-model, Madonna, has said that she's a big fan of Britney, and a duet with the new Princess of Pop is in the works. Britney also appeared in a one-hour BBC documentary on the Material Girl.

As if CDs, sold-out concerts, books (her second co-written book with her mother was released in April 2001, entitled A Mother's Gift), and a huge endorsement aren't enough, Britney is now working on an acting career and tinkering with the idea of a fashion line.

But for now, being the youngest female to achieve 10-times platinum status and to notch a number 1 album and single in the US with debut recordings, ain't all that bad.

Today Britney even says "I never knew I would be this famous" She is still going srong and even stars in the new movie "Crossroads".

Transcending her tumultuous teen character in "Crossroads," a self-assured Britney Spears will live life in the fast lane for her next movie.

Spears' self-titled third album was a laboured attempt by the singer to cultivate a more mature image. Although its initial sales were not as strong as her previous two albums, Britney shot straight to the top of the US album chart on its release in November 2001 for a brief stay.

Britney Spears is a cultural phenomenon. Though there have been pop music princesses before, none have had the impact, success and influence of Britney Spears (though the Spice Girls gave it a good shot before imploding spectacularly).

Britney has become an icon to millions of fans worldwide and her infectious brand of pop/R&B has become the template for girl pop.

She has spawned a new era in music in which the audience in control of record companies' multi-million dollar profits are teenage girls. Britney has also drawn a host of imitators into pop music that include: Christina Aguilera, Jessica Simpson and Mandy Moore.

Britney is here to stay and getting bigger and better all the time. All we can say is watch this space!!