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Freddie Mercury: Asteroid named after late Queen star to mark 70th birthday

05/09/2016



An asteroid has been named after Freddie Mercury to mark what would have been the singer's 70th birthday.

The Queen frontman has had his name attached to Asteroid 17473, which was discovered in 1991 - the year he died.

Queen guitarist Brian May told a gathering of 1,250 fans at Montreux Casino in Switzerland that the asteroid would now be known as Asteroid 17473 Freddiemercury.

May said the honour marked "Freddie's outstanding influence in the world".

Issuing the certificate of designation, Joel Parker of the Southwest Research Institute said the asteroid was a celebration for a "charismatic singer".

"Freddie Mercury sang, 'I'm a shooting star leaping through the sky' - and now that is even more true than ever before," he said.

"But even if you can't see Freddie Mercury leaping through the sky, you can be sure he's there - 'floating around in ecstasy', as he might sing - for millennia to come."

May, who still performs with his Queen colleague drummer Roger Taylor and singer Adam Lambert, is now Dr Brian May after studying for a PhD in Astrophysics at London's Imperial College.

He told the Montreux gathering that the Freddie Mercury asteroid was situated in the asteroid belt between the orbits of Mars and Jupiter and that it measured about two miles across.

"It's a dark object - rather like a cinder in space. Viewed from the Earth it is more than 10,000 times fainter than you

can see by eye, so you need a fair-sized telescope to see it and that's why it wasn't discovered until 1991," said May.

The asteroid naming follows a weekend of commemorations of the singer in London, also hosted by May.

The guitarist unveiled an English Heritage blue plaque at his bandmate's childhood home in Feltham, west London.

He said: "And so - for its first appearance in public - Asteroid Freddiemercury - happy birthday Freddie!"

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