

Jackson estate licenses virtual 'Planet Michael'

September 21 2010, By RYAN NAKASHIMA , AP Business Writer

(AP) -- The man who made the moonwalk famous will soon be getting a planet of his own.

The Michael Jackson estate has entered a licensing deal with a Los Angeles company that will create an online [virtual world](#) based on the King of Pop called "Planet Michael."

The planet will live inside the Entropia Universe, a so-called "massively multiplayer online" game that has about 100,000 active users and is run by the Swedish company Mind Ark.

The estate will work with [game publisher](#) SEE Virtual Worlds to develop the game for release in late 2011. In it, fans will be able to collect and trade virtual Jackson merchandise, and earn credits by performing challenges related to his music and dance moves.

As in other virtual worlds, players can replenish their game accounts using real money.

Martin Biallas, CEO Of SEE Virtual Worlds, said game play will focus on Jackson's dance moves and adhere to his credo of nonviolence, a departure from other online multiplayer games such as "World of Warcraft." The game will also allow for charitable contributions.

"With Michael Jackson, we're aiming at different game play," he said in an interview.

John Branca, Jackson's longtime lawyer and co-executor of his estate, said in a statement, "No artist unified the world like Michael Jackson, so it is fitting that in Planet Michael his fans will be able to join together in such a unique way online."

Terms of the deal were not disclosed.

Jackson's estate has grown immensely since his sudden death on June 25, 2009 at age 50. Ventures including a multiyear record deal with Sony Music based on unreleased recordings and a movie based on concert rehearsal footage have brought the estate more than \$250 million in the year since his death.

T.J. Keitt, a virtual world analyst with Forrester Research, said a deal between a major artist and a virtual world is "not too far out of the fold." Last year, hip-hop artist Jay-Z licensed his Rocawear clothing line to the WeeWorld virtual game targeted at teenagers.

But the analyst questioned whether Jackson fans would want to use a virtual world, which is mostly populated by preteens and teenagers, he said.

Jackson fans are likely "older adults who came of age in the '80s," he said. "Those people aren't frequenting virtual worlds."

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