

Lisa 'Left Eye' Lopes

Written by Westside ID180

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LOS ANGELES, California (CNN) -- Lisa "Left Eye" Lopes, member of hip-hop R&B group TLC, was killed in a car accident Thursday in Honduras, her record label reported early Friday. She was 30.

The head-on collision on a treacherous two-lane country road occurred shortly before 6 p.m. outside La Ceiba, a town on the Atlantic coast, said Carlos Bakota, a spokesman for the U.S. Embassy.

Lopes, who was driving, died instantly, he said.

The singer was one of eight people in the vehicle at the time of the accident. Three members of Egypt, a new band, were taken to Dantoni Hospital in La Ceiba.

She would have turned 31 next month, according to her Web site.

In an interview on CNN's "TalkBack Live," Lopes' fellow TLC band members, Rozonda "Chilli" Thomas and Tionne "T-Boz" Watkins, remembered her as a loving, big-hearted, multi-talented woman.

"She was our sister, you know?" said Thomas. "And no matter what we went through, we're sisters. You know sisters argue, and they kiss and make up and that's just how our relationship was...Through us, people will always remember Lisa. We'll always be a group. It doesn't stop."

"And she'll never be replaced," added Watkins.

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Lopes was on vacation in the Central American country, a place she often visited, said TLC manager Bill Diggins. He received a phone call late Thursday from authorities in Honduras, reporting the accident. Diggins said seven other people were in the vehicle at the time of the accident and no one else was injured. He was told that Lopes was killed instantly.

"No words can possibly express the sorrow and sadness I feel for this most devastating loss," said Antonio "L.A." Reid, president and CEO of Arista Records, who has known the group for about 10 years. "Lisa was not only a gifted and talented musical inspiration, but more importantly, she was like a daughter to me. My thoughts and prayers are with Lisa's family and friends. Her legacy will be remembered forever."

Quick rise to stardom, then trouble

TLC formed in 1991, when Lopes was 20. The group was developed and first managed by Perri "Pebbles" Reid, an R&B star known for her hits "Girlfriend" and "Mercedes Boy" and then married to L.A. Reid.

The next year, the group made its debut with the multimillion-selling "Ooooooohhh ... On the TLC Tip," which spawned the hits "Ain't 2 Proud 2 Beg" and "Baby-Baby-Baby." Lopes was the group's rapper; Watkins and Thomas handled the vocals. The group attracted attention for their looks and their wardrobe, which included floppy hats and Lopes' trademark, a pair of glasses with a condom in place of the left-eye lens.

In 1994, the group's second album, "CrazySexyCool," became an even bigger hit, helped by the chart-toppers "Waterfalls" and "Creep." The group's songs, written by urban-music stalwarts Dallas Austin, Babyface, Jermaine Dupri and others -- along with participation from TLC -- addressed subjects including safe sex, AIDS and black-on-black crime. "CrazySexyCool" sold at least 4 million copies and became one of the best-selling albums by an all-female group.

But TLC also had its problems. In 1994, Lopes set fire to the Atlanta-area mansion she shared with former Atlanta Falcon Andre Rison. She pleaded guilty to arson and was sentenced to a halfway house and five years' probation, as well as a \$10,000 fine. Her relationship with Rison was on-and-off for years.

In 1995, the group declared bankruptcy. Among the reasons cited was the management deal

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with Pebbles Reid.

Lopes didn't appear at a TLC news conference late in 2000. The media reported seeing her with another boyfriend, model Sean Newman, in Chicago, New Orleans, London and Honduras.

Last year, Lopes and Rison were to marry, but the wedding was called off abruptly.

Moving forward

But the group maintained its position in the industry. In 1996, TLC won two of its four Grammy Awards, and also picked up MTV Video Awards for its flashy, high-tech videos. For a time, Lopes hosted an MTV show, "The Cut."

In 1999, TLC returned with "Fanmail," another multiplatinum seller, which contained the hit "No Scrubs." The making of the album was said to be sometimes contentious, each member of the group pursuing outside activities.

"That we could round up these three very different personalities with all these things going on and get them back in the studio was a feat, to say the least," L.A. Reid told the Atlanta Journal-Constitution in 1999.

In 2000, Lopes challenged the other members of the group to make solo albums so fans could choose the most popular member of TLC. Her own solo album, the recently released "Supernova," sold poorly and had little radio play.

Watkins dismissed talk of a rift in an interview with The Associated Press last year.

"With three women, you agree to disagree. I'm not always going to agree with Lisa and she's not always going to agree with me," she told the AP. "That's fine."

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TLC had been recording a new album in an Atlanta studio for release later this year.

Funeral arrangements are pending. The service is scheduled to take place in Atlanta.