



Enrique Iglesias: An Unauthorized Biography

By Elina Furman, Leah Furman

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Find out all about this gorgeous Spanish singer, from his love life to his family life, how he feels about success (as the bestselling Latin recording artist in the world!) and his famous dad, what he likes to do in his free time, and much, much more!

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Elina and **Leah Furman** are the authors of numerous celebrity biographies such as *Ricky Martin*, *James Van Der Beek*, *The Heat Is On: 98 Degrees*, *Give It to You: The Jordan Knight Story*, and *Heart of Soul: The Lauryn Hill Story*. Some of their other titles include *the Everything After College Book*, *Generation Inc.*, and *The Everything Dating Book*.

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Enrique Iglesias

ONE

Father of Mine

Lounging in a plush armchair and waiting patiently for the battalions of anxious reporters to finish off their now-familiar lines of inquiry, Enrique is the image of nonchalance and detachment. With his shy smile, rumpled locks, and signature black leather pants, the world's top-selling Latin artist looks as above it all as his albums' sales figures. It seems as though nothing could faze him now; nothing, except a couple of questions that would put a dark cloud over every record sale, over every fan's smiling face, and over every glance in the bathroom mirror.

"Is there any truth to the rumor that you and your father compete when it comes to record sales?"

"Do you think you would be as successful if it wasn't for your father?"

Few things affect Enrique Iglesias as deeply as the mention of his father. Forever cast into the role of the "rising son," the young singer has grown to resent the implication. And when you consider that everything he has achieved--the awards, the critical acclaim, the unsurpassable sales record--he has achieved on his own, it's not hard to understand why.

"I don't like to get into it but I'm tired of hearing, 'Do you think you sell more records because of your dad?'"

"We're two different personalities. We're two different singers with two different styles and, most importantly, we're from two different generations."

Pointing out the obvious inconsistencies of the "like father, like son" theory cannot be easy on the Latin crooner. After all, the man he is so intent on distancing himself from is none other than his own flesh and blood, his legendary father, Julio Iglesias.

But listen closely to Enrique's words and you'll hear a wisdom that is as old as the most ancient empires, as timeless as the struggles of generations past and present, and as certain as the future of rebellious youth. To truly understand a man, it is often not enough to examine his dreams and aspirations. One must look at the whole person, and see his fears, or all that he endeavors *not* to become. Such is the case with Enrique Iglesias.

Enrique's story begins more than thirty years before his arrival into the world. While the singer might not like to dwell on the fact, his tale, like those of so many others, begins with the birth of his father. Born to a privileged Spanish family on September 23, 1943, Julio Jose Iglesias was brought kicking and screaming into this world by Julio Iglesias Puga and Rosario de la Cueva.

As one of Madrid's leading gynecologists, Julio's father presided over a posh and well-respected household. Living in a spacious apartment in a wealthy part of town, young Julio spent hours dawdling around the house with his mother and looking out onto the busy street life from the pristine privacy of his family's soaring wrought-iron balcony. A younger brother, Carlos, would join him on that very ledge eighteen months later.

Rich in history and overflowing with culture, Madrid is the kind of city one can get lost in. Strolling through its narrow streets, stopping for a *chato*, a glass of red or white wine before dinner, cheering at the bullfights--these are just some of the attractions that await the accidental tourist and greet the permanent resident.

For all their worldly advantages, the Iglesias family was not what one would call entirely functional. From an early age, young Julio was aware of difficulties in his parents' marriage. The rumors of his father's sexual exploits with other women would at first shock his delicate constitution, and then alter it beyond recognition. With time, he would learn to justify the infractions, growing closer and closer to his father as he grew up. On the surface, the family operated like a well-oiled machine. Rosario would escort Julio and Carlos to school, and play the dutiful wife at home. On the inside, however, she was fuming with all the outrage of a woman scorned, and planning the rift that would ultimately divide the family forever.

The loyalties of the children would split down the middle (and here we anticipate the course of events). Given their present reputations--Julio Iglesias is alleged to have bedded more than 3,000 women since the time he was twenty years old, while his younger brother, Carlos, has remained with one woman for a number of years--it's clear which parent each brother sided with in the ongoing war of the Iglesiases. While Carlos stuck by his mother, caring for her well into her twilight years, Julio formed a strong attachment to his father. But the disruption of the family would not occur until much later. Meanwhile, life went on for the Iglesias family as normal.

Ironically enough, the boy who grew into the quintessential "Latin lover" wasn't considered good-looking by his peers. He would often have to play second fiddle to Carlos, who received most of the attention from family and friends. Knowing that he would never be as handsome as his younger brother wrought a deep-seated insecurity in Julio, one that still plagues him to this very day.

Gabi Fominaya, a family friend from the old days, recalled that "Julio had quite an inferiority complex about his looks compared to Carlos. Carlos was an exceptionally beautiful child with thick dark hair and beautiful long eyelashes. I think Julio got sick of people saying how lovely his brother was."

No doubt Julio was affected adversely by the comparisons made between him and his brother. Although had it not been for his being deficient in the beauty department, Julio would never have striven to develop his personality. Using charm and wit to win the affections that his then-gangly and awkward frame could not, Julio developed the kind of social ease that would later help him ascend to the heights of international stardom.

He would also excel in the game of soccer, a sport that was more like an institution than a pastime in Europe. If a young boy showed promise in soccer, one could feel certain that academics, girls, and popularity would all fall into place. Being a skilled jock was not something the Spanish took lightly, and Julio had been pushed to develop his gift since he was just five years old.

By his fifteenth year, Julio had become such a proficient goalkeeper that he decided to attend tryouts for Real Madrid, Spain's premier pro soccer team. Hundreds of young hopefuls had come to compete for the limited team slots, but it was Julio who was handpicked from the crowd to serve as the junior reserve goalkeeper.

"From the outset Julio made it always look kind of easy," said Fernando Valls, a fellow teammate. "He was a showman, you know. He would spin the ball around the tip of his finger before booting it back into play. He was agile and daring. He always went for the ball, even in the most impossible situations. He definitely had what it might have taken to go all the way to the top."

Although Julio couldn't have known it at the time, his desire to take center stage and show off for the crowd already suggested the magnificent future that awaited him in show business. Even then, he had all the makings of a superstar and a world-renowned performer. Since the very first time that he blocked a shot, he would forever crave the roar of an appreciative audience and the hush of a jam-packed stadium as he dove for the ball. Of course later, the soccer balls would be replaced by women's lingerie, and the audience of male sports fans by throngs of female admirers.

His old friend and current manager, Alfredo Fraile, noted the immense impact that joining the team had on Julio's development. "After joining Real Madrid he became a kind of local hero--someone that people looked up to. Maybe that was his real taste of success and adulation and he never stopped needing it."

To anyone with neither the time nor the inclination to probe deeper, Julio was on top of his game and on top of the world. When he turned twenty years old, he was on his way to becoming one of the brightest stars on the Real Madrid roster, as well as earning his law degree at the Colegio Mayor de San Pablo.

As a young man, Julio was not apt to rock the boat. He was well aware of the respect his soccer skills elicited from his parents and friends. It was as if he were on a roll in the approval department, and was scared to slow down his momentum. To secure his position in his parents' good graces, Julio made plans to study law. Law would be his anchor, and soccer would be his crowning glory. "Like everybody, I wanted to be a doctor, lawyer, or engineer," he told *People* magazine.

His friends were known to say that Julio had life all figured out and neatly compartmentalized, but Julio was just beginning to find out what he was made of. In fact, although he claims to have chosen law as his profession, his father's not-so-subtle pressure tactics had exerted a tremendous influence on that decision. "I always wanted both my sons to be something in life," explained Julio Sr. "Carlos was an already exceptional student and it came easily to him. But for Julio, studying was always more hard. He wasn't a natural like Carlos. But I insisted that at least he tried."

And try he did. Julio attempted to immerse himself in his studies, but would invariably find himself needing to take frequent breaks between his courses. After all, he was young, popular, good-looking, and a rising soccer star. What more need be said of youth and its zest for the fast life?

Living fast had always been Julio's motto. But this credo never proved as dangerous as it did on the night of September 22, 1963. Majadahonda was home to an annual fiesta that attracted young people from every corner of Spain; the equivalent of America's youth flocking to the shores of Panama City, Florida, for spring break. And much like any other young man released from the duties of school, Julio took advantage of the fiesta, dancing in the town's square, dining al fresco, and whistling at every pretty girl who passed him in the plaza.

Happy and carefree after a short-lived but satisfying romp, Julio and his two consorts jumped into his sporty Renault, ready to return to the real world. They had not been drinking, but even so, the giddiness they felt just from being young and alive intoxicated their senses. Julio was so high on life that he felt invincible, so invincible that he decided to test his courage by accelerating the car to 100 mph just as he was rounding a dangerous bend in the road. The car spun violently, as Julio tried desperately to regain control. But it was too late. The vehicle had teetered over a sharp precipice, plunging deep into the soil.

For a minute, Julio thought that he was done for. But no sooner had the car come to a crashing halt than he regained consciousness. He was still in the driver's seat and wasn't visibly injured. His passengers were also fortunate, escaping with only minor scrapes and bruises. Hobbling away from the site of the crash, the three shaken friends went in search of help. All was well, at least for the meanwhile.

In October of the same year, Julio returned to school with the intention of resuming his studies and his practice sessions as a member of Real Madrid. Anxious to get out on the field and prove his mettle to his coaches, Julio ignored the slight discomfort in his spine. Because the pain was intermittent and would vary in intensity, Julio eschewed the doctor's office, hoping that the problem would go away of its own accord. Instead of improving, however, the discomfort grew stronger. Performing routine blocks and lunging for the ball became increasingly difficult. Soon the pain would prevent him from playing altogether. The strain on his spine had gotten so bad that he could barely stand up straight, let alone jump headfirst to block a shot. "Julio came to me and complained of this weird pain, which was obviously becoming worse by the day," recalled Julio Sr. "He was gray with pain. He was dying with it. For a father to see his son this way is a terrible thing. He had always been a healthy boy--an athlete. But I could see the gravity of his condition written on his face. I ran to every specialist that I knew and called in every favor I was owed to try to find out what was wrong with him."

Getting to the root of the problem would be easier said than done. Without the medical advancements of the past twenty years, diagnosing Julio's spinal discomfort proved to be a challenge of immense proportions. One doctor after another would shake his head after examining the stricken young man. And even though

they witnessed his pain firsthand, they could find nothing wrong with him. Some specialists even went so far as to suggest that the problem was all in his head. Julio Sr. would not stand to have his son so disparaged. He was so angry with the doctors' ineptitude that if he hadn't been one himself, he surely would have written off the entire profession as a racket.

Days turned into weeks and weeks into months, and still there was no answer. When the New Year had come and gone, and Julio's malady was no closer to being cured, Julio's father took matters into his own hands. He secured the aid of some of Spain's most renowned neurosurgeons, begging them to diagnose his son.

Through a painful procedure called the Tiodoro, the team of doctors promised to catch what the myriad of X rays had missed.

Hopeful as Julio's father was about detecting the problem, the new procedure was extremely dangerous and painful. In his autobiography, Julio described the extreme anxiety he felt during the operation. "I think it was for me the greatest moment of anguish I have ever experienced. The moment of my greatest fear, my greatest sense of being a complete nobody, of feeling all the fear of a small child or of a small animal. I have been a hyper-strong kid, super strong ... I had been one of the best sportsmen my school had ever had. I was a complete sportsman. I was an athlete from head to toes, but there I was with liquid moving slowly down my spine with my head bowed. Like a rabbit, like a bull, like a ewe about to be put to death in a slaughterhouse." Grim as his thoughts were at the time, the reaper of souls would not make an appearance on that day. As if to make up for all the anguish he experienced while lying prostrate on the table, the procedure proved successful. It finally provided the Iglesiases with the answers they had been searching for. "You could see the problem clearly," Dr. Iglesias revealed. "A soft cyst had been growing on Julio's spine and causing gradual paralysis by compressing the vertebrae and the nerves."

No sooner had Julio's family breathed a long-overdue sigh of relief than they were confronted with an even bigger problem than uncertainty--Julio was paralyzed from the waist down. He would have to stay at the hospital for a new round of treatments.

Fifteen days would pass until Julio was allowed to go home. But this would not be the happy homecoming he had envisioned. The doctors were once again baffled by the young man's paralysis, leaving the family no other option than to buy a wheelchair for their son, something they had tried to postpone for as long as possible.

Seeing the wheelchair for the first time was just about as traumatic for Julio as his father had anticipated. No matter how hard he tried to wrap his mind around it, Julio could not understand how he, the soccer whiz, the strong athlete, could wind up in a wheelchair.

Julio would have plenty of time to accept the cruel hand life had dealt him. Bedridden and despondent, he would need every minute of those painful months to recuperate from the blow and regain his strength. As a testament to his prowess, Julio started working on a strict regimen of mind over matter. He would spend hours communicating with his body, trying desperately to revive his listless form. "One day I was a guy full of strength," he expressed to *People* magazine. "And the next I was completely paralyzed. I learned how to control the pain in the muscles. I spent hours and hours a day giving orders to my brain: Move my fingers, my arms, my feet."

Four months of repeated effort would not prove fruitless. His will to walk again was so powerful that he began feeling sensation in his toes, then in his knees, and then in his entire leg. Although he would need to engage in a grueling round of physical therapy sessions, Julio was well on his way to a complete physical recovery. His emotional recovery, however, would take much longer than he'd ever expected.

By 1966, Julio had gained enough control of his body to move around with the aid of a walking stick. It would take another two years for him to walk on his own. Of course, a slight limp would always remain to remind him of the horrible ordeal--as if he could have ever forgotten.

"Though even now you notice with Julio that when he's onstage he can often look shaky and unstable," commented Alvaro Rodriguez, a photographer who shot Julio on several occasions. "People have even sometimes commented that he looks a little drunk--which is never the case; he is simply not secure on his feet. It's for this reason that he likes to wear special shoes on stage that have very thin, clothlike soles that

allow him to grip the ground. If you look at his feet, he uses them like claws to hang on to the ground."

After regaining his motor functions, Julio wanted nothing so much as to make up for lost time. He had spent a large part of his youth rehabilitating at home, and was bent on experiencing all of the pleasures that life had to offer, including outings with friends and with women. Not surprisingly, his father's wish that he go back to school fell on deaf ears. "I've got a lot of living to do," was the crux of Julio's retort. And after seeing his son's struggle to walk, Julio Sr. didn't have the heart to protest.

For the next couple of years, England would be the place Julio called home. Given the young man's desire to brush up on his English and fend for himself, the UK was the perfect choice. Ever since the accident, confidence had become an issue of paramount importance to the young man. He'd lived under the supervision and protection of his family for so long that he began to question his resolve to make a mark on the world. England was far enough away that he would not be tempted to call home for moral and financial support. Whether he could stomach the separation was another matter altogether.

As a student at the Bell Language School in Cambridge, Julio was a stranger in a strange land. With no money and no friends, the young man realized that he had taken on more than he was capable of handling. He felt utterly desolate and alone until he met fellow Spaniard Enrique Bassat. Julio jumped at the chance to open up to Enrique, telling him of his unfortunate situation in England.

"Okay, you can come with me," said Enrique, unable to repress his urge to help out. "You can share my room and you can share my money," he continued, "and we'll both live on what I have until the situation improves."

Inseparable from that point on, Enrique and Julio would remain friends for many years to come. Eventually, the latter would even name his son after the friend whom he credited with turning his life around. In Julio's darkest hour, Enrique had arrived like a saving grace. Just knowing that he would have a roof over his head and a companion to talk with put Julio in a better frame of mind. Of course, money would be tight for the down-on-their-luck duo. If they wanted to eat, let alone keep their tiny studio apartment, they would have to come up with a moneymaking scheme, pronto.

Since his days as a soccer star, Julio had not shown a proclivity for other activities. He enjoyed singing, but after being laughed off the field by his soccer buddies, Julio kept his vocals relegated to the safe confines of the shower. When pressed by his ever-industrious friend, however, Julio admitted to having sung a clear note in his day, as well as to having a rudimentary knowledge of the guitar. And as beggars couldn't very well be choosers, Enrique responded to Julio's admission by booking him a gig at the Airport Pub. At first, Enrique and Julio began playing as a duet. But once he became aware of Julio's talent and the incredible impact his performances had on the audience, Enrique graciously bowed out, giving his new friend center stage.

"I would go with him most weekends and I also started drumming up business in other pubs, too," explained Enrique. "We used to play at one in Ely just outside Cambridge. Julio would sing songs that were popular at the time--Tom Jones, Engelbert Humperdinck, The Beatles--and people responded to him because he had something then that he still has now, something you can't really quantify. He had a kind of light that shone from him. A kind of charisma."

When Julio first heard the resounding applause of the audience, it was as if he was right back on the old soccer field. The hard-won confidence he had gained during his stint with Real Madrid, and then lost during his extended convalescence, came flowing back as if by magic. He became so self-assured that he even found the courage to do what he'd once thought impossible--to fall in love.

Gwendoline Bollere was the kind of girl Julio could not resist. Unfortunately, with her blond hair, high cheekbones, and regal air, other men would also find her irresistible--namely Enrique, who had fallen in love with the young lady long before Julio ever came on the scene. When she showed an interest in Julio, young Enrique was crushed by the blow. More importantly, he felt slighted by Julio who had gone out with her on the sly to avoid the inevitable confrontation.

Painful as the discovery of the clandestine relationship was to bear, Enrique's loyalty toward Julio didn't

waver. As a testament of his enduring fealty, he even went the extra mile by joining the new couple on their many excursions around town. His was a friendship that Julio would never forget. "I knew I was the loser, but I kept the feeling inside myself," Enrique would later lament. "Julio understood it and Gwendoline understood it. But we carried on, the three of us, the best of friends, because I couldn't bear to lose the friendship of either of them. But Julio understands that I had to sacrifice a very important thing in my life at the time for the sake of friendship--Gwendoline--and I know that he has never forgotten that." Even then Enrique knew that Julio was a man of action, a man who would achieve anything he set his mind to, no matter what the circumstances. Even if he wanted to, going against Julio would be much like fighting a riptide--futile and utterly exhausting.

Although Enrique had forsaken his first love to Julio, he might have thought twice about it had he known that the young balladeer would relinquish the prize soon after the thrill of the conquest had waned. It wasn't long after he fell in love with the fair Gwendoline that Julio sparked to another challenge. He vowed to become a famous singer.

Encouraged by Gwendoline's love and affection, Julio scrounged up what remained of his little savings and recorded "*La Vida Sigue Igual*" (Life Continues Just the Same), a song he had written on his own and sung on countless occasions. Thinking he had no chance of breaking into the business, he sent the demo off to a couple of record labels. To his surprise and utter elation, Columbia came calling. Not only did they want him to record the song, they also promised to enter him into Benidorm, a competitive showcase for up-and-coming artists.

In July 1968, Julio took first place in the prestigious competition. It would be his first step in a long line of musical victories, and the last of his moments with his first true friend and his first true love. "We'd heard him sing '*La Vida Sigue Igual*' a million times and we thought it was a pretty song," said Enrique. "But we didn't stop to consider how it might change his, and our lives."

Julio obviously hadn't either. But it was just as well, for nothing could have prepared him for what would follow.

The years that Julio Iglesias would spend in racking up countless record sales and sexual conquests are important to Enrique's story only in that they would reveal the loneliness and solitude that would characterize his formative years. In the ten years after he said good-bye to his shy, insecure self, Julio would go on to perform 200 shows per year for \$250,000 each and sell more than 100 million albums worldwide. His musical career would span generations, cultures, and language barriers. And for that he had a right to be proud. "It's a nice way to live, no?" he boasted to a reporter. "It is a nice way to live, yes. How can I not love what's happened to me, how lucky I am? I love to be Julio Iglesias."

Although his career was an obvious source of gratification, there were other aspects to his life, many of which Julio could not take pride in. His marriage to Isabel Preysler, a Filipino beauty, was one of them. From the first moment he laid eyes on the exotic young woman in May of 1970, Julio was determined to have her for himself. She had the rare elegance, naivete, and porcelain good looks that Julio prized in women. His first reaction was to reach out and protect her from the harsher realities of life, the same cruel truths that, ironically, his later behavior would inevitably succeed in imposing upon her. But who could deny the pull of beauty, youth, and ambition? Certainly not Isabel. After a brief whirlwind of a romance, the couple was married on January 21, 1971.

The ceremony was one of the most elaborate and widely publicized in all of Spain. By then, Julio had amassed a significant following and was considered to be one of the country's premier entertainers. It was a romantic wedding, offering promise and hope for the newlyweds, and anyone else who was lucky enough to be invited to this most exclusive party of the year. With rosy visions of eternal joy and matrimonial bliss dancing in his head, Julio was overheard saying before the ceremony, "I'm happy to be about to marry the woman of my dreams. I don't think it's her beauty I fell in love with. It was her goodness that struck me. And as for Isabel, I don't think she fell in love with a famous singer, but with a simple normal guy, Julio Iglesias." True enough, Isabel had not married Julio for his showbiz success, but in spite of it. As for the part about

Julio being a simple, normal man with humble needs, nothing could have been further from the truth. Ever since the accident that almost left him paralyzed, Julio had a voracious appetite for everything life had to offer--money, good wine, expensive cars, and beautiful women. Although he vowed to be faithful to his young wife, Julio would not make good on that promise.

No sooner had Isabel given birth to their first daughter, Isabel (nicknamed Chabeli) on September 3, 1971, than Julio began the pattern of absence that would ultimately contribute to the demise of their marriage. Dividing his time between tours and recording studios, Julio arrived at the hospital several days after his first child had been brought into the world. Try as she might to make the best of his tardiness, Isabel had already unwittingly accepted her fate.

"Well, he was working, he was on tour, which was the way it always was, and because of that he could only stay for a couple of hours," she would later explain the circumstances surrounding her first delivery. "But yes, yes, that hurt a lot even though in a funny way it also gave me strength because I thought, 'Well, I have given birth alone, so I can be a mother, father ... I can be everything.'"

Whether Julio was already in the throes of his many amorous side-projects wasn't certain, it would take many years until Isabel became aware of the infidelity that was by then a widely known fact. Yet, how could Isabel have known when Julio protected her not only from the prying eyes and wagging tongues of the media, but from her closest confidants as well? He had become so possessive and domineering that he would even go so far as to forbid her from going out with her girlfriends. "Everything was a big deal ... I needed to take my driving test in Spain and because the instructor was a man, that was a big deal," Isabel explained. "If I wanted to go and play tennis it was a big deal, too. If I wanted to go out for the night with a girlfriend in Madrid that was unthinkable."

As a result of having devoted so much of her time and energy to pacifying Julio's green-eyed monster, she had completely lost sight of the fact that maybe she too had something to be jealous about. Isabel reflected, "Well, how could I imagine that someone who was so concerned with my fidelity could be unfaithful to me? And his concern was so intense that I genuinely felt that he needed to get some help with it."

The trusting wife's suspicions of Julio's marital crimes and misdemeanors were further offset by her preoccupation with the care and upbringing of her daughter and newborn son, Julio Jose, who was welcomed into the world on April 23, 1973.

On May 8, 1975, just a little more than two years after her second pregnancy, the hero of our story, Enrique Iglesias, would make his first appearance. By now, Isabel was known to half jokingly remark that she would be barefoot and pregnant for the entire duration of her marriage to Julio. Alas, Enrique would be her last gift to the man who had everything.

Unbeknownst to the bearer, however, this gift would never truly belong to its intended recipient. Even as his mother held the crying infant in her arms, she couldn't shake the feeling that instead of heralding a new beginning, Enrique's birth would ultimately be the harbinger of the end for her and Julio. Although Isabel didn't know as much herself, she had fulfilled her wifely obligations, and would soon be moving on to the next phase of her life. Still, she couldn't shake the feeling that little Enrique was somehow penetrating the innermost recesses of her mind, and seeing the future that she herself was too scared to acknowledge. It was this deeply hidden truth that her infant son was born to carry in silence.

Much like the aptly titled album, *A Mexico* (For Mexico), which was completed only days before his youngest son's birth, Enrique was born for the world, for a greater purpose that he would not truly understand until much later in life. He belonged to no one and to everyone. An orphan who would only feel at home within the music that gave him both life, and a reason to live it.

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