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Judge names pair of executors for Jackson estate

Wed Nov 11, 2009 7:44am IST

- * Judge makes administrators of Jackson's estate executors
- * Mother Katherine Jackson approves of Branca, McClain
- * Father Joe Jackson's objections are overruled

LOS ANGELES, Nov 10 (Reuters) - A judge made Michael Jackson's longtime attorney and a music executive the executors of his estate on Tuesday, giving them broad powers to run the late pop star's affairs despite objections from his father.

The judge's ruling came after an attorney for the "Thriller" singer's mother, Katherine Jackson, said she had no objection to John Branca and John McClain running the estate.

The Jackson estate is expected to see a boost of at least \$200 million by the end of the year on the strength of the movie "This Is It" now playing in theaters, which relies on rehearsal footage of him, as well as music sales and other business deals engineered by Branca and McClain.

Michael Jackson died, age 50, on June 25 from an overdose of powerful medications, leaving behind an estate that includes part ownership in a music catalog with songs from numerous bands including the Beatles. According to Jackson's 2002 will, the estate funnels money to a trust that benefits Katherine Jackson, the singer's three kids and children's charities.

Until now, attorney Branca and music executive McClain have handled the estate as administrators, but legal experts said being named executors gives them broader powers and makes it harder for anyone to challenge their position.

"I think that the decision today means there won't be any further challenge," said attorney Beth Kaufman, a partner at the Washington, D.C., law firm Caplin & Drysdale, and an expert on estates.

In court filings, Joe Jackson challenged the appointment of Branca and McClain, but Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Mitchell Beckloff dismissed his objections on Tuesday.

Beckloff said Joe Jackson, who had a contentious relationship with his son, was excluded from the estate's assets under the singer's will and family trust, and therefore had no standing to challenge Branca or McClain.

"That was a decision his son made," Beckloff said in court. "I don't see how (Joe Jackson's) affected by the appointment of Branca or McClain as executors."

In recent months, Katherine Jackson also had objected to the way Branca and McClain ran the estate, and she demanded greater say. But last month, she replaced her legal team and on Tuesday her new attorney, Adam Streisand, said Katherine approves of Branca and McClain.

Even though Branca and McClain were named executors, legal experts said Jackson's estate is likely to stay tied up in the court system for years as a judge oversees matters such as paying creditors and making business deals.

"A year in the blink of an eye will be gone, and they probably won't have scratched the surface," said Michael Dave, an attorney who handles probate and estate matters with the Los Angeles firm Marcus, Watanabe, Snyder and Dave.

Separately at Tuesday's court hearing, Beckloff made public the nearly \$1 million cost to the estate to stage the pop star's funeral. The internment itself cost nearly \$600,000.

The judge set a Dec. 10 hearing, where Joe Jackson can make his case for an allowance he requested from Jackson's estate, in court papers filed last week. (Editing by Bob Tourtellotte)

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