

“Billie Jean” “Don’t Stop Till You Get Enough” “Bad” “Smooth Criminal” “Beat It” “Scream” and “Thriller”. All of these songs are apparel to which the King Of Pop wears under his belt, along with his signature single white glove and exotic wardrobe. Regardless of what the media has made of him, Michael Jackson was and is a devoted hard working musician whose influence has changed the way music was created and presented. If not for his creative way of thinking outside the box, Pop music might never have found it’s way into mainstream radios, and music videos would not have become the full-fledged productions that they are today. From his early years as a musician without a childhood who bought friends with candy, to his skyrocketing solo success and courtroom case scandals, Michael’s life is nearly trademarked in that not one other person could ever copy, or out due what he has done. There is nothing anybody can do that would ever rip the story of Michael Jackson out of pulp culture, for it is the tale of one humans struggle between child and adulthood.

Joe Jackson worked as a crane operator at a steel mill in Chicago. While he worked hard at his job, he dreamt of becoming a musician and entertaining masses by playing guitar in a band. However, the short lived bands to which he joined never got far, and as reality began to sink in, Joe gave up and began to focus on more important things. He fell in love with future wife Katherine and the two moved to Gary, Indiana. While both did not have education above high school, the couple bought a house ironically on “Jackson Street” and raised nine kids, the seventh being Michael Joe. Born August 29th, 1958 Michael was brought up in a small house where 2-3 siblings shared a room. His mother and father believed in a strong sense of family togetherness, and every now and then their father would play guitar for his children. His guitar was his most prized possession, and none of the children were allowed to even touch it. However, he shortly found out that his son Tito had been sneaking into the sacred closet where

his guitar was kept, and had been playing it behind his father's back. Enraged, he challenged his son's skills, and if he did not meet expectations, he'd be beaten. Sweating, Tito performed, and to his father's surprise, he had taught himself well. Suddenly, Joe's dream of starting a band began to flash back in his eyes. Shortly after, every son and daughter of the Jackson household was either playing an instrument or dancing. While Michael was at first thought to be too young to join the band, by the age of 5, he was let in and shortly became the spotlight's best friend. His brother Jackie once remarked his younger brother's skill by saying, "He was so energetic that at 5 years old, he was the leader, we saw that... the speed was the thing. He would see somebody do something and he could do it right away," (Haskins, pg.6). Michael's mother could not believe her son's talent. She commented it saying, "It was sort of frightening. He was so young. He didn't go and play much. So if you want me to tell the truth, I don't know where he got it. He just knew," (Haskins, pg.6). It was true. Michael did not go out much. He had trouble making friends, and when the family band started taking its toll on his life, Michael began spending the money he had on candy, which he gave to other kids in exchange for friendship. After three long years of nonstop after school practices that lasted into the late hours of the night, "The Jackson 5" finally had their first show lined up. Their father entered them in the 1965 Roosevelt High School Talent show where they performed a cover of "My Girl". Michael's sweet boyish charm won the judge's over, and they placed first. From then on, The Jackson 5 would undergo dramatic changes that would help them reach the ranks of the rich and famous.

Shortly after the Jackson 5's victory, Joe Jackson quit his job to devote all of his time to his family band. They began playing at any available club they could book with, even if that meant being in an atmosphere that wasn't suitable for their age. Driving distance was no thorn to Joe. Sometimes the Jackson 5 left the state to play a show, and returned back home at 3-4 in the

morning. And if the children had school at 8, they made not sure not to be late. Michael later commented on this schedule in a 1977 interview for the Los Angeles Time saying, “It was a shame we didn’t grow up doing what other kids did. We had to rehearse everyday after school when the other kids were outside playing. No trick or treating, no football games...” (Haskins, pg. 12). By the age of 10, Michael and his siblings were playing professional gigs such as the Uptown Theater in Philadelphia to the Howard Theater in Washing D.C. It finally came time when the Jackson 5 entered the Apollo Theater. It was said that the Apollo’s audience was the toughest in the whole world, and if you were able to survive being on stage without cans or food being thrown at you, you had secured yourself a record label. Scared, the children played and sang their hearts out, winning amateur night and were asked to come back whenever they wanted. That winter they signed with major record label Motown and moved to Hollywood a year later. Because the family was so large, they split in two groups because they could not afford a house at their new residence. One half lived with their record producer Berry Gordy, and Michael, along with the remaining siblings lived with Diana Ross. Diana and Michael became close friends after they first met at the Apollo Theater, and spent many days at Disneyland having fun. This might have been where Michael developed his sense of friendship between an older adult and a younger child. It finally came time for the Jackson 5 to perform on the Ed Sullivan show, which at the time was the center of pop culture. After performing and winning the crowd over, the Jackson 5 became superstars. They released their first CD, “Diana Ross Presents the Jackson 5” winning their first ever Grammy award. Shortly after they released the “ABC Album” with “The Third Album” following suit. They then wrapped up the year with “The Jackson 5 Christmas Album” totaling 4 albums released in one year. At this time, The Jackson 5 consisted of 19-year-old Jackie, 17-Year-Old Tito, 16-year-old Jermaine, 13 year old Marlon and

12-year-old Michael. In light of all this success, Michael commented saying, “I was a veteran before I was a teen,” (Haskins, pg. 18). In 1971 they released 3 more albums and went on their 2nd national tour. About 6 years later, after changing labels and starring on Broadway in “The Wiz” Michael yearned for complete freedom and requested to create his very own album. With his father approval under their new record company Epic’s contract, he was given the chance.

For the first time, Michael went on his own. The youngest of the Jackson 5, he pursued hard to create something that was all his own. Mixing pop, dance and R&B sounds; Michael released his first album “Off The Wall” in 1979. It was the first album ever to spawn four top ten hits including “Don’t Stop Till You Get Enough” and “She’s Out of My Life”. At the American Music Awards, Michael won “Favorite Soul/R&B artist” and his fame continued to grow.

Determined to out due himself, Michael worked hard on his next album. The magnitude however of his next album was something nobody could have been ready for. After countless months of work, “Thriller” was released in 1982 and took the world by storm. It was the first album ever to spawn 7 singles that resided on the Billboard Hot 100 Hit Singles List and spent 37 weeks at number 1. Even when the album lost it’s stature at first place, it didn’t fall short and stayed on the Pop Charts for more than 2 years, selling more than 25 million copies in the US alone. It would later become certified 27x Platinum, becoming the album with the highest international sales and was recorded in the Guinness Book Of World Records for being the most sold album in history. Thriller’s edgy pop sound annihilated radio stations, but it also took a strong hold of TV stations. Michael revolutionized the way music videos were produced when he turned the album’s self titled track into a short film, combining his signature dance moves and sound with a classic story of zombies rising from their grave, seeking the blood of himself and his date. With this video he became the first African American artist to have significant airplay on MTV and

cemented his future as a musician. During a performance of “Billie Jean” in 1983 Michael wowed audiences by “moon walking” across stage, a move that would become one of his most recognizable acts. In 1984, Michael won 8 Grammy awards. Shortly after, kids began wearing single white gloves to school, a signature from Michael’s outfit. However, when the school banned this activity, the students rose in uproar and TV News Programs and Radio Stations captured every second of it. The fiasco became so big that it found its way into Canadian News Channels on TV. The Russians even felt that Michael, with so much power, was the next Adolph Hitler! One Russian official commented the Thriller music video stating; “This film is really fascist because it forces you to watch it like a drug. You couldn’t even talk to each other during it,” (Haskins pg. 8). Another Russian said Michael was the, “characteristic of the ill famed American life style which the US is trying to foist on the world. It’s mesmerizing Americans, keeping them from thinking of political things,” (Haskins, pg.8). With Soviet Union officials labeling Michael with such slander, his music was banned from the country. But that would not stop Michael’s success. In 1984 “Bad” was released and while it did could not match ranks with Thriller, it still kept Michael rich. Steven Spielberg, director of Jurassic Park and E.T. explained that, “If E.T. hadn’t come to Elliot, he would have come to Michael’s house,” (Haskins, pg.1). Spielberg was probably right, as Michael’s décor was something out of the ordinary. The house Michael had bought for himself contained a llama, a ram, a boa constrictor, 2 fawns, 3 parrots, 2 swans and some peacocks. He had a full screening room with an old-fashioned popcorn maker, an ice cream machine, a full game room, a smaller version of the Pirates of The Caribbean ride and a 16 track-recording studio. Many compared Michael to Peter Pan for his refusal to grow up, and he welcomed the idea of being a real life Pan. Michael Peters, Jackson’s choreographer commented saying, “I think he’s really Peter Pan. He is this constant dichotomy of man and

child. He can run corporations and tell record companies what he wants, and he can sit in a trailer and play hearts for hours with a friend who is 12 years old,” (Haskins pg. 15). Michael felt he had never gotten the chance to grow up since he started his music career so young under the hard rules set by his father. And now, grown up, ready to make his own decisions, Michael still could not go as he pleased. He claimed, “I may want to go walking or sit in a tree, but everything I do is on TV or in the newspapers,” (Haskins pg. 42). However, Michael still stayed strong releasing albums “Dangerous” “History: Past, Present and Future” and “Blood on the Dance Floor” before he began to lose popularity.

Through the years, Michael’s figure changed dramatically. His skin, once dark and brown brightened until he became paler than the average white citizen, and his nose began to shrink to unthinkable sizes. Michael’s actions and ideas began to collect when he offered to buy the “Elephant Man’s” remains and started sleeping in hyperbolic oxygen chambers that claimed to help a human resist aging. In 1993, he was charged for sexually assaulting a young boy who had stayed with him at his own Neverland Ranch amusement park, which was open to children with disabilities. Michael pleaded not guilty, but appeased to the prosecution, paying 18-20 million dollars. In ’94 he married Elvis Presley’s daughter Lisa Marie, but the marriage dissolved after 19 months. He remarried 2 years later to nurse Debbie Rowe who gave birth to his very own children, but divorced in 1999. His weird behavior continued when he appeared at the MTV music awards. Britney Spears had called him up on stage to celebrate his most recent birthday, but Jackson gave a speech thinking he had just won “Artist of the Millennium”. However, in the midst of all this, Jackson released another album in 2001 called “Invincible”. The album debuted at number one. However, the singles released did not fair well, with the exception of “You Rock My World”. Compared to his last albums, Michael’s sales were poor and in 2002, he sued Sony

claiming they had asked for millions of dollars in debt for the albums poor performance. He defended the album's statistics, claiming not enough publicity had been done on the albums release. Outside the US in a German hotel, Michael held his baby over a balcony to show fans down below, which stirred up many anti-Michael feelings, including the nickname "Wacko Jacko". To make matters worse, Michael was charged for sexual assault again in 2003, and his behavior only worsened the situation. Michael arrived at the courtroom late, drowsy, and still in his pajama pants. Luckily for him, he was acquitted of all charges in 2005, but his reputation had been severely damaged. He fled to the Persian Gulf to get away from the mockery the media had made of him and began working with benefit charities for Katrina. Currently he has been reported working on his latest album.

Michael's life has been a roller coaster of events. While most kids at five years old are playing tag and collecting baseball cards, Michael was rehearsing 24/7 with his family. He didn't have any best friends, and went straight from local fame to global popularity. And from there, with the media's help, he faced serious downfall. Michael's hard work however cannot be allowed to go unnoticed. From the Jackson 5, to his solo career, and onto his indefinite hiatus, Michael has pushed the boundaries and led the way for other pop artists including Justin Timberlake. His dance moves have become locked into choreography standards and music videos have never looked the same. No matter what the media makes of him, Michael pioneered a new wave of music and dance, and tried his hardest to grow up from the childhood he never had.