

Fare thee well, Greatest
Entertainer of All Time

Michael Jackson



It was the ancient prolific writer and philosopher, Williams Shakespeare, who once wrote about the world being a stage, where man frets and struts on and then takes a bow out. Michael Joseph Jackson, the world's renowned King of pop had just fulfilled that prophetic lines of Shakespeare and by the waves of tomorrow, he will be in memorial, only heard via the technology of air-waves.

The demise of this legend aptly described as the greatest entertainer of all time, is no doubt another huge loss to the world of love and music. Jackson was indeed a mystery of music and dance. He was a great thriller with his Thriller exponent and many of his cross-puzzled creative performances and albums.

Born on August 29, 1958 in Gary, Indiana, Michael Jackson was the 7th of nine children, Sigmund "Jackie", Toriano "Tito", Jermaine, Marlon, Steven "Randy", and his sisters, Rebbie, Janet and La-Toya.

He began his music career at age 5 as lead singer of the Jackson 5, made up of his other siblings, Jackie, Jermaine, Tito and Marlon. They played in local clubs and bars in Gary, Indiana and moving higher as their talents grew.

From his early days, Michael was keen at learning from the big stars then as they met at the club. But not until 1968 that Bobby Taylor and The Vancouvers discovered the Jacksons and from there they got an audition for Berry Gordy, founder of Motown Records. They sang for the Motown and moved to California. Their first 4 singles, "I Want You Back", "ABC", "The Love You Save", and "I'll Be There" all made US No.1 hits. The Jackson 5 recorded 14 albums while Michael recorded 4 solo albums with Motown.

The Jackson 5 stayed with Motown until 1976, when they moved on and signed up with Epic Records. Thereafter, the group's name Jackson 5 was reverted to The Jacksons as they had been known in the early days. Brother Jermaine married Berry Gordy's daughter and stayed with Motown. Youngest brother Randy joined in his place. The Jacksons had a number of hit records and in total made 6 albums between the years of 1976 and 1984. In 1977 Michael made his first film debut when he starred in the musical 'The Wiz' playing Scarecrow with Diana Ross in the lead role of Dorothy. It was at this time Michael met Quincy Jones who was doing the score for the film.

Michael teamed up with Quincy Jones as his producer for his first solo album with Epic Records. The album titled "Off The Wall" was a big success around the world and the first ever album to release a record-breaking 4 No.1 singles in the US.

In 1982 Michael Jackson released the world's best selling album of all time, 'Thriller'. This album produced 7 hit singles, breaking yet another records, and went on to sell over 50 million copies worldwide. Michael was keen to use music video or short films as he called them to promote his singles from the album. He worked with the best directors and producers, using the latest technology and special effects for the hit song 'Billie Jean'





The short film 'Thriller' used the latest make-up artists technology combined with fantastic dancing and choreography, to produce a 14 minute video, with a start, a middle and an ending. So successful was this video that 'The Making of Michael Jackson's Thriller' became the world's largest selling home video combined with soaring album sales. In 1983 Michael performed the now legendary moonwalk for the first time on the 'Motown 25 years' anniversary show. This performance alone set Michael undoubtedly into the realm of a superstar.

In 1984 Michael won a record-breaking 8 Grammy awards in one night. The awards were for his work on the 'Thriller' album and his work on the narrative for the 'ET Storybook'. On May 14, 1984 Jackson was invited to the White House, the United States seat of power to receive an award presented by American President, Ronald Reagan. The award was given for Jackson's support to charities that helped people overcome alcohol and drug abuse. Prior to collecting the award, President Reagan sent Jackson a telegram, which read "Your deep faith in God and adherence to traditional values are an inspiration to all of us. You've gained quite a number of fans along the road since "I Want You Back" and Nancy and I are among them. Keep up the good work, Michael. We're very happy for you." However, during the Award, Reagan also stated that Jackson "is proof of what a person can accomplish through a lifestyle free of alcohol or drug abuse. People young and old respect that. And if Americans follow his example, then we can face up to the problem of drinking and driving, and we can, in Michael's words, beat it."

In April 1990, Jackson returned to the White House to meet President George H. W. Bush, and whilst there President Bush recognised him as the

"Artist of the Decade". On May 1, 1992, President Bush presented Jackson with an award acknowledging him as "a point of light ambassador" Jackson received the award in recognition for his efforts in inviting disadvantaged children to his Neverland Ranch. Jackson was the only entertainer to receive the award.

In December 1984, at the last concert of the Jackson's Victory Tour, Michael announced he was splitting from the group and going solo. He showcased much of his solo work to over two million Americans. In 1987 Michael released his much awaited third solo album, titled 'Bad', and launched his record-breaking first solo world tour. 1988, Michael wrote his first autobiography talking for the first time on his childhood and his career. At the end of the 1980s Michael was named 'Artist of The Decade' for his success on his 'Thriller' and 'Bad' albums. Especially the Thriller short film marked an increase in scale for music videos, and was subsequently named the most successful music video ever by the Guinness World records.

Jackson suffered a setback to his health on January 27, 1984. While filming a Pepsi Cola commercial at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles, he suffered second degree burns to his scalp after pyrotechnics accidentally set his hair on fire. The incident elicited an outpouring of sympathy from his fans worldwide. Thereafter, Jackson began treatment to hide the scars on his scalp. Eventually, Pepsi settled out of court, and Jackson donated his \$1.5 million settlement to the Brotman Medical Center in Culver City, California, which now has a "Michael Jackson Burn Center". Also, against insinuations that he was dissatisfied with his colour, the truth remains that in 1986, Jackson was diagnosed with vitiligo and lupus; the vitiligo partially lightened his skin, and the lupus was in remission; both illnesses made him sensitive to sunlight. The treatments he used for his condition further lightened his skin tone, and, with the application of pancake makeup to even out blotches, he appeared very pale.

His charity knew no bounds as he donated his \$5 million share from the Victory Tour to charity. He also co-wrote the charity single "We Are the World" in 1985 with Lionel Richie, which was released worldwide to aid the poor in the U.S. and Africa. It became one of the best-selling singles of





all time, with nearly 20 million copies sold and millions of dollars donated to famine relief. Thereafter, Jackson founded the "Heal the World Foundation" in 1992 to help improve the lives of children across the world. The charity organization brought underprivileged children to Jackson's Neverland ranch to enjoy theme park rides that Jackson had built on the property. The foundation also sent millions of dollars around the globe to help children threatened by war and disease. The Dangerous World Tour began on June 27, 1992, and finished on November 11, 1993. Jackson performed to 3.5 million people in 67 concerts. All profits from the concerts went to the "Heal the World Foundation", raising millions of dollars in relief. He sold the broadcast rights to his *Dangerous* world tour to HBO for \$20 million, a record-breaking deal that still stands. So in 2000, Jackson was listed in the book of *Guinness World Records* for his support of 39 charities, more than any other entertainer.

In 1991 Michael signed with Sony Music the largest ever recording contract and released his fourth solo album, 'Dangerous'. He toured the world again in 1992, taking his concerts to countries that had never before been visited by a pop/rock artist.

Africans will not forget in a hurry his high-profile visit to the continent. Jackson visited several countries, among them Gabon and Egypt. His first stop to Gabon was greeted with a sizable reception of more than 100,000 people. In his trip to the Ivory Coast, Jackson was crowned "King Sani" by a tribal chief. He then thanked the dignitaries in French and English, signed official documents formalizing his kingship and sat on a golden throne while presiding over ceremonial dances

In May 1994 Michael married Lisa Marie Presley, daughter of rock legend Elvis Presley. The marriage only lasted for 19 months, as they divorced in 1996. 1995 saw Michael release a fifth solo album, 'History', which was a double album, first half new materials and second half, his greatest hits. Michael toured again over a legs covering a 2 year period. In between legs of the tour on November 14th 1996, Michael got married for his second time to



Debbie Rowe who was a nurse that Michael had met in course of the treatment of his skin pigment disorder. Together they had their first child Prince Michael Joseph Jackson Jnr., born on February 13, 1997 and a daughter Paris Michael Katherine Jackson born on April 3rd 1998.

In 1997 Michael released the remix album 'Blood On The Dance Floor' which also contained 5 new song linked with a 38min film "Ghosts". In this film, Michael played 5 roles using the latest special effects and make-up artistry, combined with his dance and music.

In September, 2001 Michael celebrated his 30th anniversary as a solo artist with two concerts held in New York and USA. At the event, many artists such as Whitney Houston, Usher, Destiny's Child, Shaggy and many more performed their own as well as Michael Jackson's past songs. Michael then reunited with all of his brothers performed their biggest hits at the event.

Through his group, solo, and family work, he became one of the few artists to have been inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame twice. Jackson's other achievements include 13 Guinness World Records including one for "Most Successful Entertainer of All Time", 19 Grammy Awards, 22 American Music Awards, 12 World Music Awards and the sale of over 750 million units worldwide. Winning numerous awards for his humanitarian endeavors, the singer has been honoured by two Presidents of



the United States. He has also been named as the artist of "the Decade", "Generation", and "Century" and was inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 2002

Sadly, after Jackson's acquittal on the second Child Molestation case in May 2005, he relocated to the Persian Gulf island of Bahrain, as a guest of Sheikh Abdullah. Thereafter, he abandoned his cherished 2800-acre ranch Neverland for a rented castle where he lived till he died.

On June 25, 2009, Jackson collapsed at his rented mansion at 100 North Carolwood Drive in the Holmby Hills district of Los Angeles. Attempts at resuscitating him by his personal physician were unsuccessful. Resuscitation efforts by Los Angeles Fire Department paramedics continued en route to the Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center, and for an hour after arriving there at 1:13 p.m, he was pronounced dead at 2:26 p.m. local time. He was 50.

The memorial was held on July 7, 2009, at the Staples Center in Los Angeles, preceded by a private family service at Forest Lawn Memorial Park's Hall of Liberty. The event was broadcast live around the world and watched by an estimated one billion people. Stevie Wonder, Lionel Richie, Mariah Carey, Jennifer Hudson, Usher, Jermaine Jackson, and Shaheen Jafargholi sang Jackson's songs at the service. Berry Gordy and Smokey Robinson gave eulogies, while Queen Latifah read, "We had him," a poem written for the occasion by Maya Angelou. The Reverend Al Sharpton received a standing ovation when he told Jackson's children, "There was nothing strange about your daddy. It was strange what your daddy had to deal with." Jackson's 11-year-old daughter, Paris Katherine, cried as she told the crowd, "Ever since I was born, Daddy has been the best father you could ever imagine ... I just wanted to say I love him so much."

All in all, the King of Pop, Michael Joseph Jackson had a notable impact on music and culture throughout the world. He broke down racial barriers, transformed the art of the music video and paved the way for modern pop music in his own country. Jackson's work, distinctive musical sound and vocal

style have influenced scores of hip hop, pop and R&B artists, including Mariah Carey, Usher, Britney Spears, Justin Timberlake and R. Kelly. For much of his career, he had an "unparalleled" level of worldwide influence over the younger generation through his musical and humanitarian contributions.

He was characterized as "an unstoppable juggernaut, possessed of all the tools to dominate the charts seemingly at will: an instantly identifiable voice, eye-popping dance moves, stunning musical versatility and loads of sheer star power". In the mid-1980s, Time described Jackson as "the hottest single phenomenon since Elvis Presley". By 1990, Vanity Fair had already cited Jackson as the most popular artist in the history of show business. Daily Telegraph writer Tom Utley called him an "extremely important figure in the history of popular culture" and a "genius". In late 2007, Jackson said the following of his work and future influence, "I've been in the entertainment industry since I was six-years-old... As Charles Dickens says, "It's been the best of times, the worst of times." But I would not change my career... While some have made deliberate attempts to hurt me, I take it in stride because I have a loving family, a strong faith and wonderful friends and fans who have, and continue, to support me". In another instance, hear him, "Music has been my outlet, my gift to all of the lovers in this world. Through it, my music, I know I will live forever."

Indeed, Michael Jackson will live forever in our minds as one man who came, saw and conquered. Fare Thee Well Greatest Entertainer of All Time.

