

The Jacksons American Royalty

I want to start off by saying that Jermain Jackson's son, Jaafar, did an amazing job portraying the late Michael Jackson, in the Michael movie, released April 2026. I really enjoyed the movie, and look forward to seeing it a few more times.

I have been a fan of the Jackson 5, and Michael Jackson since the early 1970s. I remember buying Motown, and Epic records listening to Enjoy Yourself, Ben, Dancing Machine, I'll be there and more. I have to admit, I didn't listen to the entire Dancing Machine album until this May of 2026. I was inspired to listen to past music released by the Jackson 5, by watching the Michael biopic. Nia Long did an amazing job as the Jackson's Matriarch, Katherine Jackson. Domingo did a very good job as the late Joe Jackson. His facial expression were exaggerated, and made Joe out to look very money obsessed. It was almost comical.

I remember meeting Janet Jackson around 1975, at the Brown wedding held in Kansas City, Kansas. I remember Mr. Brown being a friend of my mom's. Mr. Brown had a huge farm with hogs that you could smell a mile away. My mom would visit Mr. Brown's farm once a month, to get vegetables from his garden. One Saturday in 1975, I got dressed for a wedding my mom said we were attending at Mr. Brown's. Mom said that Mr. Brown was marrying a woman named Rosie. Once we arrived at Mr. Brown's beautiful red brick house, I met Janet and she said we would be flower girls together.

I thought she looked like Janet Jackson, and I asked her if she was, she said yes. I asked her where my future husband Michael was, and she said that he was working with his brothers. I noticed that Rosie had vitiligo, the same ailment Michael Jackson had.

I also had stayed with The Jackson's cousin Bonnie in Kansas City, Kansas for a few months, to give my mom a break from me. I met a couple more of their cousins too.

I want to dedicate this photo book to Janet Jackson, and hope that one day, she and I can meet again to catch up.

The Jackson 5

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This article is about the pop band. For the animated TV show, see [Jackson 5ive \(TV series\)](#). For the professional wrestling tag team known as "The Jackson Brothers", see [The Young Bucks](#).

"The Jacksons" redirects here. For other uses, see [The Jacksons \(disambiguation\)](#).

The Jackson 5



The six Jackson brothers in 1974

Clockwise from bottom left: [Tito](#), [Jermaine](#), [Jackie](#), [Marlon](#), [Randy](#), and [Michael](#) (center)

Background information

Also known as The Jacksons (1976–present)

Origin [Gary, Indiana, U.S.](#)

Genres [Pop](#)
[R&B](#)
[soul](#)
[funk](#)
[disco](#)
[bubblegum](#)

Works [Discography](#)

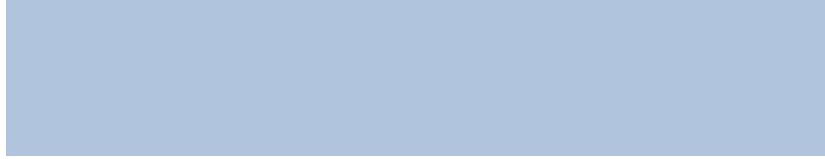
Years active 1964–1989^{[\[1\]](#)[\[2\]](#)[\[3\]](#)}
2001
2012–present

Labels [Steeltown](#)
[Motown](#)
[PIR](#)
[Epic](#)
[CBS](#)

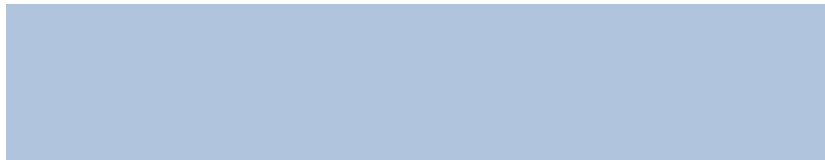


Members

Jackie Jackson
Marlon Jackson

**Past
members**

Tito Jackson
Jermaine Jackson
Michael Jackson
Randy Jackson

**Website**

thejacksons.live

The Jackson 5,^[a] later known as **the Jacksons**, are an American [pop](#) band composed of members of the [Jackson family](#). The group was formed in [Gary, Indiana](#), in 1964, and originally consisted of brothers [Jackie](#), [Tito](#), [Jermaine](#), [Marlon](#), and [Michael](#). They were managed by their father [Joe Jackson](#).^{[1][4][2][3]} The group were among the first [African American](#) performers to attain a [following across multiple genres](#).^[5]

The Jackson 5 first performed in talent shows and clubs on the [Chitlin' Circuit](#) and eventually signed with [Steeltown Records](#) in 1967, under which their first two singles were released.^[6] In 1968, they left Steeltown and signed with [Motown](#), where they were the first group to debut with four consecutive number-one hits on the [Billboard Hot 100](#) chart with the songs "[I Want You Back](#)" (1969), "[ABC](#)", "[The Love You Save](#)", and "[I'll Be There](#)" (all 1970).^[7] They achieved seventeen Top 40 singles on the chart in five years, including six number-one *Billboard* R&B hits. The group left Motown for [Epic Records](#) in early 1976, with the exception of Jermaine, who was replaced by youngest brother [Randy](#). Changing their name to the Jacksons upon signing with Epic, they released four studio albums and one live album between 1976 and 1981, including the successful albums [Destiny](#) (1978) and [Triumph](#) (1980) and singles "[Enjoy Yourself](#)" (1976), "[Shake Your Body \(Down to the Ground\)](#)" (1978), "[This Place Hotel](#)" (1980), and "[Can You Feel It](#)" (1981).

The brothers also embarked on solo careers, with Michael's being the most successful. In 1983, Jermaine reunited with the band to perform on the [Motown 25: Yesterday, Today, Forever](#) television special. They released the [Victory](#) album the following year, followed by an [extensive tour](#) which also featured songs from Michael's solo albums. After the *Victory* tour, Michael and Marlon left the group. The four remaining members released the poorly received [2300 Jackson Street](#)

album in 1989 before being dropped from Epic. In 2001, the Jacksons reunited on Michael's [30th Anniversary Celebration](#) TV special. The four eldest of the brothers embarked on their [Unity Tour](#) in 2012 following [Michael's death](#) in 2009, and they planned several major performances for 2017. ^{[8][9]}

The Jackson 5 have sold over 150 million records worldwide, making them one of the [best-selling artists of all time](#).^{[10][11]} In 1980, the brothers were honored with a star on the [Hollywood Walk of Fame](#) as the Jacksons. They were inducted to the [Rock and Roll Hall of Fame](#) in 1997. Two of the band's recordings, "ABC" and "I Want You Back", are among the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame's [500 Songs that Shaped Rock and Roll](#) and, alongside "I'll Be There", were also inducted into the [Grammy Hall of Fame](#).

History

1964–1969: Early years



The Jackson 5 in 1969

The five Jackson brothers' interest in music was bolstered by their father [Joe Jackson](#). In 1964, Joe found Tito playing with his guitar after a string broke, and he was impressed enough to buy him his own guitar. Tito, Jermaine, and Jackie later formed their own group, with Michael (age 5) playing congas and childhood friends Reynaud Jones and Milford Hite playing keyboards and drums in 1965. Marlon joined on tambourine in August 1965, when Evelyn LaHaie suggested that the group name themselves the Jackson Five.^{[1][12]}

In 1966, the group won their first talent show at [Theodore Roosevelt High School](#) in Gary. Jermaine performed [the Temptations'](#) "My Girl", and Michael performed [Robert Parker's](#) "Barefootin'".^[13] [Johnny Jackson](#) and [Ronnie Rancifer](#) eventually replaced Hite and Jones. During their early performing years, the Jackson 5 would perform at

other talent showcases at several other schools, halls, and theaters in Gary and the Chicago area. In August 1967, the boys were eventually booked into venues such as Chicago's [Regal Theater](#) and Harlem's [Apollo Theater](#), winning the talent competitions on both shows that year, winning the Apollo competition on August 13. According to Jermaine Jackson, [Gladys Knight](#) was the first established artist to support the group, sending a demo tape to [Motown](#). However, the label rejected it and returned the tape.^[14] In July 1967, the group recorded an early version of a song that would later be their first single, "[Big Boy](#)", for [One-derful Records](#), however, the group was also rejected by that label.^[15]

In November 1967, Joe Jackson signed the group into [Steeltown Records](#), a label founded and owned by record producer [Gordon Keith](#). With Keith at the helm, they recorded "Big Boy" again that same month. The song would later be released as a single in January 1968.^[6] By March, Keith had managed to sign the Jackson 5 into a distribution deal with [Atlantic Records](#), where "Big Boy" and another single, "We Don't Have to Be Over 21 (To Fall in Love)", were distributed. "Big Boy" eventually moved 10,000 copies.^[16] By March, Keith booked the boys to perform for their first paying gig at the Apollo Theater where they opened for [Etta James](#).^[17] That month, Keith had "Big Boy" distributed through Atlantic and was working on a record

contract for the boys on that label when he learned that Joe Jackson had tried to get in touch with Motown through his attorney Richard Arons.^[18]

During July 1968, the boys opened for [Bobby Taylor & the Vancouvers](#)^[19] at the Regal Theater. After being blown away by Michael's performance, Taylor sent the boys to Detroit where he set up a recorded Motown audition, which took place at Motown's official headquarters on Detroit's Woodward Avenue on July 23, 1968. Motown chief [Berry Gordy](#), who had initially rejected their tape, refusing to sign any more "kid acts" after [Stevie Wonder](#), changed his mind once he viewed Taylor's tape. On July 26, Gordy returned to Detroit where he had Joe Jackson and the boys sign their first year-long Motown contract.^[20] The recording of their first album was delayed due to a contract dispute with Keith. While negotiations were continuing to get the Jacksons out of Steeltown, the group performed at strip clubs to make extra income.^[21]

Finally on March 11, 1969, a day before Marlon's 12th birthday, the Jackson Five signed an exclusive seven-year contract with the label.^[20] After initial recordings at Detroit's [Hitsville U.S.A.](#) failed to impress Gordy, he sent the Jacksons to Hollywood. In August, Motown's PR machine, led by [Suzanne de Passe](#), started to pass off

the group as having been discovered by [Supremes](#) lead singer [Diana Ross](#). When the group opened for record industry insiders at the Los Angeles club, the Daisy, Michael was billed as an "eight-year-old sensation", though he was several days shy of his 11th birthday. Shortly after the Daisy performance, the Jackson Five performed a cover of "[It's Your Thing](#)" at the Miss Black America Pageant in New York.^[22] By September, Gordy had set up the new songwriting and producing team, [The Corporation](#), to write exclusively for the Jackson Five. After recording "[I Want You Back](#)" that same month, the single was released in early October and the Jacksons promoted the song on programs such as the [Hollywood Palace](#) and the [Ed Sullivan Show](#). Their debut album, [Diana Ross Presents The Jackson 5](#), was released in December 1969.^[23]

1970–1971: Jacksonmania

The [Jackson family](#) represents a colossus in music history. They defined black American music as a commercial entity for longer than anyone. With an average age of 12 when they turned professional, [Michael](#), [Marlon](#), [Jackie](#), [Jermaine](#) and [Tito](#) were arguably the original boy band.^[24] Thousands of fans waited for the Jackson 5 wherever they went, and they had to be escorted by the police. During the height of Jacksonmania, crowds would pile up on top of each other to

get closer to the stage. Early footage shows girls climbing over seats to get closer, with police officers trying to control the situation.^{[25][26]}

When the Jackson 5 performed at [The Forum](#), in [Inglewood, California](#) in 1970, they attracted nearly 19,000 fans. Thousands of more fans were turned away due to the Forum's capacity limits. The concert grossed more than \$105,000, a record at that time. The Forum concert is featured on [Live at the Forum](#).^[27] Veteran singer [Jerry Butler](#) and the [Rare Earth](#) (one of Motown's most popular white groups) were also opening acts for them.^[28] The tours got bigger as they evolved. The Jackson 5 performed to sold-out concerts with record-breaking attendance nationally and internationally, including Africa, Asia and Europe. The excitement of Jacksonmania was worldwide.^[29] Motown established a Jackson 5 brand. By the 70s, they were one of the world's most famous groups.^[30] Jacksonmania set the tone for the music industry for years to come.^[24]

The Jackson 5 became [Motown](#)'s main marketing focus and the label capitalized on the group's youth appeal, licensing dozens of products, including the J5 heart logo on Johnny Jackson's drum set, the group's album covers, stickers, posters, and coloring books, as well as a board game and a Saturday morning cartoon; [Jackson Five](#) produced by [Rankin/Bass](#).^[31] The black publication [Right On!](#) began in 1971

and focused heavily on the Jackson 5, with members adorning covers between January 1972 and April 1974.^[32] The Jackson 5 was featured on the cover of *Rolling Stone* magazine at a time when *Rolling Stone* did not usually cover children acts. They also appeared on the covers of *Life* and *Ebony*.^[29] The group appeared in several television specials including Diana Ross' 1971 special, *Diana!*. They starred in their first of two Motown-oriented television specials *Goin' Back to Indiana*^[33] in September; their second was *The Jackson 5 Show* which debuted in November of the following year. The group often joined Bob Hope on USO-benefited performances to support military troops during the Vietnam War.^[34]

The Jackson 5 single "I Want You Back" topped the *Billboard* Hot 100 in January 1970. They released two more number-one singles: "ABC" and "The Love You Save". The single "I'll Be There" was co-written and produced by Hal Davis and became the band's fourth number-one single, making them the first recording act to have their first four singles reach the top of the Hot 100. All four were almost as popular in other countries as they were in the United States. The Jackson 5 released a succession of four albums in one year and replaced The Supremes as Motown's best-selling group. They continued their success with singles such as "Mama's Pearl", "Never Can Say

Goodbye", and "*Sugar Daddy*", giving them a total of seven top-ten singles within a two-year period.^[35]

In order to continue increasing sales, Motown launched Michael Jackson's solo career in 1971 with the hit single "*Got to Be There*",^[33] released in October. His subsequent singles "*Rockin' Robin*" and "*I Wanna Be Where You Are*" from his solo debut album *Got to Be There* were also hits. His 1972 song "*Ben*"^[36] became his first to top the charts. Jermaine was the second to release a solo project; his most successful hit of the period was a cover of the doo-wop song "*Daddy's Home*".^[37]

1972–1976: Decline

The Jackson 5's records began falling on the charts by 1972, despite Michael and Jermaine's solo successes. The Corporation had produced most of their hit singles, but they split up in 1973.^[23] The brothers focused on the emerging disco craze and recorded the song "*Get It Together*", followed by their 1974 hit "*Dancing Machine*", their first to crack the top ten since "*Sugar Daddy*" nearly three years before.^[38] Despite those successes, most of the Jackson 5's follow-ups were not as successful, and Joe Jackson grew tired of Motown's uneasiness to continue producing hits for the brothers by

1973. He began producing a nightclub act around [his sons and daughters](#), starting in Las Vegas and expanding to other states.^[39]

By 1975, the Jackson 5 had sold over 60 million records^[40] and most of the group opted out of recording any more music for Motown, desiring creative control and royalties after learning that they were earning only 2.8% of royalties from Motown. The Jacksons announced their decision to depart from Motown at a press conference at the [Rainbow Grill](#) in [Manhattan](#), New York City.^[41] Joe Jackson then began negotiating to have the group sign a lucrative contract with another company, settling for [Epic Records](#), which had offered a royalty rate of 20% per record; he signed with the company in June 1975.^[41] Absent from the deal was Jermaine Jackson, who decided to stay with Motown following his marriage to Hazel Gordy, and [Randy Jackson](#) replaced him.^[42] Even though the group announced their departure from the label, they still remained under contract to Motown until March 1976.^[41] Motown sued them for breach of contract but allowed the group to record for Epic, as long as they changed their name because Motown owned the name Jackson 5. The brothers thus renamed themselves the Jacksons.^[43]

1976–1989: CBS/Epic Records

In November 1976, following the debut of the family's [weekly variety series](#), the Jacksons released their [self-titled CBS debut](#) under the [Philadelphia International](#) subsidiary, produced by [Gamble & Huff](#). Featuring "[Enjoy Yourself](#)" and "[Show You the Way to Go](#)", the album went gold but failed to generate the sales the brothers had enjoyed while at Motown. A follow-up, [Goin' Places](#), fizzled. Renewing their contract with Epic, the Jacksons were allowed full creative control on their next recording, [Destiny](#), released in December 1978. By 1979, the Jacksons had sold 90 million records.^{[44][45]} Featuring their best-selling Epic single to date, "[Shake Your Body \(Down to the Ground\)](#)", written by Michael and Randy, the album sold over a million copies. Its follow-up, 1980's [Triumph](#), also sold a million copies, spawning hits such as "[Lovely One](#)", "[This Place Hotel](#)" and "[Can You Feel It](#)". In 1981, they released their fifth album, a [live album](#) that eventually sold half a million copies. The live album was culled from recordings of performances on their [Triumph Tour](#).^{[46][47]}



[Michael](#) (pictured in 1984) left the group after becoming a global superstar.

In between the releases of *Destiny* and *Triumph*, Michael released his first solo effort under Epic, *Off the Wall*. Its success led to rumors of Michael's alleged split from his brothers. After *Triumph*, Michael worked on his second Epic solo release, which was released in November 1982 as *Thriller*, which later went on to become the [best-selling album of all time](#), winning eight Grammy Awards including Album of the Year, plus producing two number-one hit singles, "Billie Jean" and "Beat It", and three breakthrough MTV music videos, "Billie Jean", "Beat It", and the 14-minute zombie-themed music video "Thriller".^[48] In March 1983, with Jermaine, the Jacksons performed on *Motown 25: Yesterday, Today, Forever*, the same show where Michael debuted the [moonwalk](#) during a solo performance of "[Billie Jean](#)".^{[49][50]}

Following the success of the reunion, all six brothers agreed to record a sixth album for Epic, later released as [Victory](#) in 1984.^[51] Their biggest-selling album to date, it included their final top ten single, "[State of Shock](#)". The song was actually a duet between Michael and [Mick Jagger](#) and did not feature participation from any other Jackson besides Marlon and Jackie, who were credited as background vocalists.^[52] Most of the album was produced in this way, with each brother essentially recording solo songs. Another hit was the top 20 single "[Torture](#)", a duet between Michael and Jermaine, with Jackie singing several parts.^[52] In the same year, the brothers participated in filming a Pepsi commercial where Michael suffered burns to his scalp due to a pyrotechnic fault.^[53] In July 1984, the Jacksons launched their [Victory Tour](#), which was overshadowed by Jackie's leg injury, ticket issues, friction between the brothers, and a shakeup in the promotion and marketing team, initially headed by [Don King](#), who was later fired. Michael announced he was leaving the group after their final performance at [Dodger Stadium](#) that December to continue his solo career.^[54] The following January, Marlon Jackson also announced he was leaving the group to pursue a solo career.^[55] At the time of their breakup the Jackson 5 had sold more than 100 million records worldwide.^[56]

In 1987, the Jacksons released the single "Time Out for the Burglar", which was included on the soundtrack of the [Whoopi Goldberg](#) comedy film *Burglar* (1987). In 1989, the remaining quartet of Jackie, Tito, Jermaine and Randy released the album *2300 Jackson Street*.^[57] After a brief promotional tour, the group went into hiatus and never recorded another album together. Following the release of one solo album, Marlon quit the music business in 1989 and invested in real estate. Randy has not been active in the industry since he disbanded the group Randy & the Gypsies in 1991.^[37]

2001–2011: Reunion and death of Michael



"This Is It"

Duration: 22 seconds.

0:22

A sample of Michael and the Jacksons' "This Is It". The song was the first song for the Jacksons to chart on the *Billboard* Hot Adult Contemporary Tracks since 1970. (The song was originally recorded by Michael alone, and served as the title track for his [posthumous concert film](#).)

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In September 2001, nearly 17 years after their last performance together, all six Jackson brothers reunited for two performances at [Madison Square Garden](#) for a [30th anniversary special commemorating Michael's solo career](#), which aired in November. In early 2009, the four elder brothers began filming a reality show to make their attempt on reuniting the band, later debuting in December 2009 as *[The Jacksons: A Family Dynasty](#)*.^[58] During the middle of the project, Michael had announced his [concert comeback in London](#) was scheduled on July 13, 2009. [Michael died](#) that same year on June 25, putting efforts on hold.

Later in 2009, the surviving Jacksons recorded background vocals to add to Michael's 1980 demo of "[This Is It](#)", which became the theme song to the concert film *[Michael Jackson's This Is It](#)*.^[59] The radio-only single was released in October of that same year. The song returned the Jacksons to the *Billboard* charts, not on the Hot 100, but at number nineteen on [Hot Adult Contemporary Tracks](#).^[60] The surviving members of the Jacksons were in talks of planning a reunion concert tour (which was to serve as a tribute to Michael) for 2010, and were in talks in working on their first new studio album in over 20 years.^{[58][61]} Neither plan was put into action. In September 2010, Jermaine Jackson held his own tribute concert to Michael in [Las Vegas](#). In 2011,

Jackie Jackson released a solo single to [iTunes](#). Jermaine released his first solo album in 21 years, *I Wish U Love*.

In August 2011, there was a discord between the brothers concerning a tribute concert dedicated to Michael. While Jackie, Tito, and Marlon were present with mother [Katherine](#) and sister [La Toya](#) for a tribute concert in [Cardiff](#) at the [Millennium Stadium](#) for a press conference concerning the tour, a couple of days later, both Randy and Jermaine issued a statement denouncing the tribute tour as the date of it occurred around Conrad Murray's [manslaughter](#) trial in relation to Michael's death. The show carried on with Jackie, Tito and Marlon performing without Jermaine.^[62] In October 2011, the Jacksons were featured artists on Japanese-American singer [Ai](#)'s single, "[Letter in the Sky](#)". The song was a tribute to Michael and was the group's first single in 22 years. The song served as the theme song for the *Michael Jackson Tribute: Live in Tokyo* concert that took place December 13 and 14, 2011 at [Yoyogi National Stadium](#) in Japan.^[63] The single was a modest hit in Japan, charting at number 14 on the Japan [Oricon Singles Chart](#) and number 36 on the [Billboard Japan Hot 100](#).^{[64][65]}

2012–present: Continued activities

In April 2012, Jackie, Tito, Jermaine, and Marlon announced that they would reunite for several United States concerts for their [Unity Tour](#).

38 dates were announced; the eleven shows in the U.S. were canceled. The tour started at [Casino Rama](#) in [Orillia, Ontario](#), Canada on June 20, 2012.^[66] 32 additional dates were eventually added, and the tour ended on July 27, 2013, in [Atlantic City](#), United States.^[67]

On January 7, 2016, the Jacksons performed at [Planet Hollywood Las Vegas](#), at a concert event, naming it "Heal the World: A Tribute to Michael Jackson". A big-name roster of music stars performed the music of Michael Jackson at the concert.^[68]

On June 15, 2018, the four Jacksons; [Tito](#), [Jackie](#), [Marlon](#) and [Jermaine](#) accepted plaques bearing the Detroit city keys during a high-ticket private party that launched the second Detroit Music Weekend festival. Detroit police chief James Craig, who presented the honors, declared the [Motown](#) group "truly Detroiters". The Jacksons headlined and performed at Detroit Music Weekend Festival on the 16th. They were also honored with a 90-minute tribute concert featuring Jackson 5, the Jacksons, Michael Jackson, [Janet Jackson](#) and [Rebbie Jackson](#) hits, with guest appearances by Blue Note saxophonist David McMurray and Herschel Boone for [Kid Rock's Twisted Brown Trucker](#) Band. The concert finale was Michael Jackson's "[Don't Stop 'Til You Get Enough](#)" with [Greg Phillinganes](#), a

Detroit native who worked with the Jacksons as a session player and tour musical director.^[69]

In January 2020, the Jacksons visited Chicago, Illinois and [Gary, Indiana](#) for the groundbreaking of a new [Hard Rock Casino](#) in Gary which played repository to Jacksons memorabilia while bringing 2,000 jobs. They were interviewed by the [Chicago Sun-Times](#) and [Windy City Live](#). They also visited their old school in Gary where they donated their appearance fee to provide 170 bicycles to the [Boys & Girls Clubs of America](#) youth. They also got \$61,000 donated to the club by [Walmart](#), Hard Rock and Spectacle whose plan is to have a Jackson family museum and restaurant at the casino.^[70]

Tito died on September 15, 2024.^[71]

Legacy



The Jacksons in 1977

In 1969, one year after the assassination of [Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.](#), there was a time when [Black power movement](#) and the [civil rights movement](#) were disintegrating. It was during this time that the Jackson 5 would emerge. The Jackson family was important to black culture. After the [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) administration declared the black family broken with the [Moynihan Report](#), [Motown](#) and the Jackson family gave America and the world renewed faith in the American dream with an idealized image of domestic bliss. Black ascensionism was in the air. The Jackson family presented to America and the world a new positive image of black families. They changed the perception of the African-American male worldwide. ^{[72][73]} The brothers became a household name and appealed equally to black and white audiences, breaking racial barriers. ^{[74][75]}

In September 1971, [Jackson 5ive](#) television series ran as part of [ABC](#)'s Saturday morning cartoon lineup. *Jackson 5ive* animation director Bob Balser insisted that the series would not include violence. The series was one of the first cartoon representations of a black family that did not include cheap gags and stereotyping. The Jackson 5 solved their problems with music and intellect as role models for families and their children.^[31]

In 1977, the Jackson 5 were among a small group of artists eligible to receive the newly minted [Madison Square Garden Gold Ticket Award](#) for selling over 100,000 tickets to their concerts there.^[76] They received the award from [Madison Square Garden](#) when they played there as the Jacksons in 1981.^[77] On September 3, 1980, the brothers were honored with a star on the [Hollywood Walk of Fame](#) as the Jacksons.^[78] As the Jackson 5, they were inducted into the [Rock and Roll Hall of Fame](#) in 1997 and the [Vocal Group Hall of Fame](#) in 1999.^{[79][80]} Two of the band's recordings ("ABC" and "I Want You Back") are among the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame's [500 Songs that Shaped Rock and Roll](#), while the latter track also included in the [Grammy Hall of Fame](#).^{[79][81]} On September 8, 2008, the Jacksons were honored as [BMI](#) Icons at the annual BMI Urban Awards.^[82]

In 1992, [Suzanne de Passe](#), [Jermaine Jackson](#), and Stan Margulies worked with [Motown](#) to produce *[The Jacksons: An American Dream](#)*, a five-hour television [miniseries](#) broadcast based on the history of the Jackson family in a two-part special on [ABC](#). The series tells the story of a hard working black family and their path to success and the American Dream.^[83]

The rise of the Jackson 5 in the 1960s and 1970s coincided with the rise of a similar musical family, [the Osmonds](#). The white Mormon brothers from Utah, were thought to be an imitation of the black Jackson 5. Michael and [Donny](#), the lead singers from each group developed a friendship. They both went on to pursue successful solo careers.^[84] Influenced by [the Temptations](#), [the Supremes](#), [James Brown](#), [Jackie Wilson](#), [Sammy Davis Jr.](#), [the Teenagers](#) and [Sly and the Family Stone](#), the Jackson 5 eventually served as the inspiration for several generations of boy bands including [New Edition](#), [Boyz II Men](#), [Menudo](#), [New Kids on the Block](#), [NSYNC](#), the [Jonas Brothers](#), [Backstreet Boys](#), [One Direction](#), [Silk Sonic](#), [BTS](#) and many more.^[85]

In 2012, [Motown Records](#) released a "two-disc undiscovered" Jackson 5 collection *[Come and Get It: The Rare Pearls](#)*. The archive contained several well-known [covers](#) and previously unreleased material, re-issued.^[86]

In 2017, on their 50th anniversary, the Jacksons released *The Jacksons: Legacy*, their first official behind-the-scenes chronicle book. The book includes new interviews and unseen photographs, and it tells the story of the [Jackson family](#) in their own words.^[43]

On June 15, 2018, the Jacksons accepted plaques bearing the keys to Detroit city. Detroit police chief James Craig, who presented the honors, declared the [Motown](#) group "truly Detroiters". They were also honored with a 90-minute tribute concert featuring Jackson 5, the Jacksons, Michael Jackson, [Janet Jackson](#) and [Rebbie Jackson](#) hits. The concert finale was Michael Jackson's "[Don't Stop 'Til You Get Enough](#)" with [Greg Phillinganes](#), a Detroit native who worked with the Jacksons as a session player and tour musical director.^[69]



Highway sign on I-80/I-94/US 6 memorializing the Jackson family home

On May 13, 2021, guide signs for the "Home of the World-Famous Jackson 5" were installed on the Borman Expressway (I-80/I-94/US 6)

and local roads, directing drivers to the Jackson family home at 2300 Jackson Street in [Gary, Indiana](#). A gathering was held at the family home celebrating the installations. Among the participants were two members of the family ([Marlon Jackson](#) and [Tito Jackson](#)), the [Lieutenant Governor of Indiana Suzanne Crouch](#), and state Senator [Eddie Melton](#).^{[87][88]}

In August 2025, Marlon and Jackie Jackson returned to Gary for a two-day 2300 Jackson Street Block Party, that the city organized in celebration of the group's legacy. The event began on the 67th anniversary of Michael Jackson's birth and included a moment of silence acknowledging Tito Jackson's death.^{[89][90]} Gary native [Deniece Williams](#) performed during the event, which was months after the unveiling of a mural of the Jackson Five mural painted by Felix Maldonado.^{[89][91]}

Awards and nominations

Grammy Awards

The Jackson 5 were nominated for a total of three Grammy Awards throughout their career.

Year	Nominee / work	Award	Result
1971	"ABC"	Best Contemporary Vocal Performance by a Duo, Group or Chorus	Nominated
1975	"Dancing Machine"	Best R&B Vocal Performance by a Duo or Group	Nominated
1981	<i>Triumph</i>	Best R&B Vocal Performance by a Duo or Group	Nominated

Grammy Hall of Fame

Three of the Jackson 5's songs were inducted into the [Grammy Hall of Fame](#).

Year	Nominee / work	Award	Result
1999	" I'll Be There "	Grammy Hall of Fame	Inducted
1999	" I Want You Back "	Grammy Hall of Fame	Inducted
2017	" ABC "	Grammy Hall of Fame	Inducted

NAACP Image Awards

The Jackson 5 has won four [NAACP Image Awards](#) throughout their career.

Year	Nominee / work	Award	Result
1970	The Jackson 5	Best Vocal Group	Won
1971	The Jackson 5	Best Vocal Group	Won
1972	The Jackson 5	Best Vocal Group	Won
1980	The Jacksons	Best Vocal Group	Won

United States Congress

The [United States Congress](#) is the [bicameral](#) legislature of the federal government of the United States of America, consisting of two houses, the [Senate](#) and the [House of Representatives](#). They awarded the Jackson 5 with a "Special Commendation" for positive role models in 1972.^{[\[citation needed\]](#)}

Year	Nominee / work	Award	Result
1972	The Jackson 5	Special Commendation for Positive Role Models	Honoree

Congressional Black Caucus

Year	Nominee / work	Award	Result
1975	The Jackson Five	Inducted As Honorary Members	Honoree

Organisation of African Unity

Year	Nominee / work	Award	Result

1974	The Jackson 5	For strengthening Afro-Americans	Won
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BMI Awards

[Broadcast Music, Incorporated](#) (BMI) is one of two major United States [performing rights organization](#), along with [ASCAP](#). It collects license fees on behalf of songwriters, composers, and music publishers and distributes them as [royalties](#) to members whose works have been performed.

The Jacksons were honored with the BMI Icons award in 2008 and two of their songs, "Never Can Say Goodbye", and "Dancing Machine", were awarded to songwriters [Clifton Davis](#) in 1972 and [Hal Davis](#), [Dean Parks](#) and Don Fletcher in 1975 respectively at the BMI Pop Awards; those awards weren't received by the Jackson 5.

BMI Urban Awards

Year	Nominee / work	Award	Result
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2008	The Jacksons	BMI Icon Award	Honoree
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Atlanta International Film Festival

Year	Nominee / work	Award	Result
1984	The Jacksons	Bronze Medal Award (Pepsi TV ads)	Won

Hollywood Walk of Fame

The [Hollywood Walk of Fame](#) is a [sidewalk](#) along [Hollywood Boulevard](#) and [Vine Street](#) in Hollywood, California, United States, that serves as an entertainment [hall of fame](#). It is embedded with more than 2,000 five-pointed stars featuring the names of [celebrities](#) honored by the Hollywood [Chamber of Commerce](#) for their contributions to the entertainment industry.

The Jacksons received their star in 1980.

Year	Nominee / work	Award	Result
1980	The Jacksons	Hollywood Walk of Fame Star	Won

Rock and Roll Hall of Fame

The [Rock and Roll Hall of Fame](#) is a museum located on the shores of Lake Erie in downtown Cleveland, Ohio, United States, dedicated to recording the history of some of the best-known and most influential artists, producers, and other people who have in some major way influenced the music industry.

All of the original members of the Jackson 5 were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1997. Only Randy Jackson was not inducted alongside his brothers. They were subsequently inducted by Diana Ross and Berry Gordy.

Year	Nominee / work	Award	Result
1997	The Jackson 5	Rock and Roll Hall of Fame	Inducted

Vocal Group Hall of Fame

The [Vocal Group Hall of Fame](#) (VGHF) was organized by [Tony Butala](#), also the founder (and now only surviving original member) of [the Lettermen](#), to honor outstanding vocal groups throughout the world. Headquartered in [Sharon, Pennsylvania](#), it includes a theater and a museum.

The Jackson 5 were inducted in 1999.

Year	Nominee / work	Award	Result
1999	The Jackson 5	Vocal Group	Inducted

		Hall of Fame	
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Band members

Main article: [List of the Jackson 5 band members](#)

Current

- [Jackie Jackson](#) – lead vocals, percussion (1964–1989, 2001, 2012–present)
- [Marlon Jackson](#) – vocals, percussion (1964–1985, 2001, 2012–present)

Touring

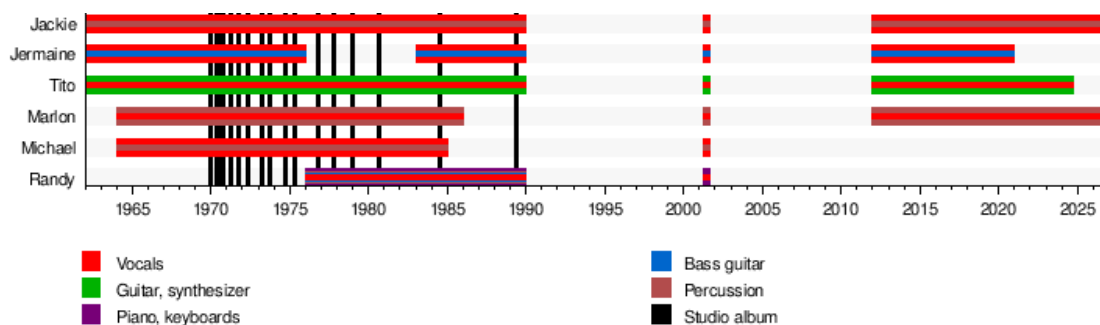
- Taryll Jackson – vocals (2023–present)^{[*[citation needed](#)*]}
- Milford Hite – drums (1964–1967)
- [Johnny Jackson](#) – drums (1967–1975)
- [Jonathan Moffett](#) – drums (1979–1984)

Former

- [Tito Jackson](#) – vocals, lead guitar, synthesizer (1964–1989, 2001, 2012–2024; his death)
- [Jermaine Jackson](#) – lead vocals, bass guitar (1964–1975, 1983–1989, 2001, 2012–2020^{[*[citation needed](#)*]})

- [Michael Jackson](#) – lead vocals, percussion (1964–1984, 2001; died 2009)
- [Randy Jackson](#) – keyboards, piano, percussion, vocals, bass (1975–1989, 2001)

Timeline



Discography

Main article: [The Jackson 5 discography](#)

Motown releases (as Jackson 5)

- [*Diana Ross Presents The Jackson 5*](#) (1969)
- [*ABC*](#) (1970)
- [*Third Album*](#) (1970)
- [*Jackson 5 Christmas Album*](#) (1970)
- [*Maybe Tomorrow*](#) (1971)
- [*Lookin' Through the Windows*](#) (1972)
- [*Skywriter*](#) (1973)
- [*G.I.T.: Get It Together*](#) (1973)
- [*Dancing Machine*](#) (1974)
- [*Moving Violation*](#) (1975)

CBS/Epic releases (as the Jacksons)

- [*The Jacksons*](#) (1976)
- [*Goin' Places*](#) (1977)
- [*Destiny*](#) (1978)
- [*Triumph*](#) (1980)
- [*Victory*](#) (1984)
- [*2300 Jackson Street*](#) (1989)

Tours

Main article: [List of concert tours by the Jackson 5](#)

As the Jackson 5

- The Jackson 5 First National Tour (1970)
- The Jackson 5 Second National Tour (1971)
- The Jackson 5 US Tour (1972)
- The Jackson 5 European Tour (1972)
- [The Jackson 5 World Tour](#) (1973–1975)
- The Jackson 5 Final Tour (1976)

As the Jacksons

- The Jacksons Tour (1977)^[92]
- Goin' Places Tour (1978)^[93]
- [Destiny World Tour](#) (1979–1980)^[94]
- [Triumph Tour](#) (1981)^[95]
- [Victory Tour](#) (1984)^[96]
- [Unity Tour](#) (2012–2013)

See also



[Indiana portal](#)



[Biography portal](#)

- [List of number-one hits \(United States\)](#)
- [List of artists who reached number one on the Hot 100 \(U.S.\)](#)
- [List of number-one dance hits \(United States\)](#)
- [List of highest-grossing concert tours](#)

Notes

- a. or **the Jackson Five**, sometimes stylized as **the Jackson 5ive**

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- ["The Jackson 5". Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.](#) 
- ['Jackson Five' Vocal Group Hall of Fame Page](#)
- [The Jackson Five Video Archive](#)
- [Jackson 5 on The Ed Sullivan Show](#)
- [Image of The Jacksons performing on stage in Kansas City's Arrowhead Stadium during the Victory Tour, 1984. Los Angeles Times Photographic Archive \(Collection 1429\). UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles.](#)
- [Jackson 5 at Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo \(1974\) from Texas Archive of the Moving Image](#)

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The Jackson 5 / The Jacksons

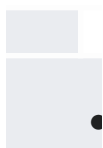
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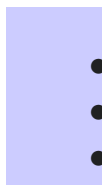
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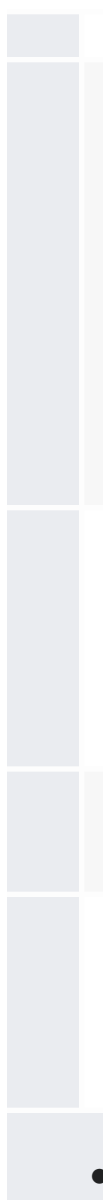


Awards for The Jackson 5





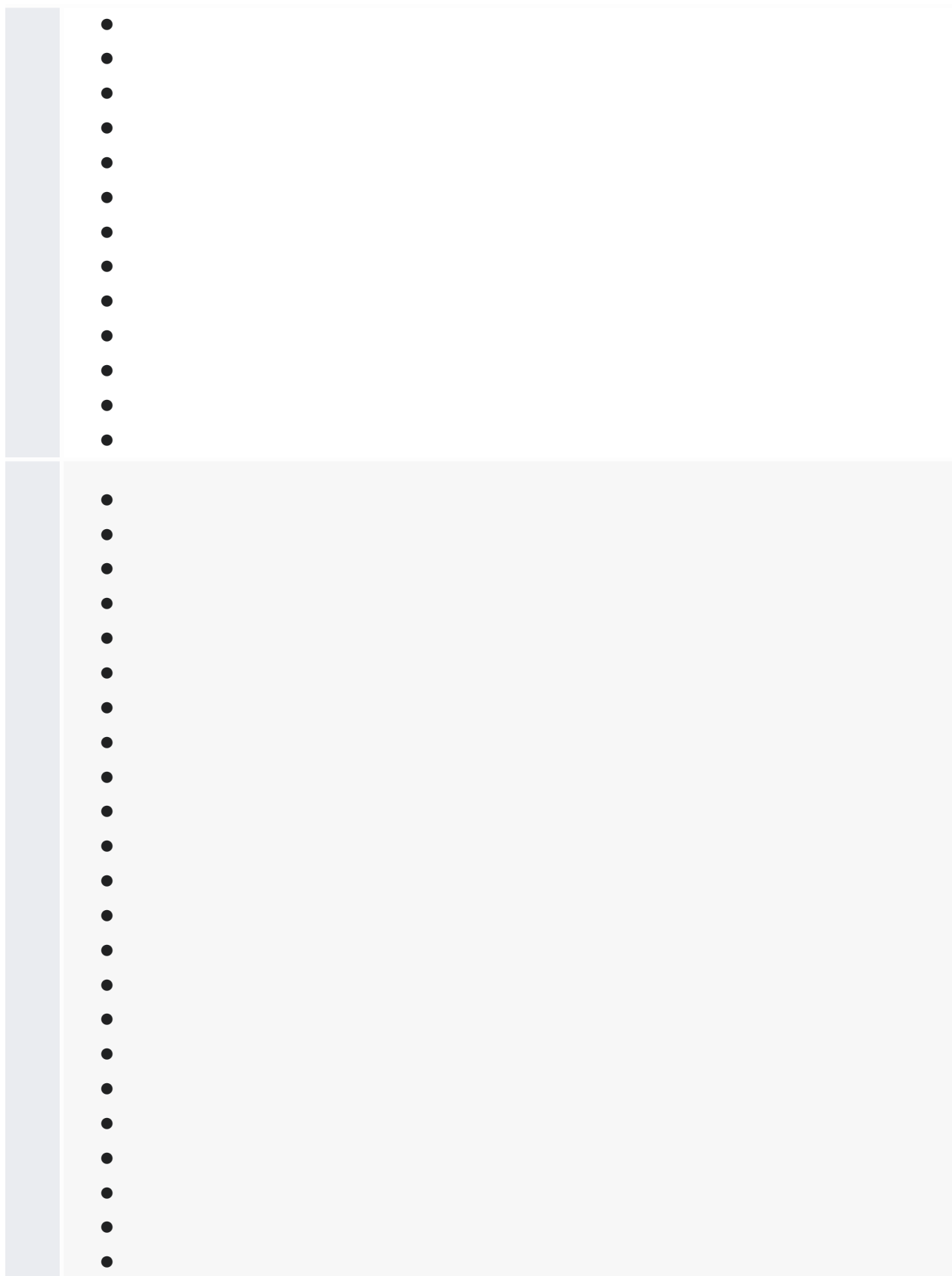


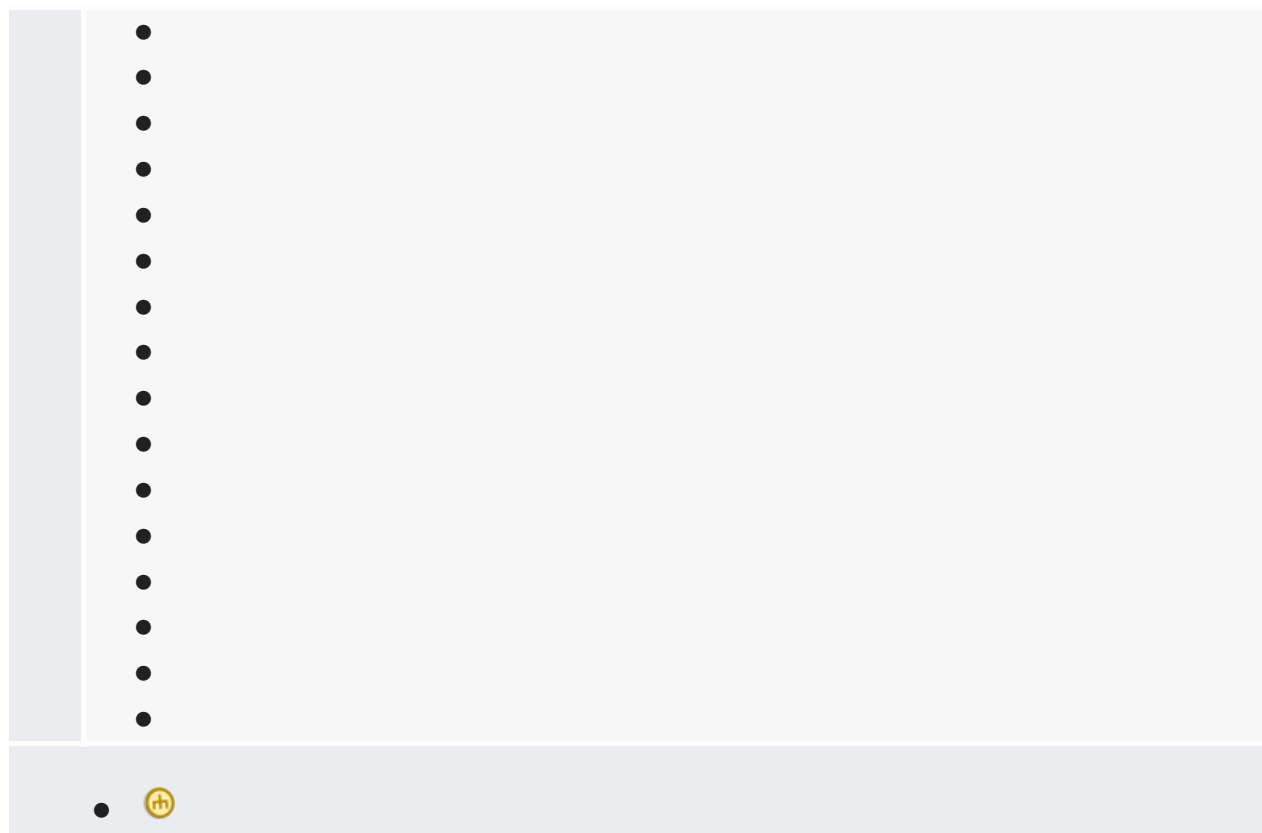


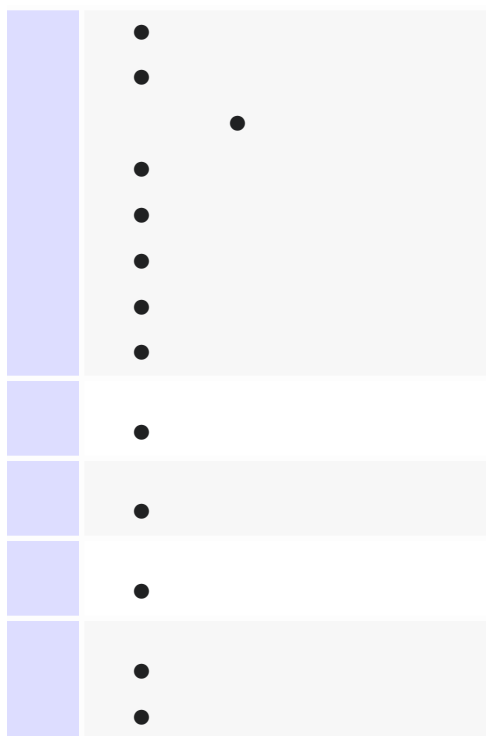
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Michael Jackson

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Categories:

The Jackson 5

1962 establishments in Indiana

African-American musical groups

American boy bands

American disco groups

American funk musical groups

American musical quintets

American pop music groups

American rhythm and blues musical groups

American soul musical groups

Bubblegum pop groups

Child musical groups

Epic Records artists

Jackson family (show business)

[Motown artists](#)

[Musical groups disestablished in 1989](#)

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[Musical groups from Indiana](#)

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[Sibling musical groups](#)

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Thriller (album)

- Article
- [Talk](#)
- Read
- [View source](#)
- [View history](#)

Tools

Appearance hide

Text

- Small
- Standard
- Large

Width

- Standard
- Wide

Color

- Automatic
- Light
- Dark



From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

For other albums, see [Thriller \(disambiguation\)](#) § Music.





Original 1982 cover

Studio album by Michael Jackson

Release November 29, 1982

d

Recorded April 14 – November 8, 1982

d

Studio [Westlake](#), Los Angeles, California

Genre

- [Pop](#)
- [post-disco](#)
- [R&B](#)

- funk
- rock

Length 42:16

Label Epic

Produce
r

- Quincy Jones
- Michael Jackson

Michael Jackson chronology

E.T **Thr** 18
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Singles from *Thriller*

1. "The Girl Is Mine"
Released: October 18, 1982
2. "Billie Jean"
Released: January 3, 1983
3. "Beat It"
Released: February 21, 1983
4. "Wanna Be Startin' Somethin'"
Released: May 9, 1983
5. "Human Nature"
Released: July 4, 1983^[1]
6. "P.Y.T. (Pretty Young Thing)"
Released: September 19, 1983^[2]
7. "Thriller"
Released: November 11, 1983^[3]

Thriller is the sixth [studio album](#) by the American singer and songwriter [Michael Jackson](#). It was released on November 29, 1982, through [Epic Records](#). It was produced by [Quincy Jones](#), who previously worked with Jackson on his album *[Off the Wall](#)* (1979). Recording took place from April to November 1982 at [Westlake Recording Studios](#) in Los Angeles, California, with a budget of \$750,000 (equivalent to \$2,502,155 in 2025). With the ongoing backlash against [disco music](#), Jackson transitioned his sound, with *Thriller* featuring [pop](#), [post-disco](#), and [R&B](#), while its themes include

paranoia, romance, and social consciousness. Paul McCartney appears as the first credited featured artist on a Jackson album.

Thriller was Jackson's first number-one album on the *Billboard* Top LPs & Tape chart, and stood atop for a record 37 non-consecutive weeks. The album's second and third singles, "Billie Jean" and "Beat It", topped the *Billboard* Hot 100 chart, while "The Girl Is Mine", "Wanna Be Startin' Somethin'", "Human Nature", "P.Y.T. (Pretty Young Thing)", and "Thriller" were Top 10 hits, setting a record for the most Top 10 hits from one album. Sales of *Thriller* surged after Jackson debuted his signature moonwalk dance in *Motown 25* and the "Thriller" music video premiered on MTV, and by early 1984 it became the best-selling album of all time, with sales of over 30 million copies.

Thriller was praised by critics and soon attracted greater acclaim. It won a record-breaking eight Grammy Awards, including Album of the Year and Record of the Year for "Beat It", and earned Jackson a record-breaking eight American Music Awards. It was the best-selling album of 1983 worldwide, and in 1984 it became the first album to be the best-selling in the United States for two years. It had an enormous impact on the music industry; in particular, the several music videos from the album are credited with transforming music videos into a serious art form.

Thriller remains the best-selling album of all time, having sold an estimated 70 million copies worldwide, and is certified **34× platinum** in the US, making it the second **best-selling album in the US**. It is often recognized as a landmark in **American culture**; the success gave Jackson an unprecedented level of **cultural significance** for a **black American**, breaking **racial barriers** in **popular music** and causing an intense fan frenzy dubbed "Michaelmania". It is frequently recognized as one of the greatest and most influential albums of all time. In 2008, it was inducted into the **Grammy Hall of Fame** and added to the **National Recording Registry** of "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant recordings" by the **Library of Congress**.

Background



Jackson during a television appearance in 1981

Jackson's previous album *Off the Wall* (1979) received critical acclaim and was a commercial success, having sold 7 million copies at the time.^{[4][5][6]} The years between *Off the Wall* and *Thriller* were a

transitional period for Jackson, a time of increased independence.^[7]

The period saw him become deeply unhappy; Jackson said, "Even at home, I'm lonely. I sit in my room sometimes and cry. It's so hard to make friends ... I sometimes walk around the neighborhood at night, just hoping to find someone to talk to. But I just end up coming home."^[8]

When Jackson turned 21 in August 1979, he hired *John Branca* as his manager.^[9] Jackson told Branca that he wanted to be the biggest and wealthiest star in showbusiness. He was upset about what he perceived as the underperformance of *Off the Wall*, feeling it had deserved the *Grammy Award for Album of the Year*.^[10] He also felt undervalued by the music industry; in 1980, when *Rolling Stone* declined to run a cover story on him, Jackson responded: "I've been told over and over that black people on the cover of magazines doesn't sell copies ... Just wait. Some day those magazines are going to be begging me for an interview. Maybe I'll give them one, and maybe I won't."^[10]

For his next album, Jackson wanted to create an album where "every song was a killer". He was frustrated by albums that would have "one good song, and the rest were like B-sides ... Why can't every one be like a hit song? Why can't every song be so great that people would want to buy it if you could release it as a single? ... That was my purpose for the next album."^[11]

Production and composition

Recording



Thriller was the second Michael Jackson album produced by Quincy Jones.

Jackson reunited with *Off the Wall* producer [Quincy Jones](#) to record his sixth studio album, his second under the [Epic](#) label. They worked together on 30 songs, nine of which were included on the album.^[12]

Thriller was recorded at [Westlake Recording Studios](#) in Los Angeles, California, with a production budget of \$750,000. The first official recording took place on April 14, 1982, at noon with Jackson and [Paul McCartney](#) recording "[The Girl Is Mine](#)". After Jones completed [Donna Summer's self-titled album](#), the rest of the album was completed between August and November 8, 1982.^{[13][14]}

Several members of the band [Toto](#) were involved in the album's recording and production.^[12] Jackson wrote four songs for the record: "[Wanna Be Startin' Somethin'](#)", "[The Girl Is Mine](#)", "[Beat It](#)" and "[Billie Jean](#)".^[15] Unlike many artists, Jackson did not write these songs on paper. Instead, he dictated into a sound recorder; when recording he would sing from memory.^{[16][17]}

The relationship between Jackson and Jones became strained during the recording. Jackson spent much of his time rehearsing dance steps alone.^[17] When the album was completed, both Jones and Jackson were unhappy with the result and remixed every song, spending a week on each.^[17]



"Beat It" features guitar work from [Eddie Van Halen](#).

"Billie Jean" was personal to Jackson, who struggled with obsessed fans. Jones wanted to shorten the long introduction, but Jackson insisted that it remain because it made him want to dance.^[15] The ongoing backlash against [disco](#) made it necessary to move in a different musical direction from the disco-heavy *Off the Wall*.^[18] Jones and Jackson were determined to make a rock song that would appeal to all tastes and spent weeks looking for a suitable guitarist for the song "Beat It". Eventually, they found [Steve Lukather](#) of Toto to play the rhythm guitar parts and [Eddie Van Halen](#) of the rock band [Van Halen](#) to play the solo.^{[15][17]}

When [Rod Temperton](#) wrote the song "[Thriller](#)", he wanted to call it "Starlight" or "Midnight Man", but settled on "Thriller" because he felt

the name had merchandising potential.^[17] Wanting a notable person to recite the closing lyrics, Jones brought in actor [Vincent Price](#), an acquaintance of Jones' wife; Price completed his part in two takes. Temperton wrote the spoken portion in a taxi on the way to the recording studio. Jones and Temperton said that some recordings were left off the album because they did not have the "edginess" of other album tracks.^[15] A cover of "[Behind the Mask](#)", originally by the Japanese band [Yellow Magic Orchestra](#), was omitted when the parties could not agree on royalties.^[19]

Music and lyrics

Thriller explores genres including [post-disco](#),^{[20][21]} [funk](#),^{[21][22]} [pop](#),^[21] [synth-pop](#),^[23] [R&B](#),^[24] and [rock](#).^[21] According to Steve Huey of [AllMusic](#), it refined the strengths of *Off the Wall*; the dance and rock tracks are more aggressive, while the pop tunes and ballads are softer and more [soulful](#).^[25] The album includes the ballads "[Human Nature](#)", "[The Girl Is Mine](#)" and "[The Lady in My Life](#)", the [funk](#) tracks "[Billie Jean](#)" and "[Wanna Be Startin' Something](#)", and the [disco](#) songs "[Baby Be Mine](#)" and "[P.Y.T. \(Pretty Young Thing\)](#)".^{[26][22][25][27]}

"Wanna Be Startin' Somethin'" climaxes in an African-inspired chant (often misidentified as [Swahili](#), but actually syllables based on [Duala](#)),^[28] giving the song an international flavor.^[29] "The Girl Is Mine" tells of two friends' fight over a woman, arguing over who loves her more, and concludes with a rap.^{[17][29]} The album's songs have a tempo ranging from 80 beats per minute on "The Girl is Mine", to 138 on "Beat It".^[30]

Thriller foreshadows the contradictory themes of Jackson's later works.^[31] With *Thriller*, Jackson began using a motif of [paranoia](#) and darker themes including [supernatural](#) imagery in the title track.^[26] This is evident on the songs "Billie Jean", "Wanna Be Startin' Somethin'" and "Thriller".^[22] In "Billie Jean", Jackson sings about an obsessive fan who alleges he fathered her child; in "Wanna Be Startin' Somethin'" he argues against media gossip.^{[26][25]} For "Billie Jean", Jones had Jackson sing [overdubs](#) through a six-foot (180 cm) cardboard tube and brought in jazz saxophonist Tom Scott to play the [lyricon](#), a wind-controlled synthesizer. Bassist Louis Johnson ran through his part on a Yamaha bass guitar. The song opens with a long bass-and-drums introduction.^[32] "Thriller" includes sound effects such as creaking doors, thunder, footsteps, wind, and howling dogs.^[17]

The anti-gang-violence "Beat It" became an homage to *West Side Story* and was Jackson's first successful rock cross-over piece.^{[25][33]}

Jackson later said of "Beat It", "the point is no one has to be the tough guy, you can walk away from a fight and still be a man. You don't have to die to prove you're a man".^[29] "Human Nature", co-written by *Steve Porcaro* of the band *Toto*,^[34] is moody and introspective, as conveyed in lyrics such as, "Looking out, across the morning, the City's heart begins to beat, reaching out, I touch her shoulder, I'm dreaming of the street".^[29]

By the late 1970s, Jackson's abilities as a vocalist were well regarded; AllMusic described him as a "blindingly gifted vocalist".^[35] *Rolling Stone* critic *Stephen Holden* likened his vocals to the "breathless, dreamy stutter" of *Stevie Wonder*, and wrote that "Jackson's feathery-timbred tenor is extraordinarily beautiful. It slides smoothly into a startling *falsetto* that's used very daringly."^[5] With the release of *Thriller*, Jackson could sing low—down to a basso low C—but he preferred to sing higher because pop tenors have more range to create style.^[36] *Rolling Stone* critic *Christopher Connelly* wrote that Jackson was now singing in a "fully adult voice" that was "tinged by sadness".^[26]

"P.Y.T. (Pretty Young Thing)", credited to [James Ingram](#) and Quincy Jones, and "The Lady in My Life" by Rod Temperton, gave the album a stronger [R&B](#) direction; the latter song was described as "the closest Jackson has come to crooning a sexy, soulful ballad after his [Motown](#) years" by [J. Randy Taraborrelli](#).^[29] Jackson had already adopted a "[vocal hiccup](#)" (first used in 1973 on "[It's Too Late to Change the Time](#)"^[37]), which he continued to implement in *Thriller*. The purpose of the hiccup—somewhat like a gulping for air or gasping—is to evoke emotion, be it excitement, sadness, or fear.^[38]

Cover

The cover for *Thriller* features Jackson in a white suit that belonged to photographer Dick Zimmerman. The [gatefold](#) sleeve reveals a [tiger cub](#) at Jackson's leg, which, according to Zimmerman, Jackson kept away from his face, fearing he would be scratched.^[39] Another picture from the shoot, with Jackson embracing the cub, was used for the 2001 special edition of *Thriller*.^[40]

Release and commercial reception

Thriller was released on November 29, 1982, through [Epic Records](#)^{[41][42]} and internationally by [CBS Records](#).^{[43][44]} Originally the label planned released for a Christmas 1982 before pushing it into the following January to allow Jones and Jackson more time to mix the songs. However, the album leaked to radio stations and the label decided to rush the release to November 29^[45].

It reached number one on the [Billboard Top LPs & Tape](#) chart on February 26, 1983.^[46] *Thriller* sold one million copies worldwide per week at its peak.^{[36][47]} *Thriller* was the [best-selling album in the United States](#) in 1983 and 1984, making it the first album to be the best-selling for two years. It also spent a record 37 weeks at number one on the *Billboard* 200, from February 26, 1983, to April 14, 1984, and has remained on the chart for 715 nonconsecutive weeks (and counting).^{[48][49]}

Thriller was Jackson's global breakthrough, topping the charts in Australia, Austria, Canada, France, Italy, [Japan](#), the Netherlands, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. It has gained Diamond certifications in Argentina, Canada, Denmark, France, Mexico and the UK. *Thriller* sells an estimated 130,000 copies in the US per year; it reached number two in the [US Catalog charts](#) in February 2003 and

number 39 in the UK in March 2007.^[50] It is the [sixth-best-selling album in the UK](#).^[51]

On December 16, 2015, *Thriller* became the first album to be certified 30× platinum by the [Recording Industry Association of America](#) (RIAA), for shipments of at least 30 million units in the US.^{[52][53]}

Following the inclusion of [streaming and tracks sales](#) into the RIAA album awards in 2017, *Thriller* was certified 33× platinum, representing 33 million album-equivalent units.^[54] As of August 2021, the album has been certified 34× platinum in the US, denoting 34 million album-equivalent units.^[55] By the end of 1983, *Thriller* became the world's best-selling album, having sold 32 million copies.^{[56][57][58]} By the end of the decade, *Thriller* had sold 48 million copies.^{[59][60]} It remains the [best-selling album of all time](#), having sold over 70 million copies worldwide.^{[nb 1][66][67][68][69]}

Singles

Seven singles were released from *Thriller*. The first, "[The Girl Is Mine](#)", was criticized as a poor choice; critics predicted that the album would disappoint and suggested that Jackson was bowing to a white audience.^[29] "The Girl Is Mine" topped the [Billboard Hot Black Singles](#)

chart, reached number two on the *Billboard* Hot 100 and reached number one on the Hot Adult Contemporary Tracks chart.^[70]

"Billie Jean" was released on January 2, 1983.^[71] It reached number one on the *Billboard* Hot 100 chart, where it remained for seven weeks. It also topped the *Billboard* Hot Black Singles chart within three weeks, and it remained at number one for nine weeks. *Billboard* ranked it as the No. 2 song for 1983.^[72] It topped the charts in 9 countries and reached the top 10 in many others. "Billie Jean" was one of the best-selling singles of 1983, helping *Thriller* become the best-selling album of all time. It also became Jackson's best-selling solo single. "Billie Jean" was described as a pioneer of "sleek, post-soul pop music" and also the beginning of a more paranoid lyrical style for Jackson, a trademark of his later music.^[32]

The third single, "Beat It",^[73] also reached number one on the Black Singles chart.^[71] *Billboard* ranked it number five for 1983. "Beat It" reached number one in Spain and the Netherlands.^[71] "Wanna Be Startin' Somethin'" was Jackson's fourth consecutive top-ten single from *Thriller* on the *Billboard* Hot 100, peaking at number five.^[74] "Human Nature" reached number seven on the *Billboard* Hot 100 and

number 2 on the *Billboard* Adult Contemporary chart.^[74] "P.Y.T. (Pretty Young Thing)" charted at number ten on the *Billboard* Hot 100.^[74]

"Thriller", the final single, was released on November 2, 1983.^[75] It was not initially planned for release, as Epic saw it as a *novelty song*;^[76] according to executive *Walter Yetnikoff*, "Who wants a single about monsters?"^[77] By mid-1983, when sales of *Thriller* began to decline, Jackson convinced Epic to release "Thriller", backed by a *new music video*.^{[77][78]} It reached number four on the *Billboard* Hot 100 and number three on the *Billboard* Hot Black Singles chart.^[74]

Music videos



Jacket worn by Jackson in the video "[Beat It](#)" displayed at the Hard Rock On Wheels Exhibit in Miami

The "Billie Jean" music video debuted on March 10, 1983, on [MTV](#).^[79] It brought MTV—until then a fairly new and unknown music channel—to mainstream attention. It was one of the first videos by a black artist to be aired regularly by the channel, as the network's executives felt [black music](#) was not "[rock](#)" enough.^[80] Directed by [Steve Barron](#), the video shows a photographer who follows Jackson. The paparazzo never catches him, and when photographed Jackson fails to materialize on the developed picture. He dances to Billie Jean's hotel room and as he walks along a sidewalk, each tile lights up at his touch.^{[80][81]}

The "Beat It" music video had its premiere on MTV during primetime on March 31, 1983.^[82] To add authenticity to the production but also to foster peace between them, Jackson had the idea to cast members of rival Los Angeles street gangs the [Crips](#) and the [Bloods](#),^[83] and included around 80 genuine gang members.^[84] Its plot is Jackson bringing two gangsters together through the power of music and dance. It is also notable for its "mass choreography" of synchronized dancers, which would become the hallmark of Jackson's music videos.^[85]

The "Thriller" music video premiered on MTV on December 2, 1983.^[86] In the video, Jackson and his girlfriend (played by [Ola Ray](#)) are confronted by [zombies](#) while walking home from a movie theater; Jackson becomes a zombie and performs a dance routine with a horde of the [undead](#).^[77] It was named the greatest video of all time by MTV in 1999,^[87] by VH1 in 2001,^[88] and by *Time* in 2011.^[89] In 2009, it became the first music video to be selected for the [National Film Registry](#) by the [Library of Congress](#).^[90] The Library described it as "the most famous music video of all time".^[91]

Critical reception

Review scores	
Source	Rating
<i>Melody Maker</i>	★★★★★ ^[92]
<i>Greensboro Daily News</i>	★★★★★ ^[93]
<i>The Orlando Sentinel</i>	★★★★★ ^[94]

<i>Record Mirror</i>	★★★★★ ^[95]
<i>Rolling Stone</i>	★★★★★ ^[26]
<i>Smash Hits</i>	7.5/10 ^[96]
<i>The Village Voice</i>	A- ^[97]

Despite receiving positive reviews, some critics initially felt that *Thriller* was inferior to *Off the Wall*. Mike Gardner of *Record Mirror* gave *Thriller* a positive review, though noted that the album "aims for cosy comfort" instead of the 'state of the art' technicality present in *Off the Wall*.^[98] Gavin Martin of *NME* gave an underwhelming review of *Thriller*, claiming that it sounds like it was released before *Off the Wall*.^[99] Martin was particularly critical of Jackson's songwriting: "the overall feeling that comes from *Thriller* is that of barely developed artist being given too much artistic control".^[99] Writing for *Smash Hits*, Bev Hillier noted that while *Thriller* is not as "instant" as *Off the Wall*, it is still a "first class product".^[98] In another *NME* review, Paolo Hewitt wrote, "this is not a good LP", described the album as "bland", and opionated that it contains "lyrical cliches".^[100] Hewitt highlights

"Wanna Be Startin' Somethin'" and "Billie Jean" as the only songs
 "worthy of mention".^[100]

Review scores	
Source	Rating
AllMusic	★★★★★ [22]
Blender	★★★★★ [101]
Christgau's Record Guide	A ^[102]
Encyclopedia of Popular Music	★★★★□ [103]
Entertainment Weekly	A ^[104]
MusicHound Rock	□□★□□ [105]

Q	★★★★□ [106]
<i>The Rolling Stone Album Guide</i>	★★★□□ [107]
<i>Slant Magazine</i>	★★★□□ [27]
<i>Tom Hull – on the Web</i>	A ^[108]
<i>Uncut</i>	□□□□□ [109]

In *Musician*, J. D. Considine wrote that *Thriller* "sounds every bit like a winner" and that Jackson and Jones did a "magnificent job of recreating the lithe grooves and carefully manicured arrangements" that defined the sound of *Off the Wall*.^[110] John Rockwell wrote in *The New York Times* that *Thriller* is "a wonderful pop record, the latest statement by one of the great singers in popular music today" and that there are "hits here, too, lots of them". Rockwell believed it helped breach "the destructive barriers that spring up regularly between white and black music", especially as "white publications and radio stations that normally avoid *black music* seem willing to pretend he isn't black

after all".^[111] In a review for *Rolling Stone*, Christopher Connelly called *Thriller* "zesty" with a "harrowing, dark message". Connelly emphasized Jackson's musical progression from *Off the Wall*, writing, "Jackson's new attitude gives *Thriller* a deeper, if less visceral, emotional urgency than any of his previous work, and marks another watershed in the creative development of this prodigiously talented performer."^[26] In *The Village Voice*, Robert Christgau said "this is virtually a hits-plus-filler job, but at such a high level it's almost classic anyway".^[112]

Thriller soon garnered greater acclaim than it initially did upon release. In *The New York Times*, Holden highlighted the album's significance: "Pop music will never be quite the same in the wake of Michael Jackson's 'Thriller,' [...] Today echoes of Michael Jackson's quavering, exhilarated tenor resound across the pop spectrum, especially in the records of youthful pop- soul singers coming up the ladder."^[113] Jay Cocks of *Time* summed up the three main singles from the album, saying, "The pulse of America and much of the rest of the world moves irregularly, beating in time to the tough strut of 'Billie Jean', the asphalt aria of 'Beat It', the supremely cool chills of 'Thriller'."^[36] Cocks also praised *Thriller* for being "a thorough

restoration of confidence, a rejuvenation" and "bringing black music back to mainstream radio".^[36]

In 1989, *Toronto Star* music critics reflected on the albums they had reviewed in the past ten years in order to create a list judging them on the basis of "commercial impact to social import, to strictly musical merit." *Thriller* was placed at number one on the list, where it was referred to as his "master work" and that "commercial success has since overshadowed Jackson's artistic accomplishments on *Thriller*, and that's a pity. It was a record for the times, brimming with breathless anticipation and a dread fear of the adult world, a brilliant fantasy that pumped with sexual heat, yet made room for serious reflection".^[114] Christgau wrote in *Christgau's Record Guide: The '80s* (1990), "what we couldn't know is how brilliantly every hit but 'P.Y.T.' would thrive on mass exposure and public pleasure."^[102]

Awards



Jackson holding his record-breaking eight [Grammy Awards](#) at the [1984 ceremony](#).

Jackson was nominated for a record 12 [Grammy Awards](#) at the [26th Grammy Awards](#).^[115] The album won a record-breaking eight Grammy Awards, including Album of the Year. Jackson won seven of the Grammy Awards for the album, while the eighth Grammy Award went to [Bruce Swedien](#).^{[116][117][118]} Richard Harrington of [The Washington Post](#) described the ceremony as 'The Michael Jackson Show', writing "it was exactly the kind of one-man show that everyone had anticipated".^[119] In winning the Album of the Year award, Jackson became the third-youngest to win the award after Barbra Streisand at 22 and Stevie Wonder at 23.^[119]

Jackson also dominated the [American Music Awards](#), winning a record-breaking eight awards, including both [Favorite Pop/Rock Album](#) and [Favorite Soul/R&B Album](#), as well as the special [Merit award](#). Jackson won three awards for the music video for "Thriller" at the inaugural [MTV Video Music Awards](#): [Best Overall Performance in a Video](#), [Best Choreography in a Video](#) and [Viewer's Choice](#).^[50] At the [1984 Brit Awards](#), Jackson was awarded [International Artist](#) and *Thriller* won [British Album of the Year](#).^[120]

Thriller topped *The Village Voice*'s [Pazz & Jop](#) poll of 1983.^[121] It was recognized as the best-selling album of all time on February 7, 1984, when it was inducted into the [Guinness Book of World Records](#).^[122] In 1992, *Thriller* was awarded the [Special Billboard Award](#) to commemorate its 10th anniversary.^[123] At the [2002 Billboard Music Awards](#), as a sign of the album's longevity, it was awarded a second [Special Billboard Award](#) as a recognition for spending more weeks at number one on the *Billboard* 200 than any other album in history.^[124]

In 2008, 25 years after its release, *Thriller* was inducted into the [Grammy Hall of Fame](#) and, a few weeks later, was among 25 recordings preserved by the [Library of Congress](#) to the [National Recording Registry](#) as "culturally significant".^{[125][126]}

Rankings

In 2000, *Thriller* was voted number 64 in [Colin Larkin's All Time Top 1000 Albums](#). It was also ranked number two in the Soul/R&B – All Time Top 50 albums. The book states; it is the finest example of perfect [disco-pop](#), and a record that should be prescribed to musical snobs and manic depressives.^[127] In 2003, it was ranked at number 20 on the *Rolling Stone* [500 Greatest Albums of All Time](#) list, maintaining the ranking in a 2012 revised list — it's the highest ranked pop album on both lists.^[128] In a 2020 updated list by *Rolling Stone*, *Thriller* was ranked number 12.^[129] It was ranked by the [National Association of Recording Merchandisers](#) (NARM), in conjunction with the [Rock and Roll Hall of Fame](#), at number three on its list of the Definitive 200 Albums of All Time.^{[130][131]} "Beat It" and "Billie Jean" were both included in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame's [500 Songs That Shaped Rock and Roll](#).^[132] In 2006, *Time* included *Thriller* in its list of the All-TIME 100 Albums.^[133] In 2009, music critics for [MTV Base](#) and [VH1](#) both listed *Thriller* as the best album released since 1981.^[134] *Thriller*, along with other critic favorites, were then polled by the public. 40,000 people found *Thriller* to be the Best Album of all time by MTV Generation, gaining a third of all votes.^{[134][135]} In 2012,

Slant Magazine ranked *Thriller* as the best album of the 1980s.^[136]

Thriller was ranked third on the Greatest of All Time *Billboard* 200

Albums.^[137] *Billboard* also ranked the album fourth on its list of All 92

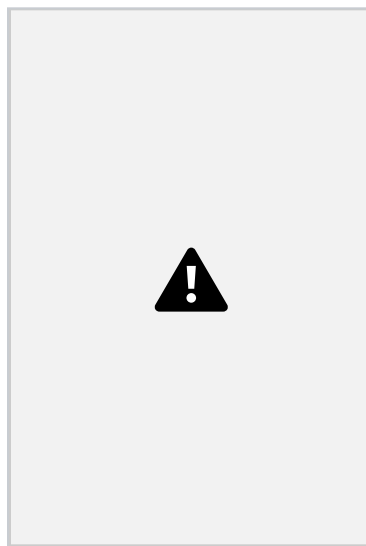
Diamond-Certified Albums Ranked from Worst to Best: Critic's

Take.^[138] In 2018, *The Independent* named *Thriller* the "most inspiring

album of all time".^[139]

Legacy and influence

Music industry



Jackson (center) with US [President Ronald Reagan](#) and [First Lady Nancy Reagan](#) at the [White House](#) in 1984

Thriller's success gave Jackson [cultural significance](#) never before attained by an [African American](#) in the entertainment industry.^[140]

[Blender](#) described Jackson as the "late 20th century's preeminent pop icon", while *The New York Times* wrote that he was a "musical phenomenon" and that "in the world of pop music, there is Michael Jackson and there is everybody else".^{[32][141]} [Richard Corliss](#) of *Time* hailed *Thriller* as "the greatest pop album of all time".^[142] *The Times* asserted that it is "still the best pop album" following the release of *Thriller 40*, a 40th-anniversary reissue of the album.^[143]

Jackson changed the way the industry functioned, both as an artistic persona and as a financial, profitable entity. *Thriller* was released around the peak of the [album era](#), which had positioned full-length records ahead of singles as the dominant form of recorded-music consumption and artistic expression in the industry. The success of *Thriller*'s singles marked a brief resurgence in the sales of the format,^[144] and changed notions about the number of singles that could be successfully released from an album.^[25]

His attorney John Branca said that Jackson had achieved the highest royalty rate in the music industry to that point: about \$2 (US\$6.2 in 2025 dollars^[145]) for each album sold. As a result, Jackson earned

record-breaking profits from compact disc sales and from the sale of copies of the documentary, *The Making of Michael Jackson's Thriller*, produced by Jackson and [John Landis](#). Funded by MTV, the film sold over 350,000 copies in its first few months. More profits came from novelties such as the Michael Jackson doll, which appeared in stores in May 1984 at a price of \$12 (US\$37 in 2025 dollars^[145]).^[36] *Thriller's* position in [American culture](#) was described by biographer J. Randy Taraborrelli: "At some point, *Thriller* stopped selling like a leisure item—like a magazine, a toy, tickets to a hit movie—and started selling like a household staple".^[146]

In a statement at the album's release, Gil Friesen, then-president of [A&M Records](#), said, "The whole industry has a stake in this success".^[36] Others later agreed. *Time* magazine speculated that "the fallout from *Thriller* has given the [music] business its best years since the heady days of 1978, when it had an estimated total domestic revenue of \$4.1 billion".^[36] *Time* summed up *Thriller's* impact as a "restoration of confidence" for an industry bordering on "the ruins of punk and the chic regions of synthesizer pop". The publication described Jackson's influence at that point as, "Star of records, radio, rock video. A one-man rescue team for the music business. A songwriter who sets the beat for a decade. A dancer with the fanciest

feet on the street. A singer who cuts across all boundaries of taste and style and color too".^[36]

The '80s were when stars replaced artists as bearers of significance... When art is [intellectual property](#), image and aura subsume aesthetic substance, whatever exactly that is. When art is [capital](#), sales interface with aesthetic quality—*Thriller's* numbers are part of its experience.

—[Robert Christgau](#) in *Christgau's Record Guide: The '80s* (1990)^[147]

As *Thriller* and "Billie Jean" sought to reach their market demographic, MTV and cable TV had a much smaller market share than broadcast television stations in the United States. CBS/Epic Records sought to promote *Thriller with* a national broadcast TV audience on ABC, NBC and CBS affiliate stations, as well as major independent TV stations. The national broadcast TV premiere of the *Thriller* album's first video, "Billie Jean", was during the week of Halloween in October 1984 and was the idea of [Video Concert Hall](#) executive producers [Charles Henderson](#) and Jerry Crowe.^{[148][149]} Video Concert Hall, the first nationwide music video TV network, taped the one-hour special in Hollywood and Atlanta, where the TV studios of Video Concert Hall were located.^{[150][151][152][153]} The *Thriller* TV special was hosted by *Thriller* video co-star [Vincent Price](#), distributed by Henderson-Crowe Syndications, Inc. and aired in the top 20 TV markets and much of the

United States, including TV stations WNEW (New York), WFLD (Chicago), KTTV (Los Angeles), WPLG (Miami), WQTV (Boston) and WXIA (Atlanta), for a total of 150 TV stations.^{[148][149]}

Thriller had a pioneering impact on black-music genres and crossover. According to ethnomusicologist Miles White, the album completely defined the "sound of post-disco contemporary R&B" and "updated the crossover aesthetic that had been the holy grail of black popular music since [Louis Jordan](#) in the 1940s". Noting its unprecedented dominance of mainstream pop music by an African-American artist, White goes on to write that "the record's song selection and sound aesthetics played to soul and pop sensibilities alike, appealing to a broad audience and selling across lines of race, gender, class and generation", while demonstrating Jackson's emergence from Motown as "the king of pop-soul crossover".^[154] [Entertainment Weekly](#) writer Simon Vozick-Levinson praised it as "the greatest pop-soul album".^[155] Included in their list of The 40 Most Groundbreaking Albums of All Time, [Rolling Stone](#) wrote:^[156]

It's hard to imagine the present-day musical landscape without *Thriller*, which changed the game both sonically and marketwise. The album's nervy, outsized blend of pop, rock and soul would send seismic waves throughout radio, inviting both marquee crossovers

(like Eddie Van Halen's guitar solo on "Beat It") and sneakier attempts at genre-meshing. The album's splashy, cinematic videos — from the John Landis-directed short film that promoted "Thriller" to the *West Side Story* homage accompanying "Beat It" — legitimized the still-nascent form and forced MTV to incorporate black artists into its playlists. Its promotional strategy, which led to seven of its nine tracks being released as singles, raised the bar for what, exactly, constituted a "hit-laden" LP. Beyond breaking ground, it broke records, showing just how far pop could reach: the biggest selling album of all time, the first album to win eight Grammys in a single night and the first album to stay in the Top 10 charts for a year.

Epic Records also reflected on the importance of the album: "More than just an album, *Thriller* has remained a global cultural multi-media phenomenon for both the 20th and the 21st centuries, smashing musical barriers and changing the frontiers of pop forever. The music on *Thriller* is so dynamic and singular that it defied any definition of rock, pop or soul that had gone before."^[157] Alan Light writing in *Rolling Stone* explained the historic significance of the album: "In today's world of declining sales and fragmented audiences, it is almost impossible to imagine how much this one album dominated and united the culture."^[158]

From the moment *Thriller* was released, it set the standard for the music industry: artists, record labels, producers, marketers and even choreographers. The music video was ahead of its time and it is considered a monumental one—not only in Jackson's career, but also in the history of pop music. Epic Records' approach to creating a song and video that would appeal to the mass market ended up influencing the way that professionals now market and release their songs.^[159]

John Landis' production of a mini-movie, rather than the usual short music video, would raise the bar for other directors and producers.^[160]

Music videos and racial equality



Thriller's music videos and singles—including the [Paul McCartney](#) duet "[The Girl Is Mine](#)"—are credited with helping promote racial equality in the United States.

Before the success of *Thriller*, many felt Jackson had struggled to get MTV airtime due to being black.^[32] CBS Records president [Walter Yetnikoff](#) told MTV: "I'm not going to give you any more videos and I'm going to go public and fucking tell them about the fact you don't want to play music by a black guy."^[32] Yetnikoff persuaded MTV to begin airing "Billie Jean" and "Beat It", which led to a long partnership and helped other black artists to gain mainstream recognition.^[161] MTV denies claims of racism in their broadcasting.^[162]

The popularity of Jackson's videos, such as "Beat It" and "Billie Jean", helped popularize MTV, and its focus shifted towards pop and R&B.^{[161][163]} Jackson transformed the medium of music video into an artform and promotional tool through the use of complex storylines, dance routines, special effects, and celebrity cameos.^[25]

When the 14-minute-long "Thriller" video aired, MTV ran it twice an hour to meet demand.^[164] The video marked an increase in scale for music videos and has been routinely named the best music video ever.^[25] The video is credited with transforming music videos into a serious art form, breaking down racial barriers in popular entertainment, and popularizing the making-of documentary format.^[165] Many elements have had a lasting impact on popular

culture such as the zombie dance and [Jackson's red jacket](#) designed by Landis's wife [Deborah Nadoolman](#).^[165]

Author, music critic and journalist [Nelson George](#) wrote in 2004, "It's difficult to hear the songs from *Thriller* and disengage them from the videos. For most of us the images define the songs. In fact it could be argued that Michael is the first artist of the MTV age to have an entire album so intimately connected in the public imagination with its imagery".^[166] Short films like *Thriller* largely remained unique to Jackson, while the group dance sequence in "Beat It" has been frequently imitated.^[15] The choreography in *Thriller* has become a part of global pop culture, replicated everywhere from [Bollywood](#) to prisons in the Philippines.^{[167][168]}

Jackson's success as a black artist was unprecedented. *Time* wrote in 1984: "Jackson is the biggest thing since [the Beatles](#). He is the hottest single phenomenon since [Elvis Presley](#). He just may be the most popular black singer ever."^[36] According to [The Washington Post](#), *Thriller* paved the way for other African-American artists to achieve mainstream recognition, such as [Prince](#).^[169] Christgau credited "The Girl Is Mine" for giving radio exposure to the idea of [interracial](#) love.^[102]

Reappraisal

Thriller has continued to receive critical acclaim. In 2024, Andrew R. Chow wrote in *Time* that *Thriller* is "a towering pillar of [American culture](#)" and "the gold standard to which all pop artists aspire in its beloved omnipresence".^[170] [Stephen Thomas Erlewine](#) of [AllMusic](#) wrote that it had something to interest everyone. He believed it showcased harder funk and hard rock while remaining "undeniably fun", and wrote that "Wanna Be Startin' Somethin'", was "the freshest funk on the album [but] the most claustrophobic, scariest track Jackson ever recorded." Erlewine felt it was an improvement on Jackson's previous album, although he was critical of the title track, describing it as "ridiculous" and "sucked out the momentum" of the record.^[22] In [The New Rolling Stone Album Guide](#) (2004), [Jon Pareles](#) wrote that Jackson had "doubled his ambitions and multiplied his audience ... *Thriller* had extra musical help in becoming the best-selling non compilation album of all time: Jackson's dancing feet and dazzling stage presence, amplified by the newfound promotional reach of music video and the [Reagan era](#)'s embrace of glossy celebrity. But especially in the album's seven hit singles (out of nine songs), the music stands on its own."^[107] Culture critic [Nelson George](#) wrote that Jackson "has educated [R. Kelly](#), [Usher](#), [Justin Timberlake](#) and countless others with *Thriller* as a textbook".^[171]

Reissues and catalog sales

Thriller was reissued on October 16, 2001, in an expanded set, *Thriller: Special Edition*. The album is [remastered](#) and includes a new booklet and bonus material, including the songs "Someone in the Dark", "Carousel" and Jackson's original "Billie Jean" demo, as well as audio interviews with Jones and Temperton.^{[15][172][173]} Sony also hired sound engineer and mixer [Mick Guzauski](#)^{[174][175]} to create 5.1-channel [surround sound](#) mixes of *Thriller* and Jackson's other albums for the [Super Audio CD](#) format, but Jackson did not approve the mixes.^[176] Consequently, *Thriller* was issued on SACD only in a stereo version.^[177] A surround sound version of *Thriller* would not be realized until November 2022, when Sony created and released [360 Reality Audio](#) and [Dolby Atmos](#) mixes of *Thriller* for [Amazon Music](#) and [Apple Music](#) respectively in honor of the album's 40th anniversary.^[178]

In February 2008, [Epic Records](#) released *Thriller 25*; Jackson served as executive producer.^[179] *Thriller 25* appeared on CD, USB and [vinyl](#) with seven bonus tracks, the new song "For All Time", a snippet of Price's voiceover and five remixes featuring American artists [Fergie](#), [will.i.am](#), [Kanye West](#) and [Akon](#).^{[179][180][181]} It also included a DVD

featuring three music videos, the *Motown 25* "Billie Jean" performance and a booklet with a message from Jackson.^[179] The *ballad* "For All Time" supposedly dates from 1982, but is often credited as being from the *Dangerous* sessions.^[182]

Thriller 25 was a commercial success and did particularly well as a reissue. It peaked at number one in eight countries and Europe. It peaked at number two in the US, number three in the UK and reached the top 10 in over 30 national charts. It was certified Gold in 11 countries including the UK, received a 2× Gold certification in France and received platinum certification in Poland.^{[183][184][185]} In the United States, *Thriller 25* was the second-best-selling album of its release week, selling one hundred and sixty six thousand copies, just fourteen thousand short of reaching the number one position. It was ineligible for the *Billboard 200* chart as a re-release but entered the *Pop Catalog Charts* at number one (where it stayed for ten non-consecutive weeks),^[186] with the best sales on that chart since December 1996.^{[187][188][189]} With the arrival of Halloween, *Thriller 25* spent an eleventh non-consecutive week atop the US catalog chart. This brought US sales of the album to 688,000 copies, making it the *best-selling catalog album* of 2008.^[190] This was Jackson's best

launch since [Invincible](#) in 2001, selling three million copies worldwide in 12 weeks.^[191]

After [Jackson's death](#) in June 2009, *Thriller* set additional records. the album sold 101,000 units in the US on the chart week ending July 1, 2009 and was the third biggest-selling album of the week. The album placed at number three on the [Top Pop Catalog Albums](#) chart.^[192] The following week the album sold 187,000 units in the US on the chart week ending July 8, 2009 and was the second biggest-selling album of the week.^[193] Songs from *Thriller* also helped Jackson become the first artist to sell more than one million [song downloads](#) in a week.^[194] According to [Nielsen SoundScan](#), *Thriller* was the 14th best-selling album of 2009 in the United States, with 1.27 million copies sold.^[195] *Thriller* sold 350,000 copies in France,^[196] 1.27 million in the United States and an estimated 4 million copies worldwide in 2009 following his death.^[197] Since 2022, *Thriller* has sold over 740,000 vinyl records alone worldwide according to the IFPI ^[198] Having been certified for 29x Platinum by August 2009, *Thriller* has gone onto sell over 6,000,000 units in the United States since Michael Jackson's death according to Luminate,^{[199][200][201][202]} with estimated sales of 36 million units to date.^[203]

For one week beginning November 20, 2015, [Google Play Music](#) offered an exclusive free copy of the album to its users in the US which included the 1981 demo of "Billie Jean" as an additional track.^[204] On November 18, 2022, Sony Music released *Thriller 40*, a 40th-anniversary reissue of *Thriller* including a bonus disc containing outtakes from the original recording sessions.^[205] The 2022 reissue was followed by a [2023 documentary](#).

Track listing

All tracks are produced by [Quincy Jones](#), except where noted.

<u>No.</u>	Title	Writer(s)	Producer(s)	Length
1.	" Wanna Be Startin' Somethin' "	Michael Jackson	• Jones • Jackson^[a]	6:03
2.	" Baby Be Mine "	Rod Temperton		4:20
3.	" The Girl Is Mine " (with Paul McCartney)	Jackson	• Jones • Jackson^[a]	3:42
4.	" Thriller "	Temperton		5:58

No.	Title	Writer(s)	Producer(s)	Length
1.	"Beat It"	Jackson	• Jones • Jackson^[a]	4:17
2.	"Billie Jean"	Jackson	• Jones • Jackson^[a]	4:57
3.	"Human Nature"	• Steve Porcaro • John Bettis		4:06
4.	"P.Y.T. (Pretty Young Thing)"	• James Ingram • Jones		3:58
5.	"The Lady in My Life"	Temperton		5:00
Total length:				42:16

Notes

- ^[a] signifies a co-producer
- The first pressings contain the original album mix of "Billie Jean". The main difference is the low volume "oh no" ad-lib in the second verse.

Personnel

Personnel as listed in the album's [liner notes](#) are:^[206]

- [Tom Bahler](#) – [Synclavier](#) (track 5)
- Brian Banks – synthesizer (track 4), synthesizer programming (2)
- Steve Bates – assistant engineer (tracks 3, 7–9)
- [Michael Boddicker](#) – synthesizers (tracks 1, 2), [Emulator](#) (6–9), [Vocoder](#) (8), background vocals (1)
- Bruce Cannon – effects (track 4)
- [Leon "Ndugu" Chancler](#) – drums (tracks 2, 6, 8)
- [Paulinho da Costa](#) – percussion (tracks 1, 7)
- Mark Ettel – assistant engineer (tracks 3, 7–9)
- Matt Forger – engineer (tracks 2, 3, 7–9)
- [David Foster](#) – synthesizer (track 3), synthesizer arrangement (3)
- [Humberto Gatica](#) – engineer (tracks 3, 7–9)
- [Gary Grant](#) – trumpet and [flugelhorn](#) (tracks 1, 2, 4)
- [Bernie Grundman](#) – mastering engineer (tracks 2, 3, 7–9)
- Nelson Hayes – bathroom stomp board (track 1)
- [Howard Hewett](#) – background vocals (track 8)
- [Jerry Hey](#) – horn arrangements, trumpet, and flugelhorn (tracks 1, 2, 4), string arrangements (3, 6), strings conductor (3)
- [Bunny Hull](#) – background vocals (tracks 1, 8)
- [James Ingram](#) – background vocals (tracks 1, 8), keyboards, handclaps, and musical arrangements (8)
- [Janet Jackson](#) – background vocals (track 8)
- [La Toya Jackson](#) – background vocals (track 8)
- [Michael Jackson](#) – co-producer (tracks 1, 3, 5, 6), lead vocals (all tracks), background vocals (1–7, 9), drum programming (1,

- 4), drum case beater (track 5), handclaps (8), horn arrangements and bathroom stomp board (1), vocal arrangements (1, 3, 5, 6), rhythm arrangements (1, 5, 6), synthesizer arrangements (6)
- [Paul Jackson Jr.](#) – guitar (tracks 5, 8, 9)
 - [Louis Johnson](#) – bass guitar (tracks 1, 3, 6, 8, 9), handclaps (8)
 - [Quincy Jones](#) – producer (all tracks), rhythm arrangements (tracks 1, 3, 5), vocal arrangements (3), musical arrangements (8)
 - [Donn Landee](#) – engineer (track 5 guitar solo)
 - Becky López – background vocals (tracks 1, 8)
 - Jerry Lubbock – strings conductor (track 6)
 - [Steve Lukather](#) – guitars (tracks 3, 5, 7), bass guitar (5), musical arrangements (7)
 - [Anthony Marinelli](#) – synthesizer programming (tracks 2, 4)
 - [Paul McCartney](#) – lead vocals (track 3)
 - [David Paich](#) – synthesizers (tracks 2, 7, 9), rhythm arrangements and piano (3), musical arrangements (7)
 - [Dean Parks](#) – guitar (track 3)
 - [Greg Phillinganes](#) – keyboards (2, 4), synthesizers (1, 2, 4–6, 8), [Fender Rhodes](#) (1, 3, 5, 6, 9), synthesizer programming and handclaps (8)
 - [Jeff Porcaro](#) – drums (tracks 3, 5, 7, 9)
 - [Steve Porcaro](#) – synthesizers (tracks 5, 7, 9), synthesizer programming (2, 3, 5, 7), musical arrangements (7)
 - [Vincent Price](#) – [voice-over](#) (track 4)
 - Steven Ray – bathroom stomp board (track 1), handclaps (8)
 - [Bill Reichenbach](#) – [trombone](#) (tracks 1, 2, 4)
 - Greg Smith – Synergy (track 5), synthesizer (6)
 - [Bruce Swedien](#) – [recording engineer](#) and audio mixer (all tracks), effects (4)
 - Chris Shepard – [vibraslap](#) (track 5)

- [Rod Temperton](#) – synthesizer (track 4), rhythm and vocal arrangements (2, 4, 9)
- [Eddie Van Halen](#) – guitar solo (track 5)
- Jerry Vinci – [concertmaster](#) (track 3)
- Julia Waters – background vocals (track 1)
- Maxine Waters – background vocals (track 1)
- [Oren Waters](#) – background vocals (track 1)
- [David Williams](#) – guitar (tracks 1, 2, 4, 6)
- [Larry Williams](#) – saxophone and [flute](#) (tracks 1, 2, 4)
- Bill Wolfer – keyboards (track 5), synthesizer (1, 6), programming (6)

Charts

Weekly charts

Chart (1982–2026)	Peak position
Australian Albums (Kent Music Report) ^[207]	1
Austrian Albums (Ö3 Austria) ^[208]	3

Belgian Albums (Ultratop Flanders) ^[209]	5
Belgian Albums (Ultratop Wallonia) ^[210]	1
Canada Top Albums/CDs (RPM) ^[211]	1
Canadian Albums (Billboard) ^[212]	18
Croatian International Albums (HDU) ^[213]	18
Danish Albums (Hitlisten) ^[214]	18

Dutch Albums (Album Top 100) ^[215]	1
European Albums (European Top 100 Albums) ^[216]	1
Finnish Albums (Suomen virallinen albumilista) ^[217]	1
French Albums (SNEP) ^[218]	1
German Albums (Offizielle Top 100) ^[219]	1
German Pop Albums (Offizielle Top 100) ^[220]	4
Greek Albums (IFPI) ^[221]	8

Greece Albums (<i>Billboard</i>) ^[222]	1
Hungarian Albums (<i>MAHASZ</i>) ^[223]	1
Iceland Albums (<i>Íslenski Listinn</i>) ^[224]	4
Italian Albums (<i>FIMI</i>) ^[225]	1
Japanese LPs (<i>Oricon</i>) ^[226]	1
Japanese Hot Albums (<i>Billboard Japan</i>) ^[227]	13
Lithuanian Albums (<i>AGATA</i>) ^[228]	4

New Zealand Albums (RMNZ) ^[229]	1
Norwegian Albums (VG-lista) ^[230]	6
Polish Albums (ZPAV) ^[231]	12
Portuguese Albums (AFP) ^[232]	29
Spanish Albums (Promusicae) ^[233]	4
Swedish Albums (Sverigetopplistan) ^[234]	1
Swiss Albums (Schweizer Hitparade) ^[235]	4

UK Albums (OCC) ^[236]	1
US <i>Billboard</i> 200 ^[237]	1
US Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums (<i>Billboard</i>) ^[238]	1

Year-end charts

Chart (1983)	Position
Australia (Kent Music Report) ^[207]	1
Austria (Ö3 Austria Top 40) ^[239]	1
Canada (RPM Top Albums) ^[240]	1
Germany (Official German Charts) ^[241]	2

Chart (2009)	Position
Australia (ARIA) ^[256]	32
Germany (Official German Charts) ^[257]	40
US Billboard Comprehensive Albums ^[258]	16
US Billboard Top Internet Albums ^[259]	16

Japan (Oricon) ^[242]	6
Netherlands (Album Top 100) ^[243]	1
New Zealand (RMNZ) ^[244]	2
UK Albums (OCC) ^[46]	1
US <i>Billboard</i> Top LPs & Tape ^[46]	1
US Hot Black Albums ^[46]	1

US <i>Billboard</i> Top Pop Catalog Albums ^[260]	16
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Chart (2010)	Position
Australian Catalogue Albums (ARIA) ^[261]	47
US <i>Billboard</i> 200 ^[262]	137
US <i>Billboard</i> Top Pop Catalog Albums ^[263]	7

Chart (1984)	Position
Australia (<i>Kent Music Report</i>) ^[207]	2
Austria (Ö3 Austria Top 40) ^[245]	3
Canada (<i>RPM Top Albums</i>) ^[246]	4
Germany (<i>Official German Charts</i>) ^[247]	5

Chart (2016)	Position
US <i>Billboard</i> 200 ^[264]	178

Chart (2018)	Position
US <i>Billboard</i> 200 ^[265]]	190

Japan (Oricon) ^[248]]	1
Netherlands (Album Top 100) ^[249]	4
New Zealand (RMNZ) ^[250]]	4
Switzerland (Schweizer Hitparade) ^[251]	1
UK Albums (OCC) ^[252]	6

Chart (2019)	Position
US <i>Billboard</i> 200 ^[265]	129

Chart (2020)	Position
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US <i>Billboard</i> Top LPs & Tape ^[253]	1
US Hot Black Albums ^[253]	2

Chart (1988)	P o s i t i o n
German Albums (Official German Charts) ^[254]	38

US <i>Billboard</i> 200 ^[266]	1
US Top R& B/ Hi p- Ho p Alb um s (<i>Billboard</i>) ^[267]	97

Chart (2003)	P o s i t i o n
UK Albu ms (OCC) ^[255]	1 4 3

C h a r t (2 0 2 1)	P o s i t i o n
B e l g i a n A l b u m s (U l t r a t	1 8 2

o p F la n d e r s) [[] 2 6 8]	
D u tc h A lb u m s (A lb u m	8 7

T o p 1 0 0) [[] 2 6 9]	
U S <i>B</i> <i>ill</i> <i>b</i> <i>o</i> <i>a</i> <i>r</i> <i>d</i> 2 0 0 [[] 2 7 0]	7 3

U S T o p R & B / H ip - H o p A lb u m s (<i>B ill b o a r d</i>) [	5 2
---	--------

2	
7	
1]	

C h a r t (2 0 2 2)	P o s i t i o n
B e l g i a n A l b u m s	7 9

(U l t r a t o p F l a n d e r s) ^[2 7 2]	
B e l g i a n A l b u	7 9

m s (U l t r a t o p W a l o n i a) [2 7 3]	
D u t c h A l b u m	3 6

s (A l b u m T o p 1 0 0) 2 7 4]	
U S <i>B</i> <i>ill</i> <i>b</i> <i>o</i> <i>a</i> <i>r</i> <i>d</i> 2 0	9 4

0[2 7 5]	
U S T o p R & B / H ip - H o p A lb u m s (<i>B ill</i>	6 5

<i>b o a r d)[[] 2 7 6]</i>	
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C h a r t (2 0 2 3)	P o s i t i o n
B el gi a	1 1 8

n A l b u m s (U l t r a t o p F l a n d e r s) ^[2 7 7]	
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B el gi a n A lb u m s (U lt r a t o p W al lo ni a) [[] 2 7 8]	1 3 5
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D u t c h A l b u m s (A l b u m T o p 1 0 0 0) [[] 2 7 9]	6 0
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U S B ill b o a r d 2 0 0 0 [[] 2 8 0]	5 9
U S T o p R & B / H ip	3 6

- H o p A l b u m s (<i>B ill b o a r d</i>) ^[2 8 1]	
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C h a r t	P o s i t
----------------------------------	----------------------------------

(2 0 2 4)	i o n
B el gi a n A lb u m s (U lt r a t o p F la n d e	1 2 1

r s) 2 8 2]	
B el gi a n A lb u m s (U lt r a t o p W al lo	1 6 9

ni a) [[] 2 8 3]	
D u tc h A lb u m s (A lb u m T o p 1 0 0) [[]	5 5

2 8 4]	
U S B ill b o a r d 2 0 0 0 [[] 2 8 5]	9 7
U S T o p R	4 2

& B / H ip - H o p A lb u m s (<i>B ill b o a r d</i>) ^[2 8 6]	
--	--

C h a r t (2 0 2 5)	P o s i t i o n
B e l g i a n A l b u m s (U l t r a t	9 4

o p F la n d e r s) [[] 2 8 7]	
B el gi a n A lb u m s (U lt r	1 1 5

a t o p W al lo ni a) [[] 2 8 8]	
D u tc h A lb u m s (A lb u m	3 6

T o p 1 0 0) [[] 2 8 9]	
G e r m a n A l b u m s (O f f i z i e l e	5 2

T o p 1 0 0) [[] 2 9 0]	
U S <i>B</i> <i>ill</i> <i>b</i> <i>o</i> <i>a</i> <i>r</i> <i>d</i> 2 0 0 [[] 2 9 1]	9 5

Decade-end charts

Chart (1980–1989)	Position
Australia (Kent Music Report) ^[207]	3
Japan (Oricon) ^[292]	2
UK Albums (OCC) ^[252]	3

Chart (2010–2019)	Position
UK Vinyl Albums (OCC) ^[293]	74

Certifications and sales

Region	Certification	Certified units/sales
Argentina (CAPIF) ^[294]	Diamond	576,779 ^[295]
Australia (ARIA) ^[296]	17× Platinum	1,190,000 [‡]
Austria (IFPI Austria) ^[297]	8× Platinum	400,000 [*]
Belgium <i>sales as of 1984</i>	—	300,000 ^[298]
Brazil <i>sales as of 2008</i>	—	2,000,000 ^[299]

Canada (Music Canada) ^[300]	3× Diamond	3,000,000 [‡]
Chile	—	40,000 ^[301]
Colombia	—	300,000 ^[302]
Denmark (IFPI Denmark) ^[303]	6× Platinum	480,000 [^]
Denmark (IFPI Denmark) ^[304] <i>reissue</i>	5× Platinum	100,000 [‡]
Finland (Musiikkituottajat) ^[305]]	Platinum	119,061 ^[305]

France (SNEP) ^[307]	Diamond	3,500,000 ^[306]
Germany (BVMI) ^[308]	3× Platinum	1,500,000 [^]
Hong Kong (IFPI Hong Kong) ^[310]	Platinum	50,000 ^[309]
India	—	100,000 ^[311]
Israel ^[312]	2× Platinum	80,000 ^[312]
Italy	—	1,000,000 ^[313]
Italy (FIMI) ^[314] <i>sales since 2009</i>	4× Platinum	200,000 [‡]

Japan (RIAJ) ^[315]	Gold	2,500,000 ^[311]
Mexico (AMPROFON) ^[316]	2× Diamond+2× Platinum+Gold	2,600,000 [‡]
Netherlands (NVPI) ^[318]	8× Platinum	2,000,000 ^[317]
New Zealand (RMNZ) ^[319]	12× Platinum	180,000 [^]
Norway	—	150,000 ^[320]
Singapore	—	25,000 ^[321]
South Africa (RISA) ^[322]	3× Platinum	120,000 ^[322]

South Korea	—	50,000 ^[323]
Spain	—	500,000 ^[324]
Sweden (GLF) ^[325]	4× Platinum	400,000 [^]
Switzerland (IFPI Switzerland) ^[326]	6× Platinum	300,000 [^]
United Kingdom (BPI) ^[327]	15× Platinum	4,500,000 [‡]
United States (RIAA) ^[328]	34× Platinum	34,000,000 [‡]
Yugoslavia	—	112,000 ^[329]

Zimbabwe	—	8,000 ^[330]
Summaries		
Europe <i>1982–1987 sales</i>	—	18,000,000 ^[331]
Europe (IFPI) ^[332] <i>For sales in 2009</i>	Platinum	1,000,000 [*]
International <i>1982–1991 sales</i>	—	27,000,000 ^[59]
Worldwide	—	70,000,000 ^{[67][66]}

* Sales figures based on certification alone.

^ Shipments figures based on certification alone.

‡ Sales+streaming figures based on certification alone.

Release history

Re gio n	Date	Edition(s)	Format(s)	Label(s)	<u>Ref.</u>
Unite d State s	Nove mber 29, 1982	Standard	• LP • Casset te	Epic	[41]
Unite d King dom				• Epic • CBS	[333]

Vario us					[43]
Japa n		• Standar d • Limited	• LP • Casset te • Picture disc	Epic/Sony	[334]
Vario us	1983	Standard	CD	• Epic • CBS	[335]
Japa n	Octob er 26, 1988	Tour Edition		Epic/Sony	[336]
	July 25, 1991	Standard		• Epic • Sony Japan	[337]
Vario us	Nove mber	Reissue	SACD	• Epic • Sony	[<i>citation needed</i>]

	23, 1999			• MJJ	
Japan	April 1, 2000			• Epic • Sony Japan	[338]
Various	October 16, 2001	Special (re-issue) ^[a]	• CD • Gold CD • Cassette	• Epic • Legacy • Sony • MJJ	[173]
Japan	October 31, 2001		• CD • Gold CD	• Epic • Sony Japan • MJJ	[339]
Various	February 8, 2008	• Thriller 25 • 25th Anniversary • Deluxe^[b]	• CD • LP • DVD • Digital download	• Epic • Legacy • MJJ	[179][340]
Japan	February			• Epic • Sony Japan	[341]

	30, 2008			• MJJ	
Variou us	November 18, 2022	Audiophile Edition ^[c]	• Hybrid SACD • LP	• Mobile Fidelity Sound Lab • Epic	[342]
Variou us		• Thriller 40 • 40th Anniversary • Deluxe^[b]	• CD • LP • Digital download • Streaming	• Epic • Legacy • MJJ	[205][343]

Notes

- ^[a] part of a re-issue promotion of solo albums released under Epic.
- ^[b] deluxe edition available exclusively on digital platforms.
- ^[c] sourced from the original master tapes.

See also

- Thriller (song)
- "Behind the Mask" (song)
- List of 1980s albums considered the best
- List of best-selling albums
- List of best-selling albums by country
- List of best-selling albums in Argentina
- List of best-selling albums in Australia
- List of best-selling albums in Austria
- List of best-selling albums in Belgium
- List of best-selling albums in Brazil
- List of best-selling albums in Canada
- List of best-selling albums in Colombia
- List of best-selling albums in Europe
- List of best-selling albums in Finland
- List of best-selling albums in France
- List of best-selling albums in Germany
- List of best-selling albums in Italy
- List of best-selling albums in Japan
- List of best-selling albums in Mexico
- List of best-selling albums in the Netherlands
- List of best-selling albums in New Zealand
- List of best-selling albums in Spain
- List of best-selling albums in the United Kingdom
- List of best-selling albums in the United States
- List of diamond-certified albums in Argentina
- List of diamond-certified albums in Canada
- List of number-one dance singles of 1983 (U.S.)

Notes

1. Representatives for Sony and Jackson's estate say that *Thriller* has sold 105 million copies globally.^[61] Although sales estimates for *Thriller* have been as high as 110 million copies,^[62] these sales figures are unreliable according to various music specialists.^{[63][64][65]}

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External links

- *Thriller* at [Discogs](#) (list of releases) 
- *Thriller* at [MusicBrainz](#) (list of releases) 

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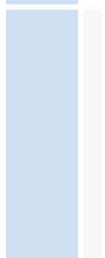
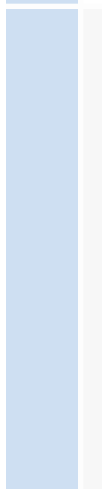
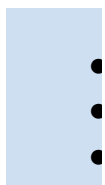
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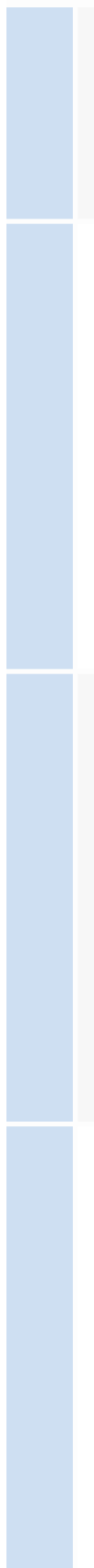
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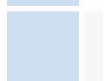
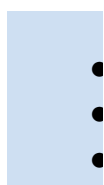


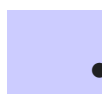
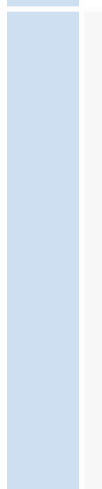
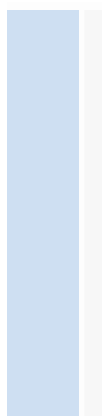
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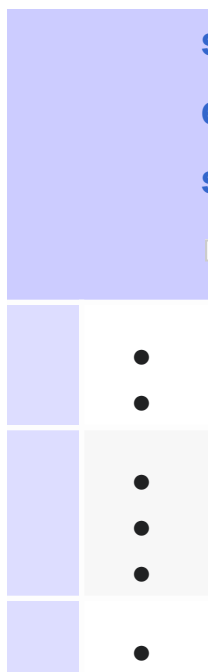


- ## UK best-selling albums (by year) (1970–1989)

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Categories:

[1982 albums](#)

[Michael Jackson albums](#)

[Epic Records albums](#)

[Albums produced by Michael Jackson](#)

[Albums produced by Quincy Jones](#)

[Albums recorded at Westlake Recording Studios](#)

[Brit Award for British Album of the Year](#)

[Grammy Hall of Fame Award recipients](#)

[Grammy Award for Album of the Year](#)

[Grammy Award for Best Engineered Album, Non-Classical](#)

[Grammy Award for Best Male Pop Vocal Performance](#)

[United States National Recording Registry albums](#)

[World record holders](#)

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Michael Jackson

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Michael Jackson



Jackson in 1983

Born Michael Joseph Jackson

August 29, 1958

[Gary, Indiana](#), US

Died June 25, 2009 (aged 50)

Los Angeles, California, US

Cause of death [Cardiac arrest](#) caused by acute [propofol](#) intoxication ([details](#))

Burial place [Forest Lawn Memorial Park, Glendale, California, US](#)

Other name Michael Joe Jackson

Occupations

- Singer
- songwriter
- dancer
- philanthropist

Spouses [Lisa Marie Presley](#)

([m.](#) 1994; [div.](#) 1996)
[Debbie Rowe](#)

([m.](#) 1996; [div.](#) 2000)

Children 3, including [Prince](#) and [Paris](#)

Parents [Joe Jackson](#)
[Katherine Jackson](#)

Family [Jackson](#)

Awards [Full list](#)

Musical career

Genres

- [Pop](#)
- [R&B](#)
- [soul](#)
- [disco](#)

Instrument Vocals

Works

- [Albums](#)
- [singles](#)
- [songs \(unreleased\)](#)
- [videography](#)
- [concerts](#)

**Years
active** 1964–2009

Labels

- [Steeltown](#)
- [Motown](#)
- [Epic](#)

- [Sony](#)

Publisher [Sony Music Publishing](#)

**Formerly
of** [The Jackson 5](#)

Website michaeljackson.com

Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'MJ' with a stylized flourish.

Michael Joseph Jackson (August 29, 1958 – June 25, 2009) was an American singer, songwriter, dancer, and philanthropist. Dubbed the "**King of Pop**", he is widely regarded as [one of the most culturally significant figures](#) of the 20th century. [His musical achievements](#) broke [American racial barriers](#) and made him [a dominant figure worldwide](#). Through [his songs](#), [concerts](#), and fashion, he proliferated visual

performance for artists in [popular music](#), popularizing [street dance](#) moves such as the [moonwalk](#), the [robot](#), and the [anti-gravity lean](#). Jackson is often deemed the greatest entertainer of all time.^[nb 1]

The eighth child of the [Jackson family](#), he made his public debut at age six as the lead singer of [the Jackson 5](#). Jackson rose to solo stardom with the album *[Off the Wall](#)* (1979) and achieved unprecedented global success with *[Thriller](#)* (1982), the [best-selling album in history](#). Its [short film](#)–style [music videos](#) for "Thriller", "Beat It", and "Billie Jean" redefined the medium as an art form. Jackson followed it with *[Bad](#)* (1987), the first album to produce five US [Billboard Hot 100](#) number-one singles: "I Just Can't Stop Loving You", "Bad", "The Way You Make Me Feel", "Man in the Mirror", and "Dirty Diana". His albums *[Dangerous](#)* (1991) and *[HIStory](#)* (1995) spawned the respective US number-one singles "Black or White" and "You Are Not Alone". Jackson's final album, *[Invincible](#)* (2001), is the [most expensive ever made](#).

Starting in the mid-1980s, he came under public scrutiny due to changes in [his appearance](#), [relationships](#), behavior, and lifestyle. He [was accused](#) of sexually abusing a 13-year-old boy in 1993. The case was settled out of court in 1994, and Jackson was not indicted due to a lack of evidence. In 2005, Jackson [was tried](#) and acquitted of child sexual abuse and other charges regarding another 13-year-old boy.

While preparing for [This Is It](#), a series of comeback concerts, [he died](#) in 2009 from an overdose of [propofol](#) administered by his personal physician [Conrad Murray](#). Jackson's death triggered global reactions, creating unprecedented surges of Internet traffic and a spike in his music sales.

Jackson is one of the [best-selling music artists of all time](#), with estimated sales of over 500 million records as a solo artist.^{[\[nb 2\]](#)} He is one of three recording artists to have sold over 100 million records both as solo artists and as principal members of a band. Jackson [holds a joint-record for a male solo artist](#) with 13 *Billboard* Hot 100 number-one singles and is the only artist to have a US top-ten single in six decades. [His accolades](#) include 13 [Grammy Awards](#), the [Grammy Legend Award](#), the [Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award](#), 26 [American Music Awards](#), 12 [World Music Awards](#), 8 [MTV Video Music Awards](#), 6 [Brit Awards](#), and 3 US presidential honors. He was inducted into numerous halls of fame, including the [Rock and Roll Hall of Fame](#) twice, the [Songwriters Hall of Fame](#), and the [Dance Hall of Fame](#). Having [donated an estimated \\$500 million](#), Jackson is credited with setting a standard for celebrity charity.

Life and career

Early life and the Jackson 5 (1958–1975)



Jackson's childhood home in Gary, Indiana, in May 2014

Michael Joseph Jackson^{[9][10]} was born on August 29, 1958, in Gary, Indiana.^{[11][12]} He was the eighth of ten children in the Jackson family, an African-American working-class household living in a two-bedroom home on Jackson Street.^{[13][14]} His mother, Katherine Jackson (née Scruse), played clarinet, cello, and piano, had aspired to be a country-and-western performer, and worked part-time at Sears.^[15] She was a Jehovah's Witness.^[16] His father, Joe Jackson, was a former boxer and a crane operator at US Steel, who also played guitar for the local rhythm and blues group the Falcons.^{[17][18]} Michael grew up with three sisters—Rebbie, La Toya, and Janet—and five brothers Jackie, Tito, Jermaine, Marlon, and Randy.^[17] A sixth brother, Marlon's twin Brandon, died shortly after birth.^[19]

Michael and Marlon joined the Jackson Brothers in 1964, a band their father formed that already included Jackie, Tito, and Jermaine. They initially performed as backup musicians, playing [congas](#) and [tambourine](#).^{[20][21]} Michael later said that his father physically and emotionally abused him during rehearsals, recalling that Joe often sat with a belt in hand, ready to punish mistakes.^{[16][22]} Joe acknowledged that he regularly whipped him.^[23] Jackie, Tito, Jermaine, and Marlon denied that their father was abusive, saying the whippings—felt more intensely by Michael because he was younger—kept the group disciplined and out of trouble.^[24] Michael described his youth as lonely and isolated.^[25]

By late 1965, Michael began sharing lead vocals with Jermaine, and the group's name was changed to [the Jackson 5](#).^[26] They won a talent show that year in which Michael danced to [Robert Parker's "Barefootin'"](#) and sang [the Temptations' "My Girl"](#).^[27] From 1966 to 1968, the Jackson 5 toured throughout the [Midwest](#), performing frequently on the [Chitlin' Circuit](#) as an opening act for artists such as [Sam & Dave](#), [the O'Jays](#), [Gladys Knight](#), and [Etta James](#). They also performed in clubs and cocktail lounges that featured [striptease](#) shows, as well as at local auditoriums and high school dances.^{[28][29]}

In August 1967, while touring the [East Coast](#), they won a weekly amateur night competition at the [Apollo Theater](#) in [Harlem](#).^[30]



Jackson (center) as a member of [the Jackson 5](#) in 1972. The group were among the first [African American](#) performers to attain a large following.^[31]

The Jackson 5 recorded several songs for the Gary-based label [Steeltown Records](#), releasing their first single, "[Big Boy](#)", in 1968.^[32]

Bobby Taylor of [Bobby Taylor & the Vancouvers](#) brought the group to [Motown](#) after they opened for him at Chicago's [Regal Theater](#) that year. Taylor produced some of their early Motown recordings, including a version of "[Who's Lovin' You](#)".^[33] After signing with

Motown, the Jackson family relocated to Los Angeles.^[34] In 1969, Motown executives decided that [Diana Ross](#) would introduce the Jackson 5 to the public—partly to support her emerging television career—launching what was considered Motown's final product of its

"production line".^[35] The group made its first television appearance that year at the [Miss Black America](#) pageant, performing a cover of "It's Your Thing".^[36] *Rolling Stone* later described the young Michael as "a prodigy" with "overwhelming musical gifts" who quickly became the group's main attraction and lead singer.^[37]

In January 1970, "[I Want You Back](#)" became the Jackson 5's first single to reach number one on the *Billboard* Hot 100, remaining at the top for four weeks. Three additional Motown singles—"ABC", "[The Love You Save](#)", and "[I'll Be There](#)"—also reached number one.^[38] In May 1971, the Jackson family moved into a large home on [Hayvenhurst](#) Avenue, a 2-acre (0.81 ha) estate in [Encino, California](#).^[39] During this period, Michael developed from a child performer into a [teen idol](#).^[40] Between 1972 and 1975, he released four solo studio albums with Motown: *[Got to Be There](#)* (1972), *[Ben](#)* (1972), *[Music & Me](#)* (1973), and *[Forever, Michael](#)* (1975).^[41] "[Got to Be There](#)" and "[Ben](#)", the title tracks from his first two solo albums, sold well as singles, as did his cover of [Bobby Day's](#) "[Rockin' Robin](#)".^[42]

Michael remained involved with the Jackson 5.^[41] The group was later described as "a cutting-edge example of black [crossover artists](#)".^[43] They grew frustrated with Motown's refusal to grant them creative input.^[44] Michael's performance of their top five single "[Dancing Machine](#)" on [Soul Train](#) helped popularize the [robot](#) dance.^{[45][46]}

Move to Epic and *Off the Wall* (1975–1981)



Jackson (left) and [Quincy Jones](#) (right) appear with [Diana Ross](#) on her upcoming special, *Diana*, in March 1981.

The Jackson 5 left Motown in 1975, signing with [Epic Records](#) and renaming themselves the Jacksons.^[47] Their younger brother Randy joined the band around this time, while Jermaine remained with Motown to pursue a solo career.^[48] The Jacksons continued to tour internationally and released six more albums between 1976 and 1984.

Michael, the group's main songwriter during this period, wrote songs such as "[Shake Your Body \(Down to the Ground\)](#)" (1978), "[This Place Hotel](#)" (1980), and "[Can You Feel It](#)" (1980).^[49]

In 1977, Jackson moved to [New York City](#) to star as the [Scarecrow](#) in *[The Wiz](#)*, a musical film directed by [Sidney Lumet](#) and featuring [Diana Ross](#), [Nipsey Russell](#), and Ted Ross.^[50] The film was a box-office failure.^[51] Its score was arranged by [Quincy Jones](#),^[52] who later produced three of Jackson's solo albums.^[53] During his time in New York, Jackson frequented the [Studio 54](#) nightclub, where he heard early [hip-hop](#); this influenced his [beatboxing](#) on later tracks such as "[Working Day and Night](#)".^[54]

Jackson's fifth solo album and first as an adult, *[Off the Wall](#)* (1979), established him as a solo performer and marked his transition from the [bubblegum](#) pop of his youth to more complex sounds.^[40] The album produced four top-10 entries in the US: "[Off the Wall](#)", "[She's Out of My Life](#)", and the chart-topping hits "[Don't Stop 'Til You Get Enough](#)" and "[Rock with You](#)".^[55] *Off the Wall* reached number three on the *[Billboard 200](#)* and sold more than 20 million copies worldwide.^[56] Jackson won the Grammy Award for Best Male R&B Vocal Performance for 1979 with "[Don't Stop 'Til You Get Enough](#)".^[57]

At the [American Music Awards](#) during the early 1980s, he won Favorite Soul/R&B Single for "Don't Stop 'Til You Get Enough", two consecutive awards for Favorite Soul/R&B Album, and Favorite Soul/R&B Male Artist.^{[58][59]} In 1981, he again won the American Music Awards for Favorite Soul/R&B Album and Favorite Soul/R&B Male Artist.^[60]

Jackson felt that *Off the Wall* should have made a greater impact and was determined to exceed expectations with his next release.^[61] In 1980, he secured the highest [royalty](#) rate in the music industry: 37 percent of wholesale album profit.^[62]

***Thriller, Motown 25: Yesterday, Today, Forever* and Pepsi incident (1981–1984)**

Duration: 16 seconds.

0:16

Jackson demonstrating the [moonwalk](#) on the 1983 television special *Motown 25: Yesterday, Today, Forever*, which helped popularize the move

From 1981 to 1983, Jackson recorded demos of "[State of Shock](#)", "Victory" and "[There Must Be More to Life Than This](#)" with [Queen's](#) lead singer [Freddie Mercury](#) for a planned album duet. The project

was never completed; "State of Shock" was later recorded with [Mick Jagger](#) for the Jacksons' album [Victory](#) (1984), and "There Must Be More to Life Than This" was released posthumously in 2014. In 1982, Jackson contributed "Someone in the Dark" to the [audiobook for the film *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial*](#).^{[63][64][65][66]}

Jackson's sixth studio album, [Thriller](#), was released on November 29, 1982. It was the best-selling album worldwide in 1983^{[67][68]} and eventually became the best-selling album of all time in the US^[69] and [globally](#), with an estimated 70 million copies sold.^[70] It topped the *Billboard* 200 for 37 weeks and remained in the chart's top 10 for 80 consecutive weeks. *Thriller* became the first album to generate seven top-ten singles on the *Billboard* Hot 100, including the number-one hits "[Billie Jean](#)" and "[Beat It](#)".^[71]

On March 25, 1983, Jackson reunited with his brothers for [Motown 25: Yesterday, Today, Forever](#), an NBC television special that aired on May 16 to an estimated audience of 47 million.^[72] Jackson's solo performance of "Billie Jean" earned him his first [Emmy Award](#) nomination.^[73] Wearing a [rhinestone](#)-studded glove,^[74] he debuted the [moonwalk](#)—taught to him three years earlier by [Jeffrey Daniel](#)—which became his signature dance move.^[75] Jackson had

initially declined the invitation, believing he had been doing too much television, but agreed to perform at the request of Motown founder [Berry Gordy](#) in exchange for a solo spot.^[76] His performance received widespread acclaim: *Rolling Stone's* Mikal Gilmore called it "extraordinary", and *The New York Times* critic [Anna Kisselgoff](#) praised the timing and technique of his dancing,^{[40] [77]} while Gordy said he was "mesmerized".^[78]



Jackson at the [26th Grammy Awards](#), where he won eight awards, breaking the record for the most wins in a single night

At the [26th Annual Grammy Awards](#), Jackson received 12 nominations—the most in a single night at the time (later tied with [Babyface](#))—and won eight awards, breaking the record for the most wins in a single night (later tied by [Santana](#)).^[57] *Thriller* received 13

nominations, the most for any album, and won eight awards, including Best Engineered Recording (Non-Classical) for [Bruce Swedien's](#) work.^[79] Jackson won seven awards related to the album, including Album of the Year for *Thriller* and Record of the Year for "Beat It", and also won an award for the *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial* storybook.^[57] At the [11th Annual American Music Awards](#), Jackson won another eight awards and became the youngest artist to receive the Award of Merit.^[80] He also won Favorite Male Artist, Favorite Soul/R&B Artist, and Favorite Pop/Rock Artist. "Beat It" won Favorite Soul/R&B Video, Favorite Pop/Rock Video, and Favorite Pop/Rock Single. The album won Favorite Soul/R&B Album and Favorite Pop/Rock Album.^{[80][81]} *Thriller's* sales doubled after the release of an extended music video for [its title track](#), which features Jackson dancing with a group of zombies.^{[82][83]}

The success transformed Jackson into a dominant force in global pop culture,^[83] and the album "conquered racial divides".^[84] He had the highest royalty rate in the music industry at that point, earning about \$2 for every album sold (equivalent to \$6 in 2025), and was making record-breaking profits.^[85] In the same year, *The Making of Michael Jackson's Thriller*, a documentary about the music video, won a Grammy for Best Music Video (Longform).^[57] *Time* described

Jackson's influence at the time as "star of records, radio, rock video. A one-man rescue team for the music business. A songwriter who sets the beat for a decade. A dancer with the fanciest feet on the street. A singer who cuts across all boundaries of taste and style and color too."^[85] *The New York Times* wrote, "in the world of pop music, there is Michael Jackson and there is everybody else".^[86]

Jackson and his brothers partnered with [PepsiCo](#) during November 1983 for a \$5 million promotional deal, setting a new record for a celebrity endorsement (equivalent to \$16.2 million in 2025). The first [Pepsi](#) campaign, which ran in the US from 1983 to 1984 and launched the company's "New Generation" theme, included tour sponsorship, public relations events, and in-store displays. Jackson helped create the advertisement and suggested using his song "Billie Jean", with revised lyrics, as its [jingle](#).^[87]



Jackson performing with the Jacksons in [Los Angeles](#) during the [Victory Tour](#) in 1984

On January 27, 1984, Michael and other members of the Jacksons filmed a Pepsi commercial at the [Shrine Auditorium](#) in Los Angeles, overseen by [Phil Dusenberry](#),^[88] a [BBDO](#) ad agency executive, and [Alan Pottasch](#), Pepsi's Worldwide Creative Director. During a simulated concert before a full audience, pyrotechnics accidentally set Jackson's hair on fire, causing second-degree [burns](#) to his scalp. He underwent treatment to conceal the scars and had his third rhinoplasty shortly afterward.^[89] Pepsi settled out of court, and Jackson donated the \$1.5 million settlement (equivalent to \$4.6 million in 2025) to the [Brotman Medical Center](#) in [Culver City, California](#); its now-closed Michael Jackson Burn Center was named in his honor.^{[90][91]} Jackson signed a second agreement with Pepsi in the late 1980s for \$10 million (equivalent to \$28.3 million in 2025). The second campaign covered 20 countries and provided financial support for Jackson's *Bad* album and 1987–1988 world tour. Jackson also had endorsements and advertising deals with companies such as [LA Gear](#), [Suzuki](#), and [Sony](#), but none were as significant as his deals with Pepsi.^[87]

The [Victory Tour](#) of 1984 headlined the Jacksons and showcased Jackson's new solo material to more than two million Americans. It

was the last tour he performed with his brothers.^[92] Following [controversy over the concert's ticket sales](#), Jackson donated his share of the proceeds—estimated at \$3 to 5 million—to charity.^[93] During the final concert of the Victory Tour at the [Dodger Stadium](#) in Los Angeles, Jackson announced his split from the Jacksons during "Shake Your Body".^[94]

"We Are the World" and other commercial activities (1985)



Jackson signing a "[We Are the World](#)" poster in 1985

With [Lionel Richie](#), Jackson co-wrote the charity single "[We Are the World](#)" (1985), which raised money for the poor in the US and

Africa.^{[95][96]} It earned \$63 million (equivalent to \$189 million in 2025),^[96] and became one of the [best-selling singles of all time](#), with 20 million copies sold.^[97] It won four Grammy Awards in 1985, including Song of the Year for Jackson and Richie.^[95] Jackson, Jones, and promoter Ken Kragen received special awards for their roles in the song's creation.^{[95][98][99][100]}

Jackson collaborated with [Paul McCartney](#) in the early 1980s and learned that McCartney was making \$40 million a year from owning the rights to other artists' songs.^[96] By 1983, Jackson had begun buying publishing rights to others' songs, but he was selective with his acquisitions, bidding on only a few of the many catalogs offered to him. Jackson's early purchases of [music catalogs](#) and song copyrights, such as the [Sly Stone](#) collection, included "Everyday People" (1968), [Len Barry](#)'s "1-2-3" (1965), and [Dion DiMucci](#)'s "The Wanderer" (1961) and "Runaround Sue" (1961). In 1984, [Robert Holmes à Court](#) announced he was selling the [ATV Music Publishing](#) catalog, which comprised the publishing rights to nearly 4,000 songs, including most of [the Beatles](#)'s material.^[101] In 1981, McCartney had been offered the catalog for £20 million (\$40 million) (equivalent to \$142 million in 2025).^{[96][102]} Jackson submitted a bid of \$46 million

(equivalent to \$143 million in 2025) on November 20, 1984.^[101] When Jackson and McCartney were unable to make a joint purchase, McCartney did not want to be the sole owner of the Beatles's songs and did not pursue an offer on his own.^{[103][102]} Jackson's agents were unable to reach a deal, and in May 1985 they left negotiations after spending more than \$1 million and four months on [due diligence](#).^[101]

In June 1985, Jackson and Branca learned that [Charles Koppelman's](#) and [Martin Bandier's](#) The Entertainment Company had made a tentative offer to buy ATV Music for \$50 million. In early August, Holmes à Court contacted Jackson and talks resumed. Jackson's increased bid of \$47.5 million (equivalent to \$142 million in 2025) was accepted because he could close the deal more quickly, having already completed due diligence.^[101] Jackson agreed to visit Holmes à Court in Australia, where he would appear on the [Channel Seven Perth Telethon](#).^[104] His purchase of ATV Music was finalized on August 10, 1985.^{[96][101]}

Increased tabloid speculation (1986–1987)

See also: [Health and appearance of Michael Jackson](#)

Jackson's skin had been medium-brown during his youth, but from the mid-1980s it gradually became paler. The change drew widespread media coverage, including speculation that he had been [bleaching](#) his skin.^{[105][106][107]} His dermatologist, [Arnold Klein](#), said he observed in 1983 that Jackson had [vitiligo](#),^[108] a condition characterized by patches of skin losing their pigment. He also identified [discoid lupus erythematosus](#) in Jackson. Klein diagnosed Jackson with lupus that year^[108] and with vitiligo in 1986.^[109] Vitiligo's drastic effects on the body can cause psychological distress. Jackson used fair-colored makeup^[110] and possibly skin-bleaching prescription creams^[111] to cover the uneven blotches caused by the illness. The creams would depigment the blotches, and with makeup he could appear very pale.^[112] Jackson said he had not purposely bleached his skin and could not control his vitiligo, adding, "When people make up stories that I don't want to be who I am, it hurts me."^[113] He became friends with Klein and Klein's assistant, [Debbie Rowe](#). Rowe later became Jackson's second wife and the mother of his first two children.^[114]

Jackson discussed within his 1988 autobiography and a 1993 interview having only two [rhinoplasty](#) surgeries and a [cleft chin](#) surgery. He mentioned losing weight in the early 1980s because of his dietary change to achieve a dancer's body.^[115] Witnesses reported

him often being dizzy and speculated he was suffering from [anorexia nervosa](#). Periods of weight loss became a recurring problem later in his life.^[116] After Jackson died, his mother talking about him first turning to [cosmetic procedures](#) to address his vitiligo and avoid looking like a "spotted cow". She said there were more than the two cosmetic surgeries he claimed, and speculated that her son had become addicted to them.^[117]



Jackson with his pet chimpanzee [Bubbles](#) in 1986

It was reported during 1986 that Jackson slept in a [hyperbaric chamber](#) to slow aging. He denied the story,^[118] though was alleged to have leaked an image of himself sleeping in a glass chamber. Jackson

said it was a promotional shot from an upcoming space opera featuring him, *Captain EO*, to *The National Enquirer*.^[119] It was also reported that he took estrogen injections to keep his voice high and facial hair sparse, proposed to *Elizabeth Taylor* and possibly kept a shrine to her, and had cosmetic surgery on his eyes. Jackson's manager *Frank DiLeo* denied all of these claims except for having a chamber. DiLeo added, "I don't know if he sleeps in it. I'm not for it. But Michael thinks it's something that's probably healthy for him. He's a bit of a health fanatic."^[120]

When Jackson took his pet chimpanzee *Bubbles* on tour in Japan, the media portrayed him as an aspiring *Disney* cartoon character who befriended animals.^[121] It was also reported that Jackson had offered to buy the bones of *Joseph Merrick* (the "Elephant Man").^[122] In June 1987, the *Chicago Tribune* reported Jackson's publicist bidding \$1 million for the skeleton from the *London Hospital Medical College* on his behalf. The college maintained the skeleton was not for sale. DiLeo said Jackson had an "absorbing interest" in Merrick, "purely based on his awareness of the ethical, medical and historical significance".^[123]

Jackson worked with *George Lucas* and *Francis Ford Coppola* on a 17-minute, \$30 million 3D film, *Captain EO*, which ran from 1986 at

Disneyland and Epcot, and later at Tokyo Disneyland and Euro Disneyland.^[124] After being removed in the late 1990s, it returned to the theme park for several years after Jackson's death.^[125] As a Jehovah's Witness, Jackson would evangelize door-to-door while wearing a disguise.^[126] In 1987, *Ebony* reported that Jackson had disassociated himself from the Jehovah's Witnesses.^[127] Katherine Jackson said this might have been because some Witnesses strongly opposed the *Thriller* video,^[128] which Michael denounced in a Witness publication in 1984.^[129] While former members are usually shunned by their families, Jackson's mother remained in contact with him.^[130] In 2001, Jackson told an interviewer he was still a Jehovah's Witness.^[131]

***Bad*, autobiography and Neverland (1987–1990)**



Jackson (center) performing a dance sequence of "[The Way You Make Me Feel](#)" at the [Bad World Tour](#) in 1988

Jackson released his highly anticipated seventh studio album, [Bad](#), on August 31, 1987.^[132] *Bad* sold more than 2.25 million copies in its first week in the US, debuting at number one on the *Billboard* 200, where it remained for six weeks.^{[133][134]} It became the first album to produce five US number-one singles: "[I Just Can't Stop Loving You](#)", "[Bad](#)", "[The Way You Make Me Feel](#)", "[Man in the Mirror](#)", and "[Dirty Diana](#)". Another single, "[Smooth Criminal](#)", peaked at number seven.^[55]

Bad won the 1988 Grammy for Best Engineered Recording—Non Classical and the 1990 [Grammy Award for Best Music Video](#), Short

Form for "[Leave Me Alone](#)".^{[57][135]} Jackson received an Award of Achievement at the American Music Awards in 1989 after *Bad* generated five number-one singles, became the first album to top the charts in 25 countries, and was the best-selling album worldwide in 1987 and 1988.^{[136][137]} The [Bad](#) tour ran from September 12, 1987, to January 27, 1989.^[138] In Japan, it had 14 sellouts and drew 570,000 people, nearly tripling the previous record for a single tour.^[139] The 504,000 people who attended seven sold-out shows at [Wembley Stadium](#) set a new [Guinness World Record](#).^[140] *Bad* cemented Jackson's status as a dominant music force,^[141] the album has sold more than 35 million copies worldwide, placing it among the [best-selling albums of all time](#).^{[142][143]}

In 1988, Jackson released his autobiography, [Moonwalk](#), with input from Stephen Davis and [Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis](#).^[144] It sold 200,000 copies,^[145] and reached the top of [The New York Times Best Seller list](#).^[146] Jackson discussed his childhood, the Jackson 5, and the abuse he experienced from his father.^[147] He attributed his changing facial appearance to three plastic surgeries, puberty, weight loss, a strict vegetarian diet, a change in hairstyle, and stage

lighting.^{[148][115]} On June 28, 1988, during the Bad World Tour, Jackson was presented with the Grand Vermeil [Medal of the City of Paris](#) by Mayor [Jacques Chirac](#).^{[149][150]} On July 20, he became the first [commoner](#) in history to enter London's [Guildhall](#) through the building's Royal Entrance.^[151] In October, Jackson released the film *[Moonwalker](#)*, which featured live footage and short films starring Jackson and [Joe Pesci](#). In the US it was released [direct-to-video](#) and became the best-selling videocassette in the country.^{[152][153]} The [Recording Industry Association of America](#) (RIAA) certified it eight times Platinum.^[154]



Jackson performing in [Vienna](#) in July 1988

In March 1988, Jackson purchased 2,700 acres (11 km²) of land near [Santa Ynez, California](#), to build a new home, [Neverland Ranch](#), at a cost of \$17 million (equivalent to \$46 million in 2025).^[155] He installed

a [Ferris wheel](#), a [carousel](#), a movie theater, and a zoo.^{[155][156][157]} A security staff of 40 patrolled the grounds.^[156] Shortly afterward, he appeared in the first Western television advertisement broadcast in the [Soviet Union](#).^[158] Around this time, Jackson became known as the "King of Pop", a nickname embraced by his publicists.^{[22][159][160]} When [Elizabeth Taylor](#) presented him with the Soul Train Heritage Award in 1989, she called him "the true king of pop, rock and soul".^[161] President [George H. W. Bush](#) designated him the White House's "Artist of the Decade".^[162] At the 38th [BMI Awards](#) in 1990, Jackson became the first person to be honored with an award named after its recipient.^[163] From 1985 to 1990, Jackson donated \$455,000 to the [United Negro College Fund](#),^[164] and all profits from his single "Man in the Mirror" went to charity.^[165] His performance of "You Were There" at [Sammy Davis Jr.](#)'s 60th birthday celebration earned Jackson a second Emmy nomination.^[73] Jackson was the best-selling artist of the 1980s.^[166]

Dangerous and public social work (1991–1993)

In March 1991, Jackson renewed his contract with Sony for \$65 million (equivalent to \$154 million in 2025), a [record-breaking deal](#) at

the time.^[167] He released his eighth studio album, *Dangerous*, on November 21, 1991, co-produced with [Teddy Riley](#).^[168] It was certified eight times platinum in the US and had sold 32 million copies worldwide by 2018.^{[169][170]} In the US, the first single, "[Black or White](#)", was the album's highest-charting song; it was number one on the *Billboard* Hot 100 for seven weeks and achieved similar chart success worldwide.^[171] The second single, "[Remember the Time](#)" peaked at number three on the *Billboard* Hot 100.^[172] At the end of 1992, *Dangerous* was the best-selling album of the year worldwide, and "Black or White" the best-selling single of the year worldwide at the *Billboard Music Awards*.^[166] In 1993, he performed "Remember the Time" at the [Soul Train Music Awards](#) while seated, saying he had twisted his ankle during dance rehearsals.^[173] In the UK, "[Heal the World](#)" reached number two on the charts in 1992.^[174]



Jackson during the [Dangerous World Tour](#) in [Monza](#), Italy, in 1992

Jackson founded the [Heal the World Foundation](#) in 1992. The charity brought underprivileged children to Jackson's ranch to use the theme park rides and sent millions of dollars around the world to help children threatened by war, poverty, and disease. That July, Jackson published his second book, *[Dancing the Dream](#)*, a collection of poetry. In support of *Dangerous*, Jackson embarked on his second world tour, the [Dangerous World Tour](#), to raise money for his Heal the World Foundation.^[175] The tour ran from June 1992 to November 1993, grossing \$100 million (equivalent to \$220 million in 2025) from 69 concerts outside the US and attracting more than 3.5 million people.^{[176][177]} Jackson sold the broadcast rights for his October 1, 1992, concert in Bucharest to [HBO](#) for \$20 million (equivalent to \$46 million in 2025), then the highest fee ever paid for a concert performer to appear on television.^[178] He donated a portion of the fee to aid Romanian children.^[175]

Following the death of [HIV/AIDS](#) spokesperson and friend [Ryan White](#), Jackson urged the Clinton administration at [Bill Clinton's inaugural gala](#) to increase funding for HIV/AIDS charities and research,^{[179][180]} and performed "[Gone Too Soon](#)", a song dedicated to White, and "Heal the World" at the gala.^[181] Jackson visited Africa

in early 1992; on his first stop in Gabon, he was greeted by more than 100,000 people, some carrying signs that read "Welcome Home Michael",^[182] and was awarded the rank of Officer of the [National Order of Merit](#) from President [Omar Bongo](#).^{[183][184]} During his trip to Ivory Coast, Jackson drew larger crowds than [Pope John Paul II](#) had on his previous visits.^[185] He was crowned "King Sani" by a tribal chief in the Ivorian village of [Krindjabo](#), where he thanked dignitaries in French and English, signed documents formalizing his kingship, and sat on a golden throne while presiding over ceremonial dances.^[182]

In January 1993, Jackson performed at the [Super Bowl XXVII halftime show](#) in Pasadena, California. The [National Football League](#) (NFL) sought a major artist to maintain viewership during halftime following declining audience figures.^{[186][187]} With 133.4 million viewers, it was the first Super Bowl whose halftime show drew a larger audience than the game itself.^[188] Jackson performed "[Jam](#)", "Billie Jean", "Black or White", and "Heal the World". *Dangerous* rose 90 places on the US albums chart following the performance.^[105]

Jackson gave [a 90-minute interview](#) with [Oprah Winfrey](#) on February 10, 1993. He spoke about the abuse he experienced during his childhood at the hands of his father, said he believed he had missed

out on much of his childhood, and stated that he often cried from loneliness. He denied tabloid rumors that he had bought the bones of the Elephant Man, slept in a hyperbaric oxygen chamber, or bleached his skin, and stated for the first time that he had vitiligo. After the interview, *Dangerous* re-entered the US albums chart in the top 10, more than a year after its release.^{[22][105]} The interview became the [most-watched television interview in US history](#) to date, with more than 90 million viewers.^[189]

In January 1993, Jackson won three [American Music Awards](#): Favorite Pop/Rock Album (*Dangerous*), Favorite Soul/R&B Single ("Remember the Time"), and became the first recipient of the International Artist Award of Excellence.^{[190][191]} In February, he received the "Living Legend Award" at the [35th Annual Grammy Awards](#) in Los Angeles.^[57] He attended the ceremony with [Brooke Shields](#).^[192] *Dangerous* was nominated for Best Vocal Performance (for "Black or White"), Best R&B Vocal Performance ("Jam"), and Best R&B Song ("Jam"), and Bruce Swedien and Teddy Riley won the Grammy Award for Best Engineered—Non Classical.^[135] In the decades since, *Dangerous* has been lauded as arguably Jackson's greatest artistic achievement.^{[193][194][195][196]}

First child sexual abuse accusations and first marriage (1993–1995)

Main article: [1993 Michael Jackson sexual abuse allegations](#)

In the second half of 1993, Jackson faced significant controversy following allegations that he had sexually abused 13-year-old Jordan Chandler, whom he met that year.^[197] On July 8, Jordan's father, Evan Chandler, was recorded threatening to ruin Jackson's career with a "carefully planned plot."^{[198][199]} The following day, Jackson's investigator, Anthony Pellicano, met Jordan, who denied any abuse or inappropriate touching by Jackson.^[200] After a letter from psychiatrist Dr. Mathis Abrams stating that sexual abuse might have occurred,^[201] Chandler allegedly received a confession from his son^[201] and demanded \$20 million from Jackson on August 4, 1993, which Jackson declined.^[198] From August 9–13, 1993, Evan Chandler and his legal team made various counteroffers to secure a settlement from Jackson, escalating their financial demands after his refusal to pay the initial \$20 million. Evan later filed a lawsuit in September seeking \$30 million for alleged damages.^[202] Jackson denied all of the claims and financial demands, prompting Chandler to go public with the allegations.^{[203][204][205]}

Prosecutors raided Neverland Ranch and other residences while Jackson was on tour in August,^[206] finding no [child pornography](#) or other incriminating evidence.^{[207][208]} In December 1993, Prosecutor [Thomas W. Sneddon Jr.](#) filed a court order to conduct a strip search of Jackson, based on a drawing provided by the accuser and submitted to authorities. According to [Reuters](#) and [USA Today](#), the description of Jackson's genitalia did not match the photographs taken during the police investigation.^{[209][210][211]} The grand jury subsequently subpoenaed Jackson's mother, reportedly to assess whether there were any physical alterations compared to the description.^{[212][213][214]}

In November 1993, Jackson requested that the civil trial be postponed until after the criminal hearing, arguing that proceeding would violate his [civil rights](#) under the circumstances of having to defend himself under [double jeopardy](#). The motion was denied, and in January 1994, the civil lawsuit was settled for \$15,331,250, with separate payments of \$1.5 million for Evan and June Chandler, totaling \$18.3 million allocated to the Chandler family—less than the initial \$20–30 million demand.^{[215][216]} The settlement documents show that the Chandlers dropped the child molestation allegations from their complaint, with Jackson's settlement filed over claims of negligence. It was later revealed that the settlement did not prevent the Chandlers from testifying in the criminal case.^[217] The police never filed criminal

charges.^[218] The prosecution continued to investigate Jackson from January to June 1994, with Jordan Chandler continuing to cooperate with investigators.^[216] By July 1994, multiple grand juries had been convened; jurors reported that no damaging evidence was presented against Jackson.^[219] On September 21, 1994, after 400 witnesses had been investigated and another 30 called before the grand juries, the investigation was closed. A few potential leads were found, but all proved to be false.^[220]

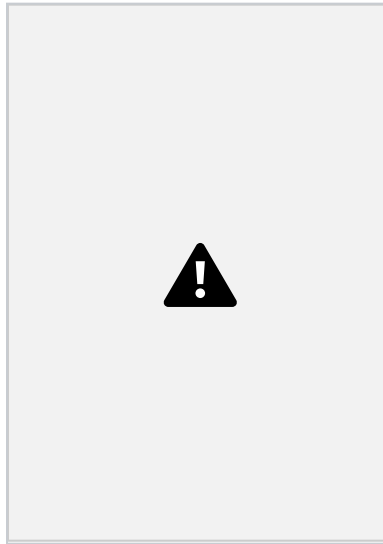
Jackson had been taking [painkillers](#) for reconstructive scalp surgeries administered after the 1984 Pepsi commercial accident, and became dependent on them to cope with the stress of the allegations.^[221] On November 12, 1993, Jackson canceled the remainder of the Dangerous World Tour due to health problems, stress from the allegations, and painkiller addiction. He thanked his close friend Elizabeth Taylor for her support, encouragement, and counsel. The end of the tour concluded his sponsorship deal with Pepsi.^[222]

In late 1993, Jackson proposed to [Lisa Marie Presley](#), the daughter of [Elvis Presley](#), over the phone.^[223] They were married in [La Vega, Dominican Republic](#), in May 1994 by civil judge Hugo Francisco Álvarez Pérez.^[224] The tabloid media speculated that the wedding

was a publicity stunt intended to deflect attention from Jackson's sexual abuse allegations and to boost Presley's career as a singer.^{[224][225]} Their marriage ended little more than a year later, and they separated in December 1995.^[226] Presley cited "irreconcilable differences" when filing for divorce the following month and sought only to reclaim her maiden name.^{[225][227]} She later said they had attempted to reconcile intermittently for four years after their divorce, traveling internationally to be together.^[228]

Jackson composed music for the [Sega Genesis](#) video game *[Sonic the Hedgehog 3](#)* (1994), but left the project around the time the sexual abuse allegations surfaced and went uncredited. His involvement was the subject of fan speculation for decades until *Sonic* co-creator [Yuji Naka](#) confirmed it in 2022.^{[229][230]} [Sega Technical Institute](#) director Roger Hector and *Sonic* co-creator [Naoto Ohshima](#) said Jackson was terminated and his music reworked following the allegations.^{[231][232]} However, Jackson's musical director [Brad Buxer](#) and other members of Jackson's team said he went uncredited because he was unhappy with how the Genesis hardware replicated his music.^[233] The game's credits theme later served as the basis for Jackson's 1996 song "[Stranger in Moscow](#)".^[234]

***HIStory*, second marriage, fatherhood and *Blood on the Dance Floor: HIStory in the Mix*
(1995–1997)**



Jackson at the [1997 Cannes Film Festival](#) for the premiere of [Michael Jackson's Ghosts](#)

In June 1995, Jackson released the double album [HIStory: Past, Present and Future, Book I](#). The first disc, *HIStory Begins*, is a [greatest hits compilation](#) (reissued in 2001 as *Greatest Hits: HIStory, Volume I*). The second disc, *HIStory Continues*, contains 13 original songs and two cover versions. The album debuted at number one on the charts and has been certified for eight million shipments in the US. ^[235] It is one of the best-selling albums of all time, with 20 million

copies (40 million units) sold worldwide.^{[171][170]} *HIStory* received a Grammy nomination for [Album of the Year](#).^[57] *The New York Times* described it as "the testimony of a musician whose self-pity now equals his talent".^[236]

The first single from *HIStory* was "[Scream/Childhood](#)". "Scream", a duet with Jackson's youngest sister Janet, protests the media's treatment of Jackson during the 1993 child abuse allegations. The single reached number five on the *Billboard* Hot 100^[172] and received a Grammy nomination for Best Pop Collaboration with Vocals.^[57] The second single, "[You Are Not Alone](#)", holds the Guinness world record as the first song to debut at number one on the *Billboard* Hot 100.^[237] It received a Grammy nomination for Best Pop Vocal Performance in 1995.^[57]

In 1995, the [Anti-Defamation League](#) and other groups criticized the original lyrics of "[They Don't Care About Us](#)" ("Jew me, sue me, everybody do me / Kick me, [kike](#) me, don't you black or white me") as [antisemitic](#). Jackson released a revised version of the song.^[238] In late 1995, he was hospitalized after collapsing during rehearsals for a televised performance, the result of a stress-related [panic attack](#).^[239] In November, Jackson merged his ATV Music catalog with Sony's

music publishing division, creating [Sony/ATV Music Publishing](#). He retained ownership of half the company, earning \$95 million up front (equivalent to \$201 million in 2025) as well as [rights to additional songs](#).^{[240][241]}

"[Earth Song](#)" was the third single released from *HIStory*, and topped the [UK Singles Chart](#) for six weeks over Christmas 1995.^[174] It became the 87th-best-selling single in UK history.^[242] At the [1996 Brit Awards](#), Jackson's performance of "Earth Song" was interrupted by [Pulp](#) singer [Jarvis Cocker](#), who said he was protesting what he viewed as Jackson's "Christ-like" persona. Jackson called the stage invasion "disgusting and cowardly".^{[243][244]}

In 1996, Jackson won a Grammy for Best Music Video, Short Form, for "Scream" and an American Music Award for Favorite Pop/Rock Male Artist.^{[57][245]} In July 1996, he performed for [Sultan Hassanah Bolkiah](#)'s 50th birthday at [Jerudong Park Amphitheater](#), which had been built specifically for the event.^[246] Jackson was reportedly paid \$17 million (equivalent to \$35 million in 2025).^[247] He promoted *HIStory* with the [HIStory World Tour](#), from September 7, 1996, to October 15, 1997. He performed 82 concerts across five continents, 35 countries, and 58 cities to more than 4.5 million fans, making it his

most-attended tour. It grossed \$165 million (equivalent to \$331 million in 2025).^[138] During the tour, in Sydney, Australia, Jackson married [Debbie Rowe](#), a dermatology assistant who was six months pregnant with his first child.^[248]

[Michael Joseph Jackson Jr.](#) (commonly known as Prince) was born on February 13, 1997. His sister [Paris-Michael Katherine Jackson](#) was born on April 3, 1998.^[249] Jackson and Rowe divorced in 2000; Rowe conceded custody of the children and received an \$8.5 million settlement (equivalent to \$15.9 million in 2025).^[250] In 2004, after the [second child abuse allegations against Jackson](#), she returned to court seeking to regain custody. The suit was settled in 2006.^[251]

In 1997, Jackson released [Blood on the Dance Floor: HIStory in the Mix](#), which contained remixes of singles from *HIStory* and five new songs. Worldwide sales stand at 6 million copies, making it the [best-selling remix album](#) of all time. It reached number one in the UK, as did the single "[Blood on the Dance Floor](#)".^[252] In the US, the album reached number 24 and was certified platinum.^[169]

Label dispute and *Invincible* (1997–2002)

From October 1997 to September 2001, Jackson worked on his tenth solo album, *Invincible*, which cost \$30 million (equivalent to \$54.5 million in 2025) to record, making it the [most expensive album of all time](#).^[253] In June 1999, Jackson joined [Luciano Pavarotti](#) for a [War Child](#) benefit concert in [Modena, Italy](#). The show raised a million dollars for refugees of the [Kosovo War](#), and additional funds for the children of [Guatemala](#).^[254] Later that month, Jackson organized a series of "[Michael Jackson & Friends](#)" benefit concerts in Germany and [South Korea](#). Other artists involved included [Slash](#), [The Scorpions](#), [Boyz II Men](#), [Luther Vandross](#), [Mariah Carey](#), [A. R. Rahman](#), [Prabhu Deva](#) Sundaram, [Shobana](#), [Andrea Bocelli](#) and Luciano Pavarotti. The proceeds went to the [Nelson Mandela Children's Fund](#), the [Red Cross](#) and [UNESCO](#).^[255] Jackson was presented with the "Outstanding Humanitarian Award" at the 1999 [Bollywood Movie Awards](#) in New York City where he noted [Mahatma Gandhi](#) was an inspiration for him.^{[256][257]} At the turn of the century, Jackson was awarded with the Artist of the 1980s Decade Award at the [27th American Music Awards](#),^[258] and the Best Selling Pop Male Artist of the Millennium Award at the 12th [World Music Awards](#).^[259] In 2000, [Guinness World Records](#) recognized him for supporting 39 charities, more than any other entertainer.^[260]

Two concerts were held during September 2001 at Madison Square Garden to mark Jackson's 30th year as a solo artist. Jackson performed with his brothers for the first time since 1984. The show also featured [Mýa](#), [Usher](#), [Whitney Houston](#), [Destiny's Child](#), [Monica](#), [Liza Minnelli](#) and [Slash](#). The first show was marred by technical lapses, and the crowd booed a speech by [Marlon Brando](#).^[261] 45 million people watched the television broadcast of the shows in November according to [Nielsen Media Research](#).^[262] After the [September 11 attacks](#), which Jackson narrowly avoided death by oversleeping and missing a scheduled meeting at the [World Trade Center](#),^[263] he helped organize the [United We Stand: What More Can I Give](#) benefit concert at [Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Stadium](#) in Washington, D.C., on October 21, 2001. Jackson performed "[What More Can I Give](#)" as the finale.^[264]

The release of *Invincible* was preceded by a dispute between Jackson and his record label, Sony Music Entertainment. He had expected the licenses to the masters of his albums to revert to him in the early 2000s, and enable him to keep the profits and promote his material as desired, but clauses in the contract set the revert date years into the future. Jackson sought an early exit from his contract.^[265] *Invincible* was released on October 30, 2001. It was Jackson's first full-length album in six years, and the last album of original material he released

in his lifetime.^[265] It debuted at number one in 13 countries, and went on to sell eight million copies worldwide, receiving double-platinum certification in the US.^{[169][266][267]}

On January 9, 2002, Jackson won his 22nd American Music Award for Artist of the Century.^{[268][269]} Later that year, an anonymous [surrogate mother](#) gave birth to his third child, Prince Michael Jackson II (nicknamed "Blanket"), who had been conceived by [artificial insemination](#).^[270] On November 20, Jackson briefly held Blanket over the railing of his Berlin hotel room, four stories above ground level, prompting widespread criticism in the media. Jackson apologized for the incident, calling it "a terrible mistake".^[271] On January 22, promoter Marcel Avram filed a breach of contract complaint against Jackson for failing to perform two planned 1999 concerts.^[272] In March, a Santa Maria jury ordered Jackson to pay Avram \$5.3 million (equivalent to \$9.5 million in 2025).^{[273][274]} On December 18, 2003, Jackson's attorneys dropped all appeals on the verdict and settled the lawsuit for an undisclosed amount.^[275]

On April 24, 2002, Jackson performed at [Apollo Theater](#). The concert was a fundraiser for the Democratic National Committee and former President Bill Clinton.^[276] The money collected would be used to

encourage citizens to vote. It raised \$2.5 million (equivalent to \$3.9 million in 2025).^[277] The concert was called [Michael Jackson: Live at the Apollo](#) and was one of Jackson's final on-stage performances.^[278]

In July 2002, at [Al Sharpton's National Action Network](#) in Harlem, Jackson called the Sony Music chairman [Tommy Mottola](#) "a racist, and very, very, very devilish", and accused him of exploiting black artists for his own gain. The accusation prompted Sharpton to form a coalition investigating whether Mottola exploited black artists.^[279]

Jackson charged that Mottola had called his colleague [Irv Gotti](#) a "fat nigger".^[280] Sony issued a statement calling the accusations "ludicrous, spiteful, and hurtful" and said Mottola had championed Jackson's career for years.^[279] Sony refused to renew Jackson's contract and said that a \$25 million (equivalent to \$44.8 million in 2025) promotional campaign had failed because Jackson refused to tour in the US for *Invincible*.^[253]

Documentary, *Number Ones*, second child abuse allegations and acquittal (2002–2005)

Further information: [Trial of Michael Jackson](#)



Jackson in Las Vegas, 2003

Beginning in May 2002, a documentary film crew led by [Martin Bashir](#) followed Jackson for several months.^[271] The documentary, broadcast in February 2003 as *[Living with Michael Jackson](#)*, showed Jackson holding hands and discussing sleeping arrangements with a twelve-year-old boy.^{[281][282]} He discussed seeing nothing wrong with having sleepovers with minors and sharing his bed and bedroom with various people, which aroused controversy. He insisted that the sleepovers were not sexual and that his words had been misunderstood.^{[283][284]}

In October 2003, Jackson received the [Key to the City](#) of [Las Vegas](#) from Mayor [Oscar Goodman](#).^[285] On November 18, 2003, Sony released *[Number Ones](#)*, a [greatest hits album](#). It was certified five

times platinum by the RIAA, and ten times platinum in the UK, for shipments of at least 3 million units.^{[169][286]}

On December 18, 2003, Santa Barbara authorities charged Jackson with seven counts of child molestation and two counts of intoxicating a minor with [alcoholic drinks](#).^[287] Jackson denied the allegations and pleaded not guilty.^[288] The *People v. Jackson* trial began on January 31, 2005, in [Santa Maria, California](#), and lasted until the end of May. Jackson found the experience stressful and it affected his health. If convicted, he would have faced up to twenty years in prison.^[289] On June 13, 2005, Jackson was acquitted on all counts.^[290] [FBI files on Jackson](#), released in 2009, revealed the FBI's role in the 2005 trial and the 1993 allegations, and showed that the FBI found no evidence of criminal conduct on Jackson's behalf.^{[291][292]}

Final years, financial problems, *Thriller 25* and This Is It (2005–2009)



Jackson and his son Blanket in [Disneyland Paris](#), 2006

After the trial, Jackson became reclusive.^[293] He moved to [Bahrain](#) during June 2005 as a guest of [Sheikh Abdullah](#).^[294] In early 2006, it was announced that Jackson had signed a contract with a Bahrain startup, Two Seas Records. Nothing came of the deal, and the Two Seas CEO, [Guy Holmes](#), later said it was never finalized.^{[295][296]} Holmes also found that Jackson was on the verge of bankruptcy and was involved in 47 ongoing lawsuits.^[294] By September 2006, Jackson was no longer affiliated with Two Seas.^[296]

In April 2006, Jackson agreed to use a piece of his ATV catalog stake, then worth about \$1 billion, as [collateral](#) against his \$270 million worth of loans from [Bank of America](#). Bank of America had sold the loans to

[Fortress Investments](#), an investment company that buys distressed loans, the year before. As part of the agreement, Fortress Investments provided Jackson a new loan of \$300 million with reduced interest payments (equivalent to \$480 million in 2025). Sony Music would have the option to buy half of his stake, or about 25% of the catalog, at a set price. Jackson's financial managers had urged him to shed part of his stake to avoid bankruptcy.^{[241][297]} The main house at Neverland Ranch was closed as a cost-cutting measure, while Jackson lived in Bahrain at the hospitality of Abdullah.^[298] At least thirty of Jackson's employees had not been paid on time and were owed \$306,000 in back wages. Jackson was ordered to pay \$100,000 in penalties.^[241] Jackson never returned to Neverland after his acquittal.^[299]

Jackson moved to [Grouse Lodge](#) during mid-2006, a residential recording studio near [Rosemount, County Westmeath](#), Ireland. While there, he began work on a new album with the American producers [will.i.am](#) and [Rodney Jerkins](#).^[300] That November, Jackson invited an [Access Hollywood](#) camera crew into the studio in Westmeath.^[171] He briefly joined a performance of "We Are the World" at the [World Music Awards](#) in London, which served as his last public performance, and accepted the Diamond Award for sales of 100 million records.^{[171][301]} Jackson returned to the US in December, settling in Las Vegas. That

month, he attended [James Brown's](#) funeral in [Augusta, Georgia](#), where he gave a eulogy calling Brown his greatest inspiration.^[302]



An aerial view of part of Jackson's 2,800-acre (11 km²) [Neverland Valley Ranch](#) near Los Olivos, California, showing the rides

Jackson and Sony bought another music publishing company during 2007, [Famous Music LLC](#), formerly owned by [Viacom](#). The deal gave him the rights to songs by [Eminem](#) and [Beck](#), among others.^{[303][304]}

Jackson mentioned having no regrets about his career despite the "deliberate attempts to hurt me".^[305] That March, he visited a US Army post in Japan, [Camp Zama](#), to greet more than 3,000 troops and their families.^{[306][307]} By September, Jackson was still working on his next album,^[308] with [Kanye West](#) joining as a producer.^[309]

In 2008, for the 25th anniversary of *Thriller*, Jackson and Sony released [Thriller 25](#), a [reissue](#) which included five remixed tracks

co-produced by him and guest producers, including the singles: "[The Girl Is Mine 2008](#)" and "[Wanna Be Startin' Somethin' 2008](#)". *Thriller 25* was the last recorded work released during Jackson's lifetime that he was extensively involved in.^[310] For Jackson's 50th birthday, Sony BMG released a series of greatest hits albums, *King of Pop*, with different tracklists for different regions.^[311] That July, Fortress Investments threatened to [foreclose](#) on Neverland Ranch, which he had used as collateral for his loans. Fortress sold Jackson's debts to [Colony Capital LLC](#).^[312] In November, Jackson transferred Neverland Ranch's title to Sycamore Valley Ranch Company LLC, a joint venture between Jackson and Colony Capital LLC. The deal earned him \$35 million.^[313] In 2009, Jackson arranged to sell a collection of his memorabilia of more than 1,000 items through [Julien's Auction House](#), but canceled the auction in April.^[314]

In March 2009, amid speculation about his finances and health, Jackson announced a series of comeback concerts, [This Is It](#), at a press conference at [the O2 Arena](#).^[315] The shows were to be his first major concerts since the HIStory World Tour in 1997. Jackson suggested he would retire after the shows. The initial plan was for ten concerts in London, followed by shows in Paris, New York City and

Mumbai. Randy Phillips, the president and chief executive of [AEG Live](#), predicted the first ten dates would earn Jackson £50 million.^[316]

The London residency was increased to fifty dates after record-breaking ticket sales; more than one million were sold in less than two hours.^[317] The concerts were to run from July 13, 2009, to March 6, 2010. Jackson moved to Los Angeles, where he rehearsed in the weeks leading up to the tour under the direction of the choreographer [Kenny Ortega](#), whom he had worked with during his previous tours. Rehearsals took place at [the Forum](#) and the [Staples Center](#) owned by AEG.^[318] By this point, Jackson's debt had grown to almost \$500 million. By the time of his death, he was three or four months behind payments on his home in San Fernando Valley.^{[319][320]} [The Independent](#) reported that Jackson planned a string of further ventures designed to recoup his debts, including a world tour, a new album, films, a museum and a casino.^[315]

Death

Main article: [Death of Michael Jackson](#)



Fans placed flowers and notes on Jackson's star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame on the day of his death.

On June 25, 2009, less than three weeks before his concert residency was due to begin in London, with all concerts sold out, Jackson died at age 50 from cardiac arrest, caused by a [propofol](#) and [benzodiazepine](#) overdose.^{[321][322]} [Conrad Murray](#), his personal physician, had given Jackson various medications to help him sleep at his rented mansion in [Holmby Hills, Los Angeles](#). Paramedics received a [911](#) call at 12:21 pm [Pacific time](#) (19:21 UTC) and arrived at the property four minutes later.^[323] Jackson was not breathing and [CPR](#) was performed.^[324] Resuscitation efforts continued en route to [Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center](#), and for more than an hour after Jackson's arrival, but were unsuccessful,^{[325][326]} and he was pronounced dead at 2:26 pm [Pacific time](#) (21:26 UTC).^{[327][328]} Murray had administered propofol, [lorazepam](#), and [midazolam](#);^[329] Jackson's death was caused by a propofol overdose.^{[322][326]}

News of his death spread quickly online, causing websites to slow down and [crash](#) from user overload,^[330] and it put unprecedented strain^[331] on many services and websites including [Google](#),^[332] [AOL Instant Messenger](#),^[331] [Twitter](#)^[332] and [Wikipedia](#).^[332] Overall, [web traffic](#) rose by between 11% and 20%.^{[333][334]} MTV and [BET](#) aired [marathons](#) of Jackson's music videos.^[335] MTV briefly returned to its original music video format,^[11] and they aired hours of Jackson's music videos, with live news specials featuring reactions from MTV personalities and other celebrities.^[336] President [Barack Obama](#) sent a letter of condolence to the Jackson family,^[337] and the [House of Representatives](#) observed a [moment of silence](#).^[338]

Memorial service

Main article: [Michael Jackson memorial service](#)



Jackson's unmarked crypt at the end of the Sanctuary of Ascension in the Holly Terrace of the [Great Mausoleum, Forest Lawn Glendale](#)



Fans visiting the makeshift memorial set up outside the Neverland Ranch entrance shortly after Jackson's death

Jackson's 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](#). Over 1.6 million fans applied for tickets to the memorial; the 8,750 recipients were drawn at random, and each received two tickets.^[339] The memorial service was one of

the most watched events in [streaming](#) history,^[340] with an estimated US audience of 31.1 million^[341] and a worldwide audience of an estimated 2.5 to 3 billion.^{[342][343]}

[Mariah Carey](#), [Stevie Wonder](#), [Lionel Richie](#), [Jennifer Hudson](#), and [Shaheen Jafargholi](#) performed at the memorial, and [Berry Gordy](#), [Brooke Shields](#), [Smokey Robinson](#) and [Queen Latifah](#) gave eulogies.^[344] [Al Sharpton](#) received a standing ovation with cheers when he told Jackson's children: "Wasn't nothing strange about your daddy. It was strange what your daddy had to deal with. But he dealt with it anyway."^[345] Jackson's 11-year-old daughter [Paris Katherine](#), speaking publicly for the first time, wept as she addressed the crowd.^{[346][347]} [Lucious Smith](#) provided a closing prayer.^[348] On September 3, 2009, the body of Jackson was entombed at [Forest Lawn Memorial Park](#) in [Glendale, California](#).^[349]

Criminal investigation and prosecution of Conrad Murray

Main article: [People v. Murray](#)

In August 2009, the [Los Angeles County Coroner](#) ruled that Jackson's death was a [homicide](#).^{[350][351]} Law enforcement officials charged Murray with [involuntary manslaughter](#) on February 8, 2010.^[352] In late 2011, he was found guilty of said charge^[353] and held without bail to await sentencing.^[354] Murray was sentenced to four years in prison, but was released after one year and eleven months.^[355]

Posthumous sales

At the [2009 American Music Awards](#), Jackson won four posthumous awards, including two for his compilation album [Number Ones](#), bringing his total American Music Awards to 26.^{[356][357]} In the year after his death, more than 16.1 million copies of Jackson's albums were sold in the US alone, and 35 million copies were sold worldwide, more than any other artist in 2009.^{[358][359]} He became the first artist to sell one million [music downloads](#) in a week, with 2.6 million song downloads. *Thriller*, *Number Ones* and [The Essential Michael Jackson](#) became the first catalog albums to outsell any new album.^[360]

Jackson also became the first artist to have four of the top-20 best-selling albums in a single year in the US.^[361] Within the year following his death, Jackson sold over 75 million records

worldwide.^[362] By the end of 2013, Jackson had sold over 50 million albums worldwide since his death.^[363]

Following the surge in sales, in March 2010, Sony Music signed a \$250 million deal (equivalent to \$370 million in 2025) with the [Jackson estate](#) to extend their distribution rights to Jackson's back catalog until at least 2017; it had been due to expire in 2015. It was the [most expensive music contract](#) for a single artist in history.^{[364][365]} They agreed to release ten albums of previously unreleased material and new collections of released work.^{[364][366]} The deal was extended in 2017.^[367] That July, a Los Angeles court awarded [Quincy Jones](#) \$9.4 million of disputed royalty payments for *Off the Wall*, *Thriller*, and *Bad*.^[53] In July 2018, Sony/ATV bought the estate's stake in EMI for \$287.5 million.^[368]

In 2015, *Thriller* became the first album to be certified for 30 million shipments by the [Recording Industry Association of America](#) (RIAA).^[369] A year later, it was certified 33× platinum after [Soundscan](#) added streams and audio downloads to album certifications.^{[370][nb 3]}

In February 2024, Sony Music acquired half of Jackson's publishing rights and recording masters for \$600 million. The deal includes

assets from his [Mijac publishing catalog](#), but excludes royalties from several Jackson-related productions, such as the *MJ* Broadway musical and the 2026 *Michael* film. The transaction is possibly the largest for a single musician's work.^{[372][373]}

Posthumous releases and productions

Jackson's posthumous releases and productions are administered by the [estate of Michael Jackson](#), which owns Jackson's trademarks and rights to his name, image and likeness.^[374] The first posthumous Jackson song, "[This Is It](#)", co-written in the 1980s with [Paul Anka](#), was released in October 2009. The surviving Jackson brothers reunited to record backing vocals.^[375] It was followed by a documentary film about the rehearsals for the canceled This Is It tour, *[Michael Jackson's This Is It](#)*,^[376] and [a compilation album](#).^[377] Despite a limited two-week engagement, the film became the highest-grossing documentary or concert film ever, with earnings of more than \$260 million worldwide.^[378] Jackson's estate received 90% of the profits.^[379] In late 2010, Sony released the first posthumous album, *[Michael](#)*, and the lead single "[Hold My Hand](#)", a duet with [Akon](#). The Jackson collaborator will.i.am expressed disgust, saying that Jackson would not have approved the release.^[380]

The video game developer [Ubisoft](#) released a [music game](#) featuring Jackson for the 2010 holiday season, *[Michael Jackson: The Experience](#)*. It was among the first games to use [Kinect](#) and [PlayStation Move](#), the motion-detecting camera systems for [Xbox 360](#) and [PlayStation 3](#).^[381] In October 2011, the theater company [Cirque du Soleil](#) launched *[Michael Jackson: The Immortal World Tour](#)*, a \$57 million production in Montreal.^[382] A larger and more theatrical Cirque show, *[Michael Jackson: One](#)*, designed for residency at the [Mandalay Bay](#) resort in Las Vegas, opened on May 23, 2013, in a renovated theater.^{[383][384]}

In 2012, in an attempt to end a family dispute, Jackson's brother Jermaine retracted his signature on a public letter criticizing executors of Jackson's estate and his mother's advisors over the legitimacy of his brother's will.^[385] T.J. Jackson, the son of Tito Jackson, was given co-guardianship of Michael Jackson's children after false reports of Katherine Jackson going missing.^[386] *[Xscape](#)*, an album of unreleased material, was released on May 13, 2014.^[387] The lead single, a duet between Jackson and [Justin Timberlake](#), "[Love Never Felt So Good](#)", reached number 9 on the US *Billboard* Hot 100, making Jackson the first artist to have a top-10 single on the chart in five different decades.^[388]

Later in 2014, [Queen](#) released a duet recorded with Jackson in the 1980s.^[65] A compilation album, [Scream](#), was released on September 29, 2017.^[389] A jukebox musical, [MJ the Musical](#), premiered on Broadway in 2022.^[390] [Myles Frost](#) won the 2022 [Tony Award for Best Actor in a Musical](#) for his portrayal of Jackson.^[391] On November 18, 2022, Epic released a [40th-anniversary edition reissue of *Thriller*](#).^{[392][393]} Since Jackson's death, his estate has grossed \$2 billion in ticket revenue from *MJ the Musical*, [Michael Jackson's This Is It](#) and two Cirque du Soleil productions.^[394] A biographical film, [Michael](#), directed by [Antoine Fuqua](#) and starring Jackson's nephew [Jaafar Jackson](#), premiered in April 2026.^[395] It received generally negative reviews from critics, but positive reception from audiences.^{[396][397] [398]} The film broke several records for biopics on opening day and opening week both domestically and internationally, with an opening weekend gross estimated at \$97 million domestically and \$217 million worldwide, becoming [the sixth highest-grossing film of 2026](#).^[399]

Posthumous child sexual abuse allegations

In 2013, choreographer [Wade Robson](#) filed a lawsuit alleging that Jackson had sexually abused him for seven years, beginning when he was seven years old (1989–1996).^[400] In 2014, a case was filed by James Safechuck, alleging similar sexual abuse over a four-year period starting when Safechuck was ten (1988–1992).^{[401][402][403]} Both had previously testified in Jackson's defense during the 1993 allegations; Robson did so again in 2005.^{[404][405]} In 2015, Robson's case against Jackson's estate was dismissed as it had been filed too late. Safechuck's claim was also time-barred.^[406]

In 2017, it was ruled that Jackson's corporations could not be held accountable for his alleged past actions.^{[407][408]} The rulings were appealed. On October 20, 2020, Safechuck's lawsuit against Jackson's corporations was again dismissed. The judge ruled that there was no evidence that Safechuck had a relationship with Jackson's corporation, nor was it proven that there was a special relationship between the two.^{[409][410][411][412]} On April 26, 2021, Robson's case was dismissed because of a lack of supporting evidence that the defendants exercised control over Jackson.^[413]

Robson and Safechuck's allegations were the subject of the documentary film [Leaving Neverland](#), broadcast by HBO in March

2019.^[414] Radio stations in New Zealand, Canada, the UK and the Netherlands removed Jackson's music from their playlists.^{[415][416][417]} Jackson's family condemned the film as a "public lynching",^[418] and the Jackson estate released a statement calling the film a "tabloid character assassination [Jackson] endured in life, and now in death".^[419] Close associates of Jackson, such as [Corey Feldman](#), [Aaron Carter](#), Brett Barnes, and [Macaulay Culkin](#), defended Jackson in the wake of the documentary's release, saying that Jackson had never molested them.^{[420][421][422]}

Documentaries such as *Square One: Michael Jackson, Neverland* *Firsthand: Investigating the Michael Jackson Documentary* and *Michael Jackson: Chase the Truth*, presented information countering the claims suggested by *Leaving Neverland*.^{[423][424][425]} Jackson's album sales increased following the documentary screenings.^[426] *Billboard* senior editor Gail Mitchell said she and a colleague interviewed about thirty music executives who believed Jackson's legacy could withstand the controversy.^[427] In late 2019, some New Zealand and Canadian radio stations re-added Jackson's music to their playlists due to "positive listener survey results".^{[428][429]}

On February 21, 2019, the Jackson estate sued HBO for breaching a non-disparagement clause from a 1992 contract. The suit sought to compel HBO to participate in a non-confidential arbitration that could result in \$100 million or more in damages awarded to the estate.^[430]

HBO said they did not breach a contract and filed an anti-SLAPP motion against the estate. In September 2019, Judge [George H. Wu](#) denied HBO's motion to dismiss the case, allowing the Jackson estate to arbitrate.^[431] HBO appealed, but in December 2020 the appeals court affirmed Wu's ruling.^[432] In 2024, the Jackson estate and HBO reached a settlement; as part of the settlement, HBO removed *Leaving Neverland* from the [HBO Max](#) streaming service.^[433]

In 2020, a state law passed in California which granted plaintiffs in child sex abuse cases an additional period to file lawsuits. In October 2020 and again in April 2021, the [Los Angeles County Superior Court](#) ruled in *Safechuck v. MJJ Productions* that MJJ Productions Inc. and MJJ Ventures Inc. employees were not legally obligated to protect the two men from Jackson. In August 2023, California's Second District Court of Appeal overturned the ruling, and the case was approved to move forward to [trial court](#).^[434]

In 2026, three male (Aldo, Frank, and Eddie) and one female (Marie Nicole) adult siblings of the Cascio family filed a federal lawsuit

against Jackson's estate alleging sexual abuse that spanned from childhood to adulthood. The lawsuit followed a trial court's ruling to grant the estate's petition to arbitrate against Frank Cascio where he was being sued for civil extortion after a \$213 million demand and threats to go public with allegations of abuse. ^{[435][436][437]}

Legacy

Main article: [Cultural impact of Michael Jackson](#)

See also: [List of Michael Jackson records and achievements](#)



Jackson at the [White House](#) in 1984. President [Ronald Reagan](#) described him as "one of the most talented, most popular and most exciting superstars". ^[438]

Jackson has been referred to as the "[King of Pop](#)" for having transformed the art of music videos and paving the way for modern pop music. For much of Jackson's career, he had an unparalleled worldwide influence over the younger generation.^[439] His influence extended beyond the music industry; he impacted dance, led fashion trends, and raised awareness for global affairs.^[440] Jackson's music and videos fostered racial diversity in MTV's roster and steered its focus from rock to pop music and R&B, leading to the discontinuation of the [album-oriented rock](#) format previously dominant on the channel.^{[40][441]} In songs such as "[Black or White](#)", "[Heal the World](#)", "[Earth Song](#)" and "[They Don't Care About Us](#)", Jackson's music emphasized [racial integration](#) and [environmentalism](#) and protested injustice.^{[442][443]} He is considered one of the most significant cultural figures of the 20th century,^[444] and his contributions to music, dance, and fashion, along with his publicized personal life, made him a global figure in popular culture for over four decades.^{[445][446][447][448]}

Jackson's meteoric rise in the 1980s catapulted him to global stardom, and his influence transcended borders. In Africa, his influence was compared to [Nelson Mandela](#) for his ability to inspire and unite diverse audiences through his music.^{[449][450]} Similarly, in India, Jackson was likened to [Mahatma Gandhi](#), with his art championing themes of social

justice and [humanitarianism](#),^[451] and his influence extending to [Bollywood](#) where it was said that anyone who danced well was compared to Jackson.^[449] In Europe, Jackson's impact was compared to that of the [Pope](#); huge crowds gathered to see him in public and even more attended his concerts, which spread messages of love and healing during rough economic and political times.^[452] His presence in the Middle East was considered as widespread as [Coca-Cola](#), symbolizing a shared global culture through his music.^[453] Additionally, Jackson is considered the backbone of the [K-pop](#) industry in South Korea, influencing countless artists and shaping the genre's development.^{[454][455]}

So vast, far-reaching and was his impact—particularly in the wake of [Thriller](#)'s colossal and heretofore unmatched commercial success—that there weren't a whole lot of artists who *weren't* trying to mimic some of the Jackson formula.

—J. Edward Keyes of [Rolling Stone](#)^[456]

[Danyel Smith](#), chief content officer of Vibe Media Group and the editor-in-chief of [Vibe](#), described Jackson as "the greatest star".^[457] Steve Huey of AllMusic called him "an unstoppable juggernaut,

possessed of all the skills to dominate the charts seemingly at will: an instantly identifiable voice, eye-popping dance moves, stunning musical versatility and loads of sheer star power".^[10] BET said Jackson was "quite simply the greatest entertainer of all time" whose "sound, style, movement and legacy continues to inspire artists of all genres".^[458] In 1984, *Time* pop critic [Jay Cocks](#) wrote that Jackson was the biggest phenomenon since the Beatles and Elvis Presley, while possibly "the most popular black singer ever". Cocks declared him a "star of records, radio, rock video" and the "dancer with the fanciest feet".^[85] In 2003, *The Daily Telegraph* writer [Tom Uthey](#) described Jackson as "extremely important" and a "genius".^[459] At Jackson's memorial service on July 7, 2009, Motown founder Berry Gordy called Jackson "the greatest entertainer that ever lived".^{[460][461]} Jackson is recognized as the "Most Successful Entertainer of All Time" by [Guinness World Records](#).^{[462][463]} He has also appeared on *Rolling Stone's* lists of the "Greatest Singers of All Time".^{[464][465]}

Craig Glenday, the editor-in-chief of *Guinness World Records*, called Jackson the most famous person in the world in 2006. Following Jackson's death, Glenday wrote in an obituary that Jackson had maintained this status up until his death,^[466] later remarking that his

fame had exceeded that of [Confucius](#).^[467] [The Guardian](#) wrote that he was in a league of his own in terms of fame, noting that Jackson had become so famous that the number of people who might not know who he was had become statistically insignificant.^[468] Due to his unprecedented influence, Jackson is widely recognized as one of the most famous and globally renowned figures in history.^[469] Reports of his fame extend from the Middle East,^{[470][471]} Africa,^{[449][472]} India,^{[473][474]} and China^{[475][476]} to tribes in the Amazon.^[477] His influence even reached remote corners of the world such as [São Tomé and Príncipe](#), or [Tristan da Cunha](#), where tribute artists keep his legacy alive by celebrating his music.^{[478][479]}



The Jackson wax figure at [Madame Tussauds](#) in London

In 2018, the [National Portrait Gallery](#) named Jackson the most depicted cultural figure of the century,^[480] later stating that Jackson's

influence on art rivaled that of [Jesus Christ](#).^[481] [Nicholas Cullinan](#), director of the National Portrait Gallery and curator of the *[Michael Jackson: On the Wall](#)* exhibition, described Jackson's impact on art as unprecedented and claimed in 2018 that Jackson was the most depicted figure in the history of [contemporary art](#).^[482] In 2014, a comprehensive study conducted by researcher Young-Ho Eom at the [University of Toulouse](#) identified Jackson as one of the most influential people of all time.^[483] The study utilized advanced ranking methods, including 2D Rank and PageRank algorithms, to analyze the impact of historical figures. Jackson was prominently placed on the list of top influencers, alongside Swedish botanist [Carl Linnaeus](#), [Adolf Hitler](#), and Jesus Christ. Another study conducted in 2013 also identified Jackson as one of the most influential people of all time. This study ranked Jackson at the top of the list, alongside [Napoleon Bonaparte](#), highlighting the extraordinary influence and global recognition that Jackson achieved throughout his career.^[484] Numerous publications and academic studies^[485] have noted his impact beyond music in fields such as psychology, law, chemistry, and engineering.^{[486][487][488]}

Philanthropy

Main article: *Philanthropy of Michael Jackson*

Duration: 7 minutes and 1 second

7:01

President [Ronald Reagan](#) rewarding Jackson in 1984 for his support of alcohol and drug abuse charities

Jackson is well known for his prolific philanthropy and humanitarianism.^{[489][490][491][93]} Jackson's early charitable work has been described by *The Chronicle of Philanthropy* as having "paved the way for the current surge in celebrity philanthropy",^[492] and by the *Los Angeles Times* as having "set the standard for generosity for other entertainers".^[489] By some estimates, he donated over \$500 million, not accounting for inflation, to various charities over the course of his life.^[489] In 1992, Jackson established his [Heal the World Foundation](#), to which he donated several million dollars in revenue from his [Dangerous World Tour](#).^[493]

Jackson's philanthropic activities went beyond just monetary donations. He also performed at [benefit concerts](#), some of which he arranged.^[494] He gifted tickets for his regular concert performances to groups that assist underprivileged children.^[495] Jackson visited sick

children in hospitals around the world.^[496] He donated valuable, personal and professional paraphernalia for numerous charity auctions. He received various awards and accolades for his philanthropic work, including two bestowed by American presidents. The vast breadth of Jackson's philanthropic work has earned recognition in the *Guinness World Records*.^{[489][497][498]}

On May 14, 1984, President [Ronald Reagan](#) gave Jackson an award recognizing his support of alcohol and drug abuse charities,^[499] and in recognition of his support for the [Ad Council](#)'s and the [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#)'s Drunk Driving Prevention campaign. Jackson allowed the campaign to use "Beat It" for its public service announcements.^[500]

Artistry

Vocal style



Jackson performing in [Vienna](#), Austria, 1988

Jackson was known as an expressive vocalist with [absolute pitch](#).^{[501][502][503]} Critics describe his vocal theatricality as having a range from clear and soft to harsh and aggressive,^{[504][505][506][507]} depending on the genre sung. Principally in history, Jackson is the sole recipient to receive [Grammy Awards](#) for three different genres of vocal performance (as a soloist), winning [Pop Vocal](#) for "[Thriller](#)", [Rock Vocal](#) for "[Beat It](#)", and [Rhythm and Blues Vocal](#) with both "[Billie Jean](#)" and "[Don't Stop 'Til You Get Enough](#)". [Bruce Swedien](#), his long-time sound engineer, emphasized that a critical element of their vocal recordings are of him and Jackson trying numerous approaches

to rhythmic, emotional and technical distinctions to consummate a "sonic character".^[508] His stylings, such as common use of *staccato*, *legato*, *falsetto* as well as *vocal hiccups*,^[509] adlibs, wailings and growls, are all signature to his sound.^{[510][511]}

Jackson sang from childhood, and over time his voice and vocal style changed. Between 1971 and 1975, it descended from boy *soprano* to lyric *tenor*.^[512] He was known for his intonation and vocal range.^[464]

Through each music release, his vocal development and changes were positively narrated by music journalists. With *Off the Wall* in the late 1970s, Jackson's abilities in his *coming-of-age* period had *Rolling Stone* comparing his vocals to the "breathless, dreamy stutter" of Stevie Wonder, and wrote that "Jackson's feathery-timbred tenor [was] extraordinarily beautiful. It slides smoothly into a startling *falsetto* that's used very daringly."^[513] When *Thriller* was released in the early 1980s, *Rolling Stone* wrote that Jackson was singing in a "fully adult voice" that was "tinged by sadness".^[514] With the release of the introspective album *Dangerous*, *The New York Times* wrote that on some tracks, "he gulps for breath, his voice quivers with anxiety or drops to a desperate whisper, hissing through clenched teeth" and he had a "wretched tone". When singing of brotherhood or self-esteem the musician would return to "smooth" vocals.^[515] Of *Invincible*,

Rolling Stone wrote that, even at age 43, Jackson still performed "exquisitely voiced rhythm tracks and vibrating vocal harmonies".^[516] [Joseph Vogel](#) noted Jackson's ability to use non-verbal sounds to express emotion.^[517] [Neil McCormick](#) wrote that Jackson's unorthodox singing style "was original and utterly distinctive".^[518]

Influences

Jackson was influenced by musicians including [James Brown](#), [Little Richard](#), [Jackie Wilson](#), [Diana Ross](#), [Fred Astaire](#), [Sammy Davis Jr.](#), [Gene Kelly](#),^[519] and [David Ruffin](#).^[520] Little Richard had a substantial influence on Jackson,^[521] but Brown was his greatest inspiration. When Jackson was a small child, his mother would wake him whenever Brown appeared on television. Jackson described being "mesmerized".^[522]

Jackson's vocal technique was influenced by Diana Ross; his use of the *ooooh* interjection from a young age was something Ross had used on many of her songs with [the Supremes](#).^[523] She was a mother figure to him, and he often watched her rehearse.^[524] He said he had learned a lot from watching how she moved and sang, and that she had encouraged him to have confidence in himself.^[525]

Choreographer [David Winters](#), who met Jackson while choreographing the 1971 Diana Ross TV special *[Diana!](#)*, said that Jackson watched the musical *[West Side Story](#)* almost every week, and it was his favorite film; he paid tribute to it in "Beat It" and the "Bad" video.^{[526][527][528]}

Musicianship

Jackson had no formal music training and could not read or write [music notation](#). He is credited for playing guitar, keyboard, and drums, but was not proficient in them.^[529] When composing, he recorded ideas by [beatboxing](#) and imitating instruments vocally.^[529] Describing the process, he said: "I'll just sing the bass part into the [tape recorder](#). I'll take that bass lick and put the chords of the melody over the bass lick and that's what inspires the melody." These were shown in his demos for "Beat It" and "Billie Jean" where he vocalized the melody, bass instrumentals as well as lead and backing vocals by overlaying each component. The engineer Robert Hoffman recalled that after Jackson came in with a song he had written overnight, Jackson sang every note of every chord to a guitar player. Hoffman also remembered Jackson singing string arrangements part by part into a cassette recorder.^[529]

Dance

Jackson danced from a young age as part of the Jackson 5,^[530] and incorporated dance extensively in his performances.^[530] According to Sanjoy Roy of *The Guardian*, Jackson would "flick and retract his limbs like switchblades, or snap out of a tornado spin into a perfectly poised toe-stand".^[530] The *moonwalk*, taught to him by *Jeffrey Daniel*,^[75] was Jackson's signature dance move and one of the most famous of the 20th century.^[531] Jackson is credited for coining the name "moonwalk" for this street dance move, previously known as the "backslide".^{[532][533]} His other moves included the *robot*,^{[46][534]} crotch grab, and the "anti-gravity" lean of the "Smooth Criminal" video.^[530]

Themes and genres



Jackson performing during the Dangerous World Tour in 1992

Jackson explored genres including pop,^{[10][535]} soul,^{[10][156]} rhythm and blues,^[535] funk,^[536] rock,^{[535][536]} disco,^[537] post-disco,^[536] dance-pop,^[538] and new jack swing.^[10] Steve Huey of [AllMusic](#) wrote that *Thriller* refined the strengths of *Off the Wall*; the dance and rock tracks were more aggressive, while the pop tunes and ballads were softer and more soulful.^[10] Its tracks included the ballads "The Lady in My Life", "[Human Nature](#)", and "[The Girl Is Mine](#)",^{[514][539][540]} the funk pieces "Billie Jean" and "Wanna Be Startin' Somethin'",^{[514][539]} and the disco set "[Baby Be Mine](#)" and "[P.Y.T. \(Pretty Young Thing\)](#)".^[540]

With *Off the Wall*, *The Guardian*'s Tom Ewing wrote that Jackson's "vocal tics – the gasps and shudders that punctuate almost every song" evoke "a singer desperate to cut loose and express himself in movement."^[510] Christopher Connelly of *Rolling Stone* commented that, with *Thriller*, Jackson developed his long association with the subliminal theme of [paranoia](#) and darker imagery.^[514] AllMusic's [Stephen Thomas Erlewine](#) noted this on the songs "Billie Jean" and "Wanna Be Startin' Somethin'".^[539] In "Billie Jean", Jackson depicts an obsessive fan who alleges he has fathered her child,^[10] and in "Wanna Be Startin' Somethin'" he argues against gossip and the media.^[514] "Beat It" decried gang violence in a homage to [West Side Story](#), and was Jackson's first successful rock cross-over piece, according to Huey.^{[10][37]} He observed that "[Thriller](#)" began Jackson's interest with the theme of the [supernatural](#), a topic he revisited in subsequent years. In 1985, Jackson co-wrote the charity anthem "We Are the World"; humanitarian themes later became a recurring theme in his lyrics and public persona.^[10]

In *Bad*, Jackson's concept of the predatory lover is seen on the rock song "Dirty Diana".^[541] The lead single "I Just Can't Stop Loving You" is a traditional love ballad, and "Man in the Mirror" is a ballad of confession and resolution. "[Smooth Criminal](#)" is an evocation of

bloody assault, rape and likely murder.^[132] AllMusic's Stephen Thomas Erlewine states that *Dangerous* presents Jackson as a paradoxical person.^[542] The first half of the record is dedicated to new jack swing, including songs like "Jam" and "Remember the Time". It was the first Jackson album in which social ills became a primary theme; "Why You Wanna Trip on Me", for example, protests world hunger, AIDS, homelessness and drugs. *Dangerous* contains sexually charged songs such as "In the Closet". The title track continues the theme of the predatory lover and compulsive desire. The second half includes introspective, pop-gospel anthems such as "Will You Be There", "Heal the World", and "Keep the Faith".^[515] In the ballad "Gone Too Soon", Jackson gives tribute to Ryan White and the plight of those with AIDS.^[543]

HIStory creates an atmosphere of paranoia.^[544] In the new jack swing-funk rock tracks "Scream" and "Tabloid Junkie", and the R&B ballad "You Are Not Alone", Jackson retaliates against the injustice and isolation he feels, and directs his anger at the media.^[545] In the introspective ballad "Stranger in Moscow", Jackson laments his "fall from grace"; "Earth Song", "Childhood", "Little Susie", and "Smile" are operatic pop songs.^{[544][545]} In "D.S.", Jackson attacks lawyer Thomas W. Sneddon Jr., who had prosecuted him in both child sexual abuse

cases; he describes Sneddon as a white supremacist who wanted to "get my ass, dead or alive".^[546] *Invincible* includes urban soul tracks such as "[Cry](#)" and "The Lost Children", ballads such as "[Speechless](#)", "Break of Dawn", and "Butterflies", and mixes hip-hop, pop, and R&B in "2000 Watts", "Heartbreaker", and "Invincible".^[547]^[548]

Music videos and choreography

Jackson released "[Thriller](#)", a 14-minute music video directed by [John Landis](#), in 1983.^[549] The [zombie](#)-themed video "defined music videos and broke racial barriers" on [MTV](#), which had launched two years earlier.^[40] Before *Thriller*, Jackson struggled to receive coverage on MTV, allegedly because he was African American.^[550] Pressure from CBS Records persuaded MTV to start showing "Billie Jean" and later "Beat It", which led to a lengthy partnership with Jackson, and helped other black music artists gain recognition.^[551] The popularity of his videos on MTV helped the relatively new channel's viewing figures, and MTV's focus shifted toward pop and R&B.^[551]^[552] His performance on *Motown 25: Yesterday, Today, Forever* changed the scope of live stage shows, making it acceptable for artists to lip-sync to music video on stage.^[553] The choreography in *Thriller* has been

copied in [Indian films](#) and [prisons in the Philippines](#).^[554] *Thriller* marked an increase in scale for music videos, and was named the most successful music video ever by the *Guinness World Records*.^[237]

In the 19-minute video for "Bad"—directed by [Martin Scorsese](#)—Jackson used sexual imagery and choreography, and touched his chest, torso and crotch. When asked by Winfrey in the 1993 interview about why he grabbed his crotch, he said it was spontaneously compelled by the music. *Time* magazine described the "Bad" video as "infamous". It featured [Wesley Snipes](#); Jackson's later videos often featured famous cameos.^{[555][556]} For the "Smooth Criminal" video, Jackson experimented with leaning forward at a 45-degree angle, beyond the performer's center of gravity. To accomplish this live, Jackson and designers developed a special shoe to lock the performer's feet to the stage. They were granted [U.S. patent 5,255,452](#) for the device.^[557] The video for "Leave Me Alone" was not officially released in the US, but in 1989 was nominated for three *Billboard* Music Video Awards^[558] and won a Golden Lion Award for its special effects. It won a Grammy for [Best Music Video, Short Form](#).^[57]

He received the [MTV Video Vanguard Award](#) in 1988; in 2001 the award was renamed in his honor.^[559] The "Black or White" video simultaneously premiered on November 14, 1991, in 27 countries with an estimated audience of 500 million people, the largest audience ever for a music video at the time.^[171] Along with Jackson, it featured [Macaulay Culkin](#), [Peggy Lipton](#), and [George Wendt](#). It helped introduce [morphing](#) to music videos.^[560] It was controversial for scenes in which Jackson rubs his crotch, vandalizes cars, and throws a garbage can through a storefront. He apologized and removed the final scene of the video.^[160]

"In the Closet" featured [Naomi Campbell](#) in a courtship dance with Jackson.^[561] "Remember the Time" was set in [ancient Egypt](#), and featured [Eddie Murphy](#), [Iman](#), and [Magic Johnson](#).^[562] The video for "Scream", directed by [Mark Romanek](#) and production designer Tom Foden, gained a record 11 [MTV Video Music Award](#) Nominations, and won "Best Dance Video", "Best Choreography", and "Best Art Direction".^[563] The song and its video are Jackson's response to being accused of child molestation in 1993.^[564] A year later, it won a Grammy for Best Music Video, Short Form. It has been reported as the [most expensive music video ever made](#), at \$7 million;^[565]

Romanek has contradicted this.^[566] The "Earth Song" video was nominated for the 1997 Grammy for Best Music Video, Short Form.^[567]

Michael Jackson's Ghosts, a short film written by Jackson and Stephen King and directed by Stan Winston, premiered at the 1996 Cannes Film Festival. At over 38 minutes, it held the Guinness world record for the longest music video until 2013.^[568] The 2001 video for "You Rock My World" lasts over 13 minutes, was directed by Paul Hunter, and features Chris Tucker and Marlon Brando.^[569] It won an NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Music Video in 2002.^[570]

In December 2009, the Library of Congress selected "Thriller" as the only music video on the National Film Registry, as a work of "enduring importance to American culture".^{[571][572]} Huey wrote that Jackson transformed the music video into an artform and a promotional tool through complex story lines, dance routines, special effects and famous cameos, while breaking down racial barriers.^[10]

Honors and awards

See also: *List of awards and nominations received by Michael Jackson*



Jackson and President [George H. W. Bush](#) at the White House on April 5, 1990. It was the second time that Jackson had been honored by a US president.

Jackson is one of the [best-selling music artists](#) in history,^[573] with worldwide record sales estimated from 500 million to more than 1 billion.^{[574][575][576][Note 2]} He had 13 [number-one singles in the US](#) over his solo career—more than any other male artist in the Hot 100 era at the time of his death.^[577] Jackson is one of only three recording artists who have sold over 100 million records both as solo artists and separately as principal members of a band.^[578] He was invited to the [White House](#) three times. In 1984, he was honored with a "Presidential Public Safety Commendation" award by [Ronald Reagan](#) for his humanitarian endeavors.^[579] In 1990, he was honored as the "Artist of the Decade", which was awarded by the [National Children's](#)

[Museum](#), by [George H. W. Bush](#).^[580] In 1992, he was honored as a "Point of Light Ambassador" by Bush for inviting disadvantaged children to his [Neverland Ranch](#).^[581]

Jackson won hundreds of awards and is one of the most-awarded artists in popular music.^[582] His awards include 39 Guinness World Records, including the Most Successful Entertainer of All Time,^{[462][463]} 13 [Grammy Awards](#),^[583] as well as the [Grammy Legend Award](#)^[584] and the [Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award](#),^[585] and 26 American Music Awards, including the Artist of the Century and Artist of the 1980s.^[258] He received the [World Music Awards's](#) Best Selling Male Artist of the Millennium and the [Bambi](#) Pop Artist of the Millennium Award.^{[259][586]}



Jackson's star on the [Hollywood Walk of Fame](#) on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of his death

Jackson was inducted onto the [Hollywood Walk of Fame](#) in 1980 as a member of the Jacksons, and in 1984 as a solo artist. He was [inducted to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame](#) and [Vocal Group Hall of Fame](#) as a member of the Jackson 5 in 1997 and 1999,^[587]

respectively, and again as a solo artist in 2001.^[588] In 2002, he was

added to the [Songwriters Hall of Fame](#).^[589] In 2010, he became the

first recording artist to be inducted into the [Dance Hall of Fame](#),^[590]

and in 2014, he was posthumously inducted into the [Rhythm and](#)

[Blues Music Hall of Fame](#).^[591] In 2021, he was among the inaugural

inductees into the [Black Music & Entertainment Walk of Fame](#).^[592]

In 1988, [Fisk University](#) honored him with an honorary doctorate.^[593]

In 1992, he was invested as a [titular king](#) of [Sanwi](#), a traditional

African kingdom.^[594] In 2009, the Lunar Republic Society named a

crater on the Moon after Jackson.^[595] In August, for what would have

been Jackson's 51st birthday, Google dedicated their [Google Doodle](#)

to him.^[596] In 2012, the extinct hermit crab [Mesoparapylocheles](#)

[michaeljacksoni](#) was named in his honor.^[597] In 2014, the [British](#)

[Council](#) of Cultural Relations deemed Jackson's life one of the 80

most important cultural moments of the 20th century.^[598] [World Vitiligo](#)

[Day](#) is June 25, the anniversary of Jackson's death, to raise awareness of the auto-immune disorder that Jackson suffered from.^[599]

Earnings

Main article: [Estate of Michael Jackson](#)

In 1989, Jackson's annual earnings from album sales, endorsements, and concerts were estimated at \$125 million.^[237] [Forbes](#) placed Jackson's annual income at \$35 million in 1996 and \$20 million in 1997.^[600] Jackson has been one of the wealthiest [celebrities](#) and [musical artists](#); estimates of Jackson's net worth during his life range from negative \$285 million to positive \$350 million for 2002, 2003 and 2007.^{[601][602]} [Forbes](#) reported in August 2018 that Jackson's total career pretax earnings in life and death were \$4.2 billion.^{[603][604]}

Sales of his recordings through Sony's music unit earned him an estimated \$300 million in royalties. He may have earned another \$400 million from concerts, music publishing (including his share of the Beatles catalog), endorsements, merchandising and music videos.^[605]

In 2013, the executors of Jackson's estate filed a petition in the [United States Tax Court](#) as a result of a dispute with the [Internal Revenue](#)

[Service](#) (IRS) over [estate taxes](#).^[606] The executors valued it at about \$7 million, while the IRS valued it at more than \$1.1 billion. In February 2014, the IRS reported that Jackson's estate owed \$505 million in taxes, and \$197 million in penalties.^[607] In 2021, the Tax Court issued a ruling in favor of the estate, ruling that the estate's total combined value was \$111.5 million and that the value of Jackson's name and likeness was \$4 million.^[608]

In 2016, *Forbes* estimated annual gross earnings by the Jackson estate at \$825 million, the largest ever for a celebrity, mostly due to the sale of the Sony/ATV catalog.^[609] In 2018, the figure was \$400 million,^[610] and by 2024, it rose to \$600 million,^[611] bringing Jackson's postmortem total to \$3.3 billion.^[611] *Forbes* has consistently recognized Jackson as one of the [top-earning dead celebrities](#), placing him at the top spot from 2010 to 2024, except for 2012, 2021, and 2022.^{[612][613]}

Discography

Main articles: [Michael Jackson albums discography](#), [Michael Jackson singles discography](#), and [List of songs recorded by Michael Jackson](#)

See also: [The Jackson 5 discography](#)

- [*Got to Be There*](#) (1972)
- [*Ben*](#) (1972)
- [*Music & Me*](#) (1973)
- [*Forever, Michael*](#) (1975)
- [*Off the Wall*](#) (1979)
- [*Thriller*](#) (1982)
- [*Bad*](#) (1987)
- [*Dangerous*](#) (1991)
- [*HIStory: Past, Present and Future, Book I*](#) (1995)
- [*Invincible*](#) (2001)

Filmography

See also: [Michael Jackson videography](#)

- [*The Wiz*](#) (1978)
- [*Michael Jackson's Thriller*](#) (1983)
- [*Captain EO*](#) (1986)
- [*Moonwalker*](#) (1988)
- [*Michael Jackson: The Legend Continues*](#) (1989)
- [*Michael Jackson's Ghosts*](#) (1997)
- [*Men in Black II*](#) (2002)
- [*Miss Cast Away and the Island Girls*](#) (2004)
- [*Michael Jackson's This Is It*](#) (2009)
- [*Bad 25*](#) (2012)
- [*Michael Jackson's Journey from Motown to Off the Wall*](#) (2016)
- [*Thriller 40*](#) (2023)

Tours

Main article: [List of Michael Jackson concerts](#)

- [Bad World Tour](#) (1987–1989)
- [Dangerous World Tour](#) (1992–1993)
- [HIStory World Tour](#) (1996–1997)

See also

- [List of American Grammy Award winners and nominees](#)
- [List of dancers](#)

Notes

1. Attributed to multiple sources.^{[1][2][3][4][5][6]}
2. The estimates of Michael Jackson's record sales often vary up to 1 billion.^{[7][8]}
3. In 2018, its US sales record was overtaken by [the Eagles's](#) album *[Greatest Hits 1971–75](#)*, with 38× platinum.^[371]

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Five years after his death, how his influence lives on". *The Guardian*. Retrieved September 12, 2025. technically it should be easy to get as famous as Jackson – you can be adored from the Mongolian steppes to the Madagascan rainforest, all via YouTube. But in reality, fame is diluted by the internet as everyone makes their own collaged personal vision of global culture, and so that Jackson-level fame, an omnipresence mediated via the restricted channels of radio, TV and recorded sound, is unlikely ever to be repeated "[18 Documentaries About Your Favorite Celebrities That Will Make You Look At Them In All New Ways](#)". *Bustle*. February 23, 2017. Retrieved September 12, 2025. The world simply could not function without a solid documentary of Michael Jackson, arguably the most famous person of all time. Grundey, Adam (June 29, 2019). "[Wanted dead or alive: Despite 'Leaving Neverland,' Michael Jackson's star seems undiminished in the Middle East](#)". *Arab News*. Retrieved September 12, 2025. Jackson was idolized around the world. He became an enormous part of people's lives — and arguably the most recognizable person in history Kisuule, Vanessa (September 12, 2024). *Neverland: The Pleasures and Perils of Fandom*. Canongate Books. ISBN 978-1-83885-708-0. Söderström observed: "They didn't know about the moon landing and were concerned about the negative impact it could have for conditions on Earth. They couldn't understand modern warfare and appeared to be shocked by the footage of the 9/11 attacks in New York. Neither did they know France's most famous soccer star of the day. However, all the young members of the (Amazonian) tribe were familiar with Michael Jackson." Vogel, Joseph (September 24, 2017). "[Michael Jackson's Forgotten Humanitarian Legacy](#)". *HuffPost*. Retrieved October 20, 2025. He was the most famous person on the planet. Everywhere he travelled, he created mass hysteria. The day after his sold-out concert at Prater Stadium in Vienna, an AP article ran, "130 Fans Faint at Jackson Concert." If the Beatles were more popular than Jesus, as John Lennon once claimed, Jackson had the entire Holy Trinity beat.

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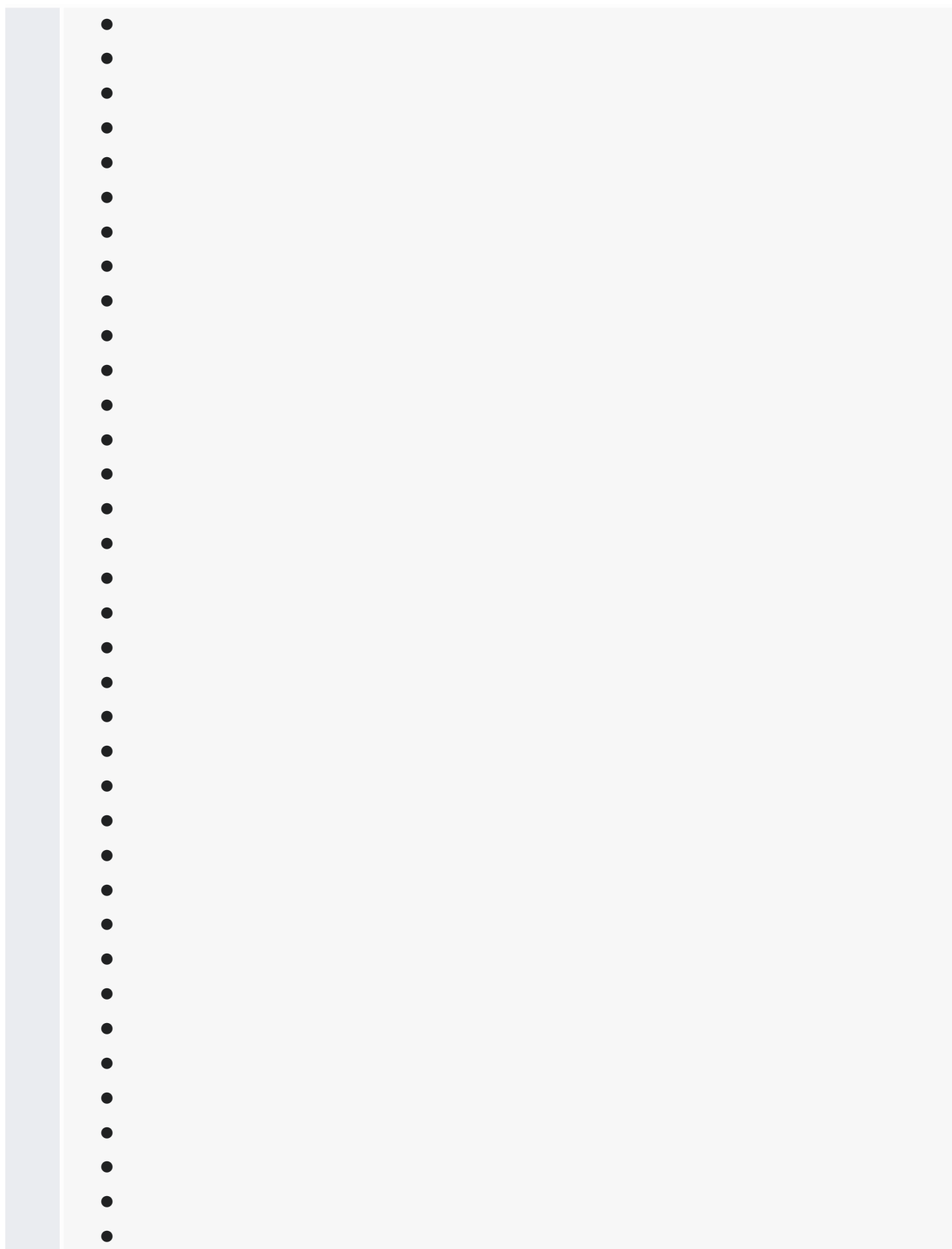
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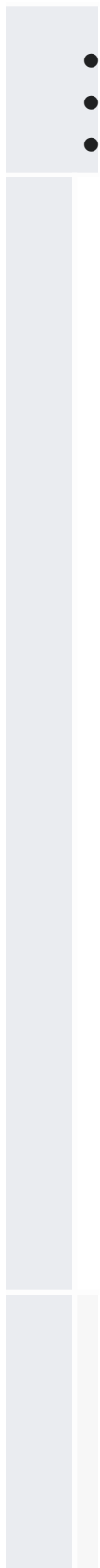
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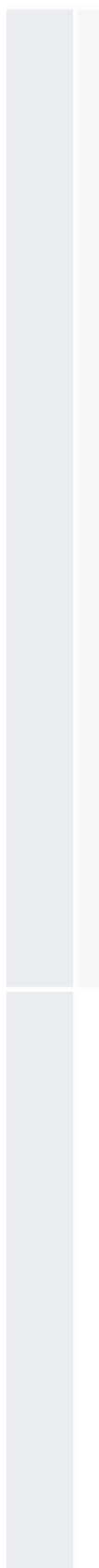
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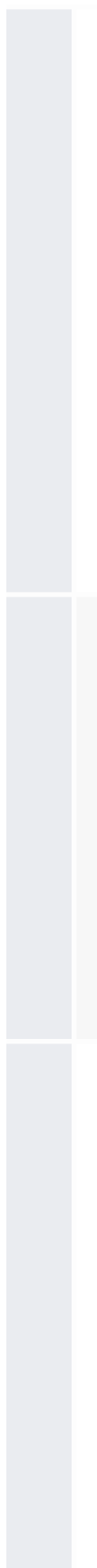
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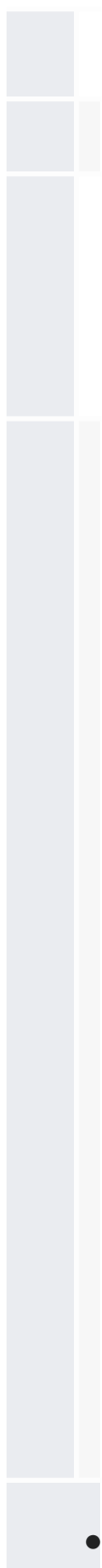












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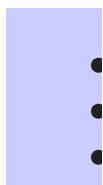
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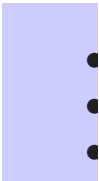
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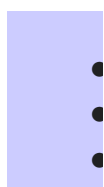
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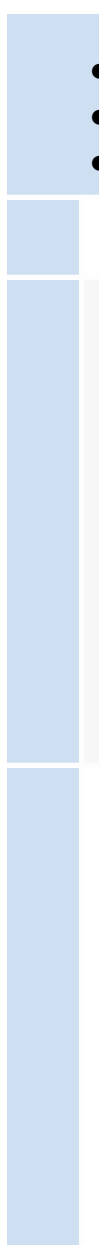
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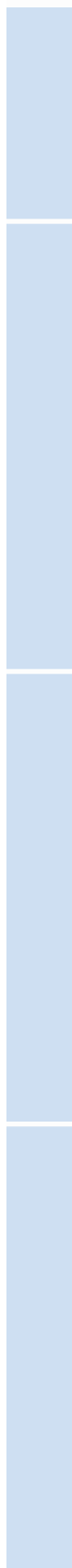
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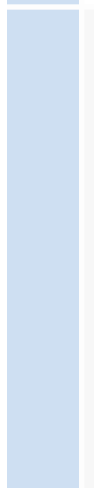
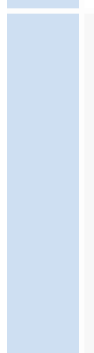
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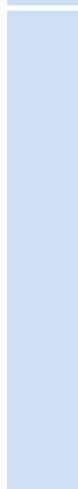
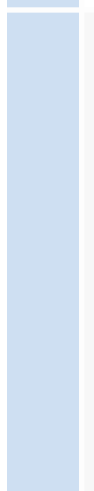
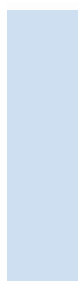








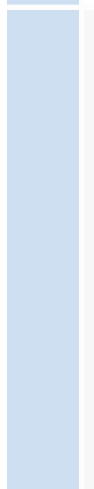


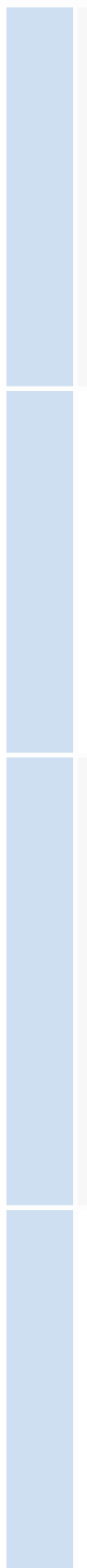


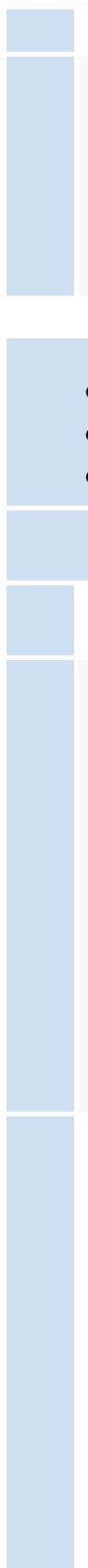




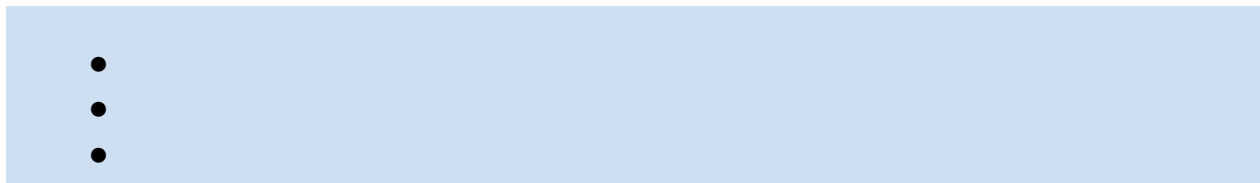
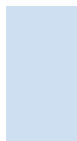










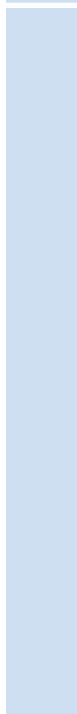


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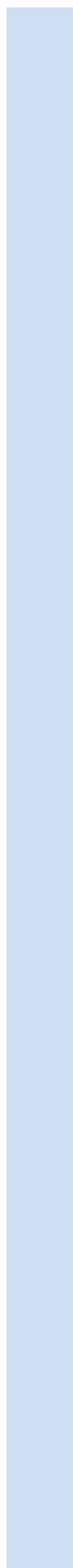


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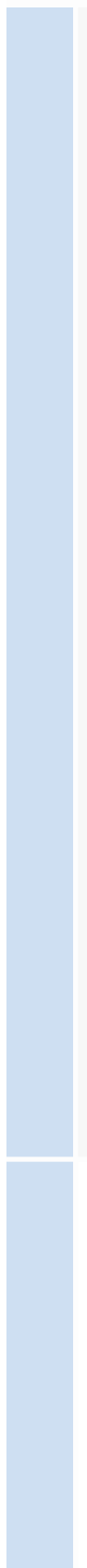


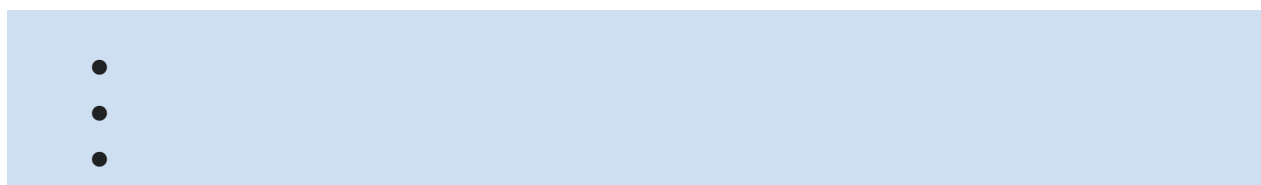
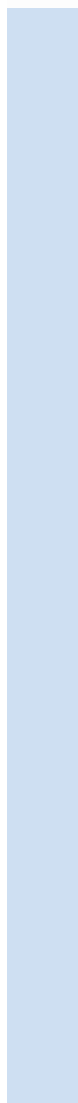












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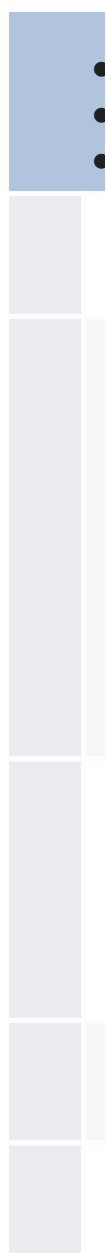
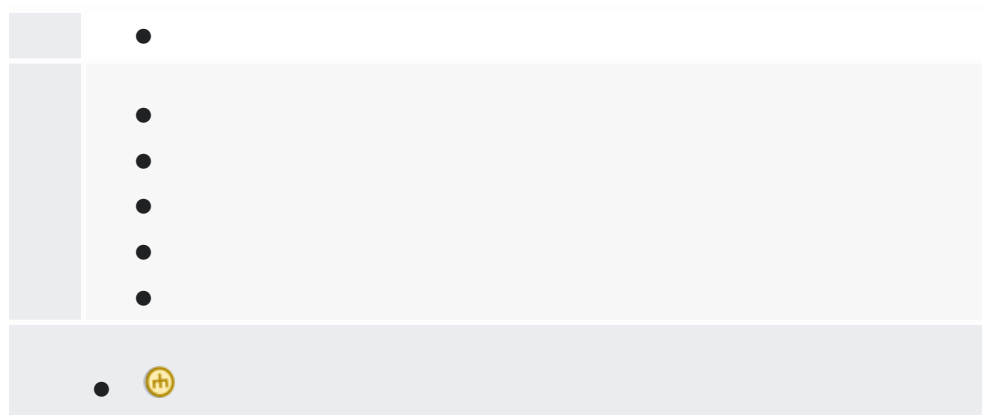


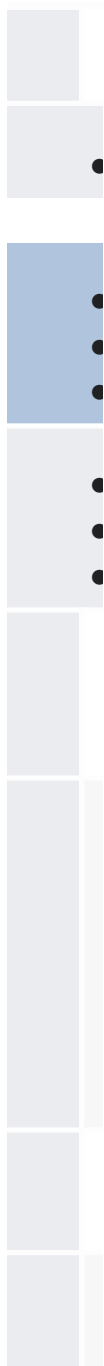






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American choreographers
American dance-pop musicians
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American disco singers
American expatriates in Bahrain
American expatriates in Ireland
American funk singers
American HIV/AIDS activists
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American male pop singers
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American manslaughter victims
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American rhythm and blues singers
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