Editorial

Each year around this time, Super Bowl fever hits the US, and with it the inevitable discussion of the half time show, and whose performance was the best ever in the history of the event. If there’s a poll, Michael Jackson fans will jump on it and vote up his performance at Super Bowl XXVII. The date was 31 January 1993, and the location was the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, California. It was an event that changed forever the nature and perception of the half time show.

Michael’s performance was a wonderful mini-concert that showcased his ability to hold audiences enthralled. I realise the footage probably belongs to the NFL, but I would love the Estate to do some deal with them to get it released, complete with behind the scenes footage, interviews etc - perhaps as part of a Dangerous 30th anniversary package. It so much reflected the exhilaration and optimism of that era. The NFL gave Michael a platform to get a message across that was of primary importance to him – a message to heal the world – and he used it, like no-one before or since.

A couple of years ago I wrote an article on my blog about this, and he used it, like no other before or since.

Have a great month and keep on Michaeling! #amplifyMJ

Kerry Hennigan

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Calendar of MJ Events

21-22 Feb – In the Studio with MJ 2020 – Atlanta
25 Feb – Major Love Prayer day www.majorloveprayer.org
6-7 Mar In the Studio with MJ 2020 – Miami
20-21 Mar In the Studio with MJ 2020 – Honolulu
28 Mar – Earth Hour 8.30 pm in your time zone https://www.earthhour.org.au/
22 Apr – Earth Day 2020 all around the world, 50th Anniversary
15-16 May - In the Studio with MJ 2020 – Detroit
26-28 Jun - In the Studio with MJ 2020 (Bottrell/Vibberts/Sundberg – Los Angeles
28 Aug - In the Studio with MJ 2020 (Bottrell/Vibberts/Sundberg – Brussels

News of Note

- New MJ trial documentary coming in June
  Late last month showbiz columnist Roger Friedman stated that a new 4-hour, 2-part documentary was coming from A&E on the Michael Jackson 2005 trial. The special is reportedly being put together by Atlantic Entertainment, owned by Michael and Michelle Walraith. Friedman writes “The filmmakers are trying to talk to everyone involved in the 2005 trial including the Anzalone family, who were used by Santa Barbara District Attorney Tom Sneddon in his vendetta against Jackson. Janet

- Coronavirus temporarily impacts MJ One
  Seven Chinese performers from Cirque du Soleil’s Michael Jackson ONE were held out of the show for three days because of possible exposure to the deadly coronavirus. The troupe of seven had just returned from a trip to China but had not been near the city of Wuhan. As reported in the Las Vegas Review Journal, it was the first time in its nearly 27-year history on the Strip that Cirque had sidelined artists because of a potential health risk. The decision was “made in consultation with the Michael Jackson ONE medical team and the seven affected artists and was supported by the entire cast and crew of the show,” the Cirque statement explained. All of the artists were expected to rejoin the cast after their brief hiatus.

- Statement from the MJ Estate - R.I.P. Kobe Bryant
  Following the shock death of LA Lakers basketball legend Kobe Bryant in a helicopter crash on 26 Jan 2020, along with his teenage daughter Gianna and seven others, the following statement was issued by the Michael Jackson Estate:

  “Everyone at the Michael Jackson Estate joins the world in mourning the immeasurably tragic loss of Kobe Bryant, not just for his magnetic excitement and competitive spirit on the basketball court but for his kindness and generosity toward others as well as his devotion to his family. We are heartbroken to lose his daughter Gianna who tragically died with him. Kobe and Michael became good friends. It is telling of his spirit that in speaking at Michael’s memorial service in 2009, Kobe stressed that for all of Michael’s achievements on stage he should be remembered for his charitable efforts. Our hearts go out to Kobe’s family and friends during this difficult time.”

  Taj Jackson posted on Twitter “Me and my brothers sat in on some of the phone calls between Kobe and my uncle. They both had such mutual respect for the other. Thank you for being a true friend Kobe. You will be greatly missed.” Following the news of Kobe’s death, fans shared this cute video of Kobe accepting the challenge to name 5 Michael Jackson songs in 10 seconds. Watch it here.

- Anniversary of recording “We Are The World”
  MJ Vibe has reminded us that it has been 35 years since “We Are The World” was recorded – on 26 Jan 1985, when forty luminaries of the music industry gathered together to record the song written by Michael Jackson and Lionel Richie. Jane Fonda hosted a TV special about the historic occasion which aimed to raise funds for famine relief in Ethiopia. The song won several awards, including four Grammys at the 1986 awards ceremony. It won for: Record of the Year, Song of the Year, Best Pop Performance by a Duo or Group with Vocal.
Avrizo and her then 13 year old son Gavin claimed Michael molested the boy. Eighteen grueling months of embarrassing negative publicity culminated in a graphic trial. Thanks to the truth, and defense attorney Thomas Mesereau, Jackson was acquitted. But the episode wore on. Jackson and pushed him into a series of misadventures that ended his life four years later. Jackson biographer, J. Randy Taraborrelli, posted on social media that he had been interviewed for the special, and that "it's good... it's a major network... All the MJ Big Shots participated." It's currently believed that this latest headline-graber will go to air on the anniversary of Michael's acualt (13 June) - two weeks before the eleventh anniversary of his death. Good, bad or a "non-event"? We will have to wait and see. Read MJ Vibe's report here.

• Lukather on recording songs for Thriller album
Steve Lukather guitarist, singer, songwriter, arrange, record producer and member of Toto recently told the story of recording "The Girl Is Mine", "Beat It" and "Human Nature" for Michael's Thriller album. Steve says that he hung up on Michael the first three times he called. When they eventually connected, Steve was mortified but Michael said: "I get that all the time. It's funny." For "Beat It" Steve explains there was originally no "click track", just Michael banging on a drum case - which was retained on the final version of the track. Filmed at the Musicians Hall of Fame and Museum in Nashville, TN, the interview excerpt was published on YouTube in November 2019 and subsequently shared through Michael's official social media accounts last month.

• Rhythm and Blues Hall of Fame plans
As reported by MJ Vibe. Bay City Michigan may become the home of a new Rhythm and Blues Hall of Fame, of which Michael is an inducée. Founder LaMont Robinson has been running it out of his Detroit office since 2014. Other Hall of Fame luminaries include Aretha Franklin, Whitney Houston, James Brown and Prince. Michael was inducted in 2014. The organization has a collection of memorabilia but currently no place to display it. Robinson hopes that with an actual museum, the Rhythm and Blues Hall of Fame will become an attraction similar to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Country Music Hall of Fame.

• Support for Square One in Amsterdam
Radio DJ Corné Klijn posted positive messages on Square One and its screening in Amsterdam where he interviewed Taj Jackson and Danny Wu on his Soul Sensations show (on Sat 18 Jan). Corné tweeted: "What a great evening and nice show with my guests @tajjackson3 and @dannywuuyee #SquareOne MJ Thetriumphmarathons @NPORadio2 #soulnight #soulsensations thank you guys for coming!" The interview can be heard on YouTube.

• Colin Chilvers on filming “Smooth Criminal”
Director and special effects Academy Award winner Colin Chilvers has a chapter of his book "Believing a Man can Fly: Memories of a Life in Special Effects and Film" to directing Michael Jackson’s "Smooth Criminal" short film which, of course, ended up in Moonwalker (1988). Chilvers comes across as a humble kind of guy who is grateful for the career he has had and some of the great artists he has worked with. Despite never having been one to be starstruck, he admits that Michael Jackson was the exception. "I was in awe of him the first time I met him in 1986 and I'm still in awe of him now he's passed on." He says that working for two years with the King of Pop on "Smooth Criminal" was a major highlight of his career. His book is available from Amazon and Best Music Video Short Form. In concluding his acceptance speech, Michael asked everyone to "remember the children." Watch a video of the awards here.

• Paris Jackson's catwalk debut in Gaultier finale
Michael's daughter Paris made her debut on the fashion catwalk at the closing couture show of designer Jean Paul Gaultier last month. As reported by Vogue UK, Paris knew this was a moment not to be missed. "Of course it was a no-brainer [to be a part of]." Paris said, "I was, and am, absolutely honoured." Vogue asked if we can expect to see Paris on the catwalk again soon? "I sure hope so," she said. "I was very nervous during the moments leading up to the walk, but once I stepped out there, all the anxiety faded away. The rush I got afterwards was similar to the one I get when I get off stage after performing with my band."

• Estate Lawyer clarifies "revival" of Robson/Safechuck claims
Following erroneous reports in the media, MJ Estate lawyer Howard Weitzman released a statement saying that the Court of Appeal did NOT revive the lawsuits against the Estate. "Both of those lawsuits were dismissed in 2016 and the judgements in favour of the Estate and against Mr Robson and Mr Safechuck remain FINAL." He explained that the Court of Appeal’s ruling merely revived lawsuits against Michael’s companies, whose employees they claim are somehow responsible for sexual abuse that never happened. This revival is due to a change in the law in California, which extends the time for genuine victims to file claims. "The Court of Appeal specifically did not address the truth of these false allegations," Weitzman continued, "and we are confident that both lawsuits will be dismissed and that Michael Jackson will be vindicated once again.

• “Diddy” gives shout out to MJ and “Off the Wall”
At the annual Pre-Grammys Gala in Los Angeles on Sat 25 January, Sean “Diddy” Combs was honored with the Industry Icon Award. He put the Grammys on notice when he said in his 90 min speech: "Black music has never been respected by the Grammys to the point that it should be." He paid tribute to Michael, and gave a shout out to artists whose albums SHOULD have, but DIDN'T, win a Grammy – including MJ for “Off the Wall”. Watch a video excerpt here.

• R.I.P. Dr. William B. Van Valin II
Michael’s former neighbour Dr. William B. Van Valin II passed away on 4 Jan. Dr Van Valin was the author of the book “Conversations in Neverland with Michael Jackson”. Their friendship was noted in an article published by edhat, which states that Dr. Van Valin was born and raised in the Santa Ynez Valley and had worked at the Buellton Medical Clinic and Centre since 2004. The Centre issued the following statement saying: “He loved his hometown...He was a good man and a great doctor; he will be greatly missed by all his patients and all the people that knew him.”

• BAD’s 1 billion streaming milestone on Spotify
As noted by @MJCharts on Twitter last month, Michael Jackson’s Bad album has now surpassed 1 billion streams on Spotify. This milestone does NOT include the streams from the 25th anniversary edition of the album. If you’d like to add to the numbers, listen to the album on Spotify here.

• Michael's relationship with BMI to continue
The performance rights organisation BMI and the Michael Jackson Estate have extended their long-term deal for BMI to keep handling the royalties for Michael’s catalogue. This deal continues the relationship between Michael and BMI that began in 1979 and was most recently renewed in 2014. As reported by Deadline, Estate co-executors John Branca and John McClain stated: “Michael first signed with BMI in the nascent stage of his solo career, and BMI has never wavered in its commitment to his extraordinary talent. This is a significant agreement, one that demonstrates the robust growth of interest in his music and his enduring contribution to the culture.” BMI President and CEO Mike O’Neill added: “The influence of Michael Jackson’s revolutionary music is undeniable. We are extremely pleased that his Estate continues to entrust BMI to represent his extraordinary catalogue.”

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