



A Candle for Michael Newsletter

Issue #130 - February 2024

Sharing MJ news and comment from the World Wide Web

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Editorial

We Are The World was a significant event in American pop music history, with so many great artists coming together to record and film a song for the USA for Africa campaign. Inspired by Bob Geldof's super group Band Aid who recorded "Do They Know It's Christmas" and the Live Aid concerts, the idea that gave birth to "We Are The World" came from Harry Belafonte. Michael Jackson and Lionel Richie wrote what would become an award winning song and a massive hit record that achieved so much to alleviate hunger in Ethiopia. It was also the last song Michael performed live in front of an audience when he joined in with the choir at the World Music Awards in London in 2006. ➡

The new Netflix documentary, "The Greatest Night in Pop," brings that heady time back to life, breathing fresh air into an industry which has currently seems to be devolving into something other than a benevolent reflection of current popular culture. I hope that all MJ fans are able to see and enjoy the film as I certainly did. If it moves you to tears, you are not alone! Its premiere at the Sundance Film Festival was a delicious irony, considering the festival program back in 2019 spear-headed a high-profile, *unsuccessful* attempt to cancel the memory and legacy of the world's greatest entertainer and selfless humanitarian.

This issue of *A Candle for Michael Newsletter* is respectfully dedicated to MJ fan Melanie Freeman (@mellie4justice) of NYC who passed away unexpectedly last month. Read a wonderful obituary to her [here](#). Mel will be very much missed.

Wishing you peace and happiness and very happy *Michaeling!*

Kerry Hennigan

Kerry Hennigan

Global MJ Pilgrim ("I'm with the doll")

Editor 'A Candle for Michael Newsletter' ISSN 2981-9857

Admin: Michael Jackson's short film 'Ghosts' fan group

Blog: <https://kerryhennigan.wordpress.com>

Columnist: <https://michaelsjacksonstudies.org/>

Calendar of MJ Events

Ongoing – MJ ONE by Cirque du Soleil, Las Vegas.

Until 3 Mar – Photographic exhibition: MJ: Stage of Michael Jackson at Earth Plaza, Yokohama, Japan

Until 26 May – MJ: The Musical, New York City

Until 25 Feb – MJ the Musical on tour – San Francisco CA

27 Feb – 3 Mar – MJ the Musical on tour – Salt Lake City, UT

25 Feb – Major Love Prayer www.majorloveprayer.org

5 Mar – 10 Mar – MJ the Musical on tour – San Diego, CA

6 Mar – 14 Sep – MJ the Musical UK opens in London

12 Mar – 17 Mar – MJ the Musical on tour – Tempe, AZ

19 Mar – 31 Mar – MJ the Musical on tour – Costa Mesa, CA

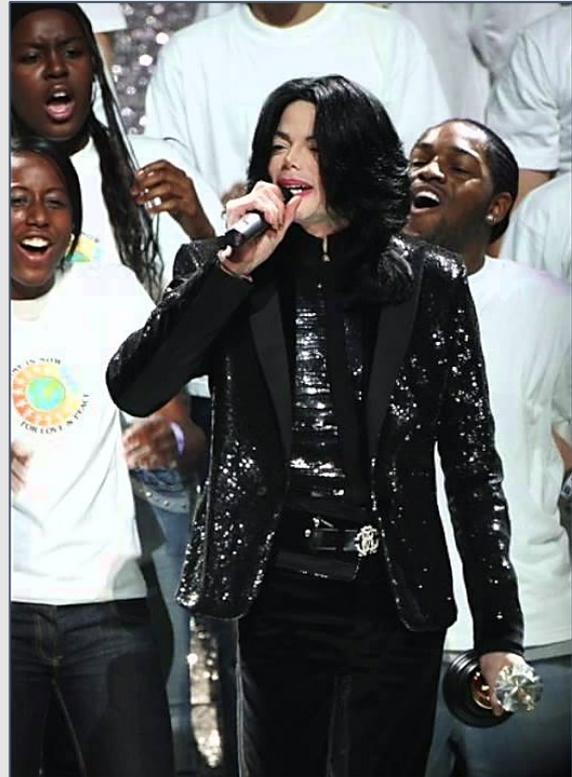
10 Apl – 28 Apl – MJ the Musical on tour – Tucson, AZ

10-24 Apl – MJ: the Musical on tour – Denver CO

28 Apl – The Wiz at Lido Cinemas Hawthorn, Melbourne, Vic

30 Apl – 5 May – MJ The Musical on tour – Des Moines, IA

7 – 12 May – MJ: the Musical on tour – Kansas City MO



• **Cast list for MJ: the Musical in London**

The full cast and creative team for the London performances of MJ: the Musical has been announced and can be viewed in this article by [Noise11](#) as well as on the official MJ: the Musical [website](#). Myles Frost is reprising his Tony Award winning role as MJ, with Mitchell Zhangazha as middle Michael, and four young performers alternating as little Michael: Jaydon Eastman, Elliot Mugume, Ethan Sokontwe and Dylan Trigger. The show opens at the Prince Edward Theatre on 6 March. Details and tickets [here](#).

• **Huey Lewis on recording "We Are The World"**

[Smooth Radio](#) recently shared some clips of Michael looking seemingly puzzled during Huey Lewis' contribution during the recording of 'We Are The World,' suggesting that Michael was reacting to Huey's singing. The accompanying article included Huey's comments on working with Michael, which he gave to [Entertainment Weekly](#) in 2009. "I stood right next to him on the solo lines, because I had the line right after he did," Huey said. "We had to share a position there for a couple hours. And we chatted. He said lots of nice things about my songs, and he knew our stuff, and he was just sweet, sweet, sweet...Obviously, what can be said about the guy? Super talented, and super fabulous, and super sweet at the same time. He was very comfortable. He was just really nice, man. Michael was just a really sweet guy."

• **New Hot 100 Hit – 50 years after its release!**

As reported by [Forbes](#) on 4 Jan, Michael and his brothers hit No. 43 on the list of the most-consumed tracks in the US with "I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus." The article reminds us: "I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus' reaches the Hot 100 more than half a century after it was first released. The sibling band put the cut out in 1970, and it has become the most famous version of the track, which didn't originate with the Jackson 5." After the festive season, *The Essential Michael Jackson* compilation reappeared on at least three charts as also reported by [Forbes](#), while the J5's Christmas album dropped out. Read the latest updates [here](#).

14-26 May – MJ: the Musical on tour – Minneapolis MN
28 May – 6 Jun – MJ: the Musical on tour – St. Louis, MO
11 – 16 Jun – MJ the Musical on tour – Buffalo, NY
18 Jun – 7 Jul – MJ the Musical on tour – Boston, MA
9 – 14 Jul – MJ: the Musical on tour – Grand Rapids MN
16 Jul – 11 Aug– MJ: the Musical on tour – Cleveland OH
13 Aug – 8 Sep – MJ: the Musical on tour–Washington DC
4 Dec – 32 Jan 2025 – MJ: the Musical opens in Hamburg
Feb 2025 – MJ: the Musical opens in Sydney, Australia
18 Feb 2025 – “Michael” biopic premieres.

News of Note

- “We Are The World” Netflix documentary**
 “The Greatest Night in Pop” a film about the making of ‘We are the World,’ premiered at the Sundance Film Festival on Jan 19 where it was followed by a conversation with Lionel Richie, director Bao Nguyen, and producer Julia Nottingham. Lionel, who co-authored the song with Michael, explains: “The writing wasn’t difficult because we both knew what we had to do and where we wanted to go. It’s like basketball players – they know how to play basketball. We just had to figure out what were the right words, what’s the right melody? And having him as a partner was everything.” In the film, Lionel tells the story (complete with snake hisses) of Michael’s pet python appearing over his shoulder at one songwriting session. We also see Stevie Wonder help Bob Dylan get in the groove by playing Bob’s part on the piano and singing the line in Bob’s voice! The film includes interviews with many of the artists who were in the recording studio on that special night, as well as some of the musicians, engineers, and production crew. *The Greatest Night in Pop* is produced by Lionel Richie, Julia Nottingham, Bruce Eskowitz, Larry Klein, Harriet Sternberg, and George Hencken. Stream it on [Netflix](#), or watch the trailer [here](#). Read a review from the Sundance premiere [here](#). Watch a clip of Michael talking about writing “We Are The World” as he remembered it, on [Twitter/X](#).
- Release date announced for “Michael” biopic**
 The MJ biopic will be released on 18 April 2025 according to an official announcement. Filming commencing on Jan 22, and a photo of Michael’s nephew Jafaar Jackson in the role of MJ was shared in the [media](#). The young actor who will play the coveted role of Michael as a child is nine year old Juliano Krue Valdi. The part of Joseph Jackson has gone to Colman Domingo with Nia Long as Katherine. [Deadline](#) has also advised that *Top Gun: Maverick* and *Whiplash* star Miles Teller is hoping to secure the role of one of Michael’s lawyers in the film, but this has yet to be officially confirmed.
- Experiencing MJ in the Studio – Dave Way**
 Dave Way is a mixer, recording engineer, producer and songwriter who worked with Michael on the *Dangerous* album. In an excerpt from an interview posted on YouTube by Inside Blackbird, he talks about the experience of meeting and working with Michael in the studio. Watch it [here](#).
- Academic MJ book coming in paperback**
 The good news for students of Michael Jackson academic studies is that Elizabeth Amisu’s 2016 book *The Dangerous Philosophies of Michael Jackson* is being released in April in a paperback edition by the publishers Bloomsbury. Orders can be placed now through their [website](#).
- The Wiz on the big screen in Melbourne**
 Want to see Michael as the Scarecrow in *The Wiz* (1978) on a big screen? The movie will be playing twice at three cinemas around Melbourne on April 28 and May 1, namely the [Lido](#), [Cameo](#) and [Classic](#). Click on the link for each cinema to access screening details. Paul Dwyer has set up an [event](#) for fans who would like to attend the first session at the Lido in the company of fellow MJ fans!

- The real numbers on ‘This is It’ vs. Taylor Swift**
 As noted by many MJ fans on social media, Taylor Swift’s Eras tour concert film has not surpassed *This Is It* as the highest grossing concert film ever (in the US), because *This Is It* is not a concert film, as stated by Michael’s nephew Taj on X, who pointed out that to achieve this headline Billboard had combined two completely separate film categories. The Guinness World Records office confirmed this on X. Readers added context with the following details: “*This Is It* by Michael Jackson, a documentary, not a concert film, earned \$380M (inflation calculated) globally and was only in theatres for 5 weeks. Swift’s Eras Tour...a concert film, not a documentary, grossed \$2661.6M and has been in theatres for over 13 weeks.” An article from Business Insider, India, noted that, even if *This Is It* was counted in the same category as the Taylor Swift film, Michael still comes out a winner on a world-wide basis. Check out their calculations [here](#).
- Explanation of Michael’s name on Epstein list**
 The tabloid media had a field day recently when previously sealed documents relating to the Jeffrey Epstein sexual abuse scandal and trial of his partner Ghislaine Maxwell were released, revealing that Michael had visited Epstein’s house in Palm Beach. However, as confirmed by one of the couple’s victims and reported by [Billboard](#), “There are no allegations of any wrongdoing on Jackson’s part in the documents.” Michael’s name came up during the deposition of a witness back in 2016 who confirmed meeting him at Epstein’s Palm Springs Mansion, but swore under oath there was no wrongdoing on Michael’s part. As a high profile financial advisor, Epstein was known for his associations with well-known public figures and politicians. Michael’s meeting with Epstein occurred before the latter had been accused of any abuse. Michael’s phone number in the financier’s list of contacts actually belonged to a lawyer acting for Michael’s own financial advisor at the time. Michael never visited Epstein’s infamous island where a lot of the abuse took place, and only visited the Palm Beach mansion once to seek financial advice.
- Michael in a Mary Poppins sequel?**
 A curious story popped up on [Collider](#) about Michael supposedly being named to star in a Mary Poppins movie sequel that never happened. According to Kendall Myers, who wrote the story, Disney intended to make a sequel to the Julie Andrews hit musical film in the 1980s, only Julie herself declined to reprise her role. Michael “was expected to play the male lead in place of Bert, being an ice cream seller and Bert’s brother.” Without Julie available to play Mary, the project did not go ahead. (I have to admit to never having heard this story before and certainly don’t know if it’s true! – Kerry)
- Dan Reed contacting fans re Leaving Neverland 2**
 On the [Popcorned Planet](#) YouTube channel, long-time MJ fan Jenny Winings has revealed that some fans have been contacted by Dan Reed’s team working on Leaving Neverland 2. He wants it to appear like he is providing a balanced view this time around. Do not be fooled. Chuck from the Estate’s Online Team shared the link to the video and recommended that other fans take heed of Jenny’s warning. “I encourage you all to watch the exchange...in case you, like Jenny, are contacted by someone from Dan Reed’s team and have questions or want more information...Thank you for checking this out and I wish you all a happy new year.”
- Kingvention 2024 in Los Angeles?**
 The folks that bring us Kingvention have been approached to bring a version of the event to Los Angeles in 2024. Would you be interested in attending? If so, please let them know by filling out the online form [here](#).
- More Funko Pop! Michaels on their way**
 Two more new Michael Jackson Funko Pop! figures are heading our way: HIStory tour Michael and Dirty Diana Michael. See an article and photos of these cute newcomers on [MJVibe](#). In Australia, you can pre-order from [Sunshine Collectables](#). The Super Bowl MJ Funko Pop! is also available to order from this online store, but the Smooth Criminal MJ figure doing the lean has sold out! (He’s a popular boy, obviously!) 😊 Instead, try Amazon or eBay.