

Happy 5-0, Jack-o

Today marks the half-century mark for one of the strangest, most celebrated (in his heyday), and most controversial performers ever to dance across a stage. At one time, the mere mention of Michael Jackson's name sent teenage girl's hearts a-flutter. Now, it seems that it sends chilling thoughts of child abuse charges, skin color changing, surgical mask wearing, and sleeping with chimpanzees. I do remember when he was rightfully given the moniker "The King of Pop," but 1983-84 was some time ago and most people born just a few years after that would wonder what all the fuss was about. In fact, they frequently laugh at the mere mention of his name (as most people do... even most of his fans wonder what happened).

I remember vividly my experience with most things [Thriller](#): the album itself (still the world's largest selling of all time), the video, the sequined glove, the marketing, and the introduction of the Moonwalk during the 25th anniversary of Motown. I remember seeing the video while staying overnight with my cousin. My uncle stayed up with us as he was a fan going back to the Jackson 5 days. At the time, it was one of the scariest things I had ever seen. A tribute to the old creature features of the 50s and 60s. Zombies, werewolves, creatures rising from graves. Even Vincent Price's voice made an eerie appearance in a "rap" toward the end of the 14-minute movie. Days later, the video was banned from network airwaves and was only allowed to be played on MTV after 10pm.

In 1984, the phenomenon sparked the "Victory" reunion tour of Michael and his brothers. While visiting our relatives in Texas that summer, the group was performing in Dallas. And not forgetting the hair-burning incident during the filming of a Pepsi commercial.

Although Wacko-Jacko is now almost in total seclusion, at one

time he was a powerhouse of performing dominance seemingly invincible. However, his success with Thriller was never surpassed as rumors began to take control of his life just as its popularity was at its peak.