

"Remember the Time"

Date range assessed by the fact that Teddy Riley, who co-wrote the song, met Michael in "early 1991" and "after beginning work on 'Remember the Time', Michael wrote a note with... 'MA and MJ duet', referring to his desire to collaborate with Madonna."; Michael's meeting with Madonna didn't occur until March 1991.

Teddy Riley, co-writer, producer, [LA Times \(November 24, 1996\)](#)

I wrote "Remember the Time" when Michael [Jackson] told me about falling in love with [Debbie Rowe], the woman he just married. I don't know why he didn't marry her the first time around.

[MaximoTV 2009 BET Awards interview](#)

Another thing is...we [The Blackstreet] were actually in the studio, working on 'Dog Me Out' remix, and I was in the other room working on Michael Jackson tracks...And I did about maybe 60 or 70 tracks, and when I went to go play those tracks for Michael, we only got to five tracks and he stopped; and that fifth track was "Remember The Time". And he stopped me, he said, 'We're not playing no more music, no more sequences, no nothing, you and I are going back to the computers until we finish writing this song.' And I called my guy, Bernabel, down and we finished writing the song, and the rest is history, we went back in and we did "Jam and all of those great songs and we had so much fun together. (MaximoTV)

[MusicRadar \(July 3, 2009\)](#)

One of the biggest things Michael really surprised me with on the Dangerous album was his vocal deliverance on Remember The Time. That really blew me away. I came to the project with this track. That was the sound I was thinking of for this album. Basically it was the sound I wanted on Dangerous and he loved it – loved it from the beginning. I'd describe that sound as, really, like the New Jack Swing sound.

He'd often record the vocals on a Dictaphone and take them into the studio and then see how it would all work out.

The elements on this song that give it that New Jack Swing sound are the ones that I used when I recorded with Guy and Bobby Brown to pioneer it. Sort of like the twisted samples I brought in. There were no samples of other people on that; what I did was make the sounds myself – I was sampling myself. I'd just jam with a riff and think, 'That's a cool bit there...' Yeah, it kinda really brought a lot to the production side. It worked.

[Billboard interview \(November 23, 2016\)](#)

[The song] took new jack swing and my style of music to the next level. After Michael, my whole career just got turned up. Michael gave me a new life and a new perspective on my career. If it wasn't for him, I wouldn't be the performer that I am today. Learning from him was like going to college. His lessons about staying power, learning how to cope and sustain with the direction of the business as it changes ... it all rubbed off on me.

["Red Bull Music Academy Festival New York 2017" Interview \(May 5, 2017\)](#)

And one thing about Michael, his pitch is amazing. Like, he--this is what he's singing? Okay, he'll go to the side, get his notes, and he would come in and sing straight. "Do you remember?" and his--everything is the same, each stack, and what he would do was move around the mic, and he would go this way for a different angle of the mic. It's almost like a photographer I want to get different angles of you, and Michael would go to this side. He would go behind the mic, and sing

the same stack, and it would be stacked about five, six, seven, ten times, and then the next note. So I'm sitting here like, "Wow", and his vibrato, everything just the same. It's almost like a sampler. So, learning this from him had taught me how to get with other singers and show them how they can actually do their own backgrounds, and not sound the same. And it sounds like people, instead of "That's just you", and that is how I learned how to do that...

It's about your angles, it's about your dynamics. And it was like going to college, because I finished high school, working with my my brothers and my sisters in there, and my friends and their mothers, and got with Michael, and I worked with the king, and it was just like--it took a while for me to tell Michael was off-key, until he really put me on Front Street, in front of Bruce Swedien and the assistants. He's like, "I just want--can you come in?", and did not know that the microphone was still on. He's like, "I need you to tell me when I'm off-key. I need you to tell me if I suck. Whatever I'm doing, I need you to tell me, and don't be afraid". And the same thing happened. I didn't do no interviews for the album for a long time, it was about six months, and I didn't do not one interview talking about the album. And he pulled me in the room again. I'm thinking, either I'm gonna get fired, or something's happening that I didn't long. And he's like, "Are you a part of this album?" I said, "Yes, I'm a hundred percent a part of this album." He said, "So why don't you talk about it?" I said, "Michael, you gave me--I don't know how many pages, forty pages of a non-disclosure, and I'm not validating that. You're not taking me to court, sue me for something I said about this project." He said, he started laughing, he's like, "Don't worry about that. That's just something I give to everyone when we're doing our sessions. I want you to take these interviews, I have interviews, and I need you to take them all, and talk about this." I said, "Well, first of all, I don't even know what's going to be on the album, so what is there to talk about?" He's like, "Okay, I'm taking you even further. Let's go to the room", and he had his progress board, and another board here, and the collage--y'all remember the collage? The Michael Jackson collage of the Dangerous album. I'll tell y'all that story. Is it okay? Okay, so on the collage, he said, "We don't even have lyrics for 'Remember the Time'." So I'm thinking, how the hell 'Remember the Time' get on the board?" He has visions before visions, and he can tell you what's going to make it, and what's not. What he feels good about, and what he don't feel good about it. It would be at the bottom of the list, and all the records that he feel good about, which he had about fifty, fifty-five records. And I'm looking at this list, and I'm like, "How did 'In the Closet' be on this list, and we don't even have the track finished." And then he put this "Jam" record that I never heard. "Jam", and I never heard the record, I was like, "So, what is this 'Jam' record?", and why is my name next to it? He said, "'Cause you're gonna work on it." And he said, "Joy" Joy had a question mark behind it. I was like, "So, what is 'Joy', and why do I have a question mark?" He said, "Because I don't know if it's gonna make the album, 'cause, as you as you can see, we have so many songs, but I know that these are going to make the album." So, I was like, "Yo, I gotta go work harder", 'cause I see only three of my songs... He said, "So, now you can talk about these songs, and just spread the word. I want people to know that you're working with me." I said, "Cool. I must write the words." He said, "Great." So, I went back in and did those interviews, came back in, and made more...

He would start the lyrics for "Remember the Time", but only certain words would come out. And you guys know why Michael don't pronounce his words sometimes? It's because it's the feel of the actual melody, and if you can't put a word in there, you mumble it. And that's what Michael

did. And that's how we came up with most of these songs, and then he said, "Call some of your friend writers", and I called my best friend Bernard Belle. And Bernard Belle came down, and I said, "I'm gonna let you know right now. Got to stay along this melody. You got to stay with this melody, or you may not make the cut." He said, "I got you, I got you." So, he said, "Do he want all these words pronounced, because I don't know if I'm gonna be able to curve the words with the melody." I said, "Don't worry about it, just get as many words as you can in the song". And he did, he got everything exactly how Michael curved it... So, that was the lesson of--the main thing is melody is king. That is Michael's slogan. "Melody is king"...

There was a creative battle with this song ("Remember the Time") and why it took so long. It actually took us four months to finish this song, and I'll tell you why. That's a funny story, because when Michael was singing the verses to this song, and I'm actually coaching and letting him go, and do his thing, and just lay his vocals, 'cause he doesn't like to stop and go, unless he say, "I like this part so much I want to punch onto it." Well, Michael was singing vocals straight through it. And it'd be like twenty tracks of vocals of one--just a verse. Well, we got the final verse done, and he said, "I'm gonna lay a one-take now." I said, "Okay." After twenty-two tracks of vocals, I want to see this. And he laid a one-take, because he knew. What Michael does when he's doing his vocals like that, he's taking what's good and really implementing it to the last track. He's really taking those phrases and taking in, really signaturing it, and then he makes the vocal. And when he made that vocal, we were so happy, and he disappeared. Michael went to Switzerland right after the first verse. He went to Switzerland to check on this mall that was being built and he had a few--he had stores in the mall, I think it was his mall. And he called me while he was on the plane from his satellite phone and said, "I'm gonna be back in a couple of weeks." And I said, "Michael, I thought you were in a room. I'm thinking we're gonna get this record finished, and you're gone." He said, "Oh, we're gonna get it finished. It's a smash. It's going to be on the album." I'm thinking he's gone, I'm not gonna be here, and maybe two or three weeks, I gotta go back home. And I said, "Michael, well, can I go home?" He said, "Nooo." I said, "Why?" He said--and I remember, everybody who left, like Dallas Austin, left because nobody really had the patience for Michael. He'll keep you in the studio and you being there, and he's not there. And there's no indication, or no guidance. You got Bruce Swedien, "Yeah, that's great, Teddy. Just keep going." And all of his workers--everybody's just there for you, and, "You need food?", just to keep me in a room... So, I said, "Michael, I miss my family." He's like, "Bring them." I said, "Michael I can't bring my family." He said, call [unintelligible]. Bring them, they can come." I said, "I miss my friends too." He said, "Bring them, don't worry." I said, "Well, how are we all gonna get around?" "Rent them all cars." Okay. I said, "Michael I could just go home for a--" "No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. Please stay, everybody left me. I need you to stay. This is you and I. This is our album It's not just Michael. Your name is all over this." And when he came back, there wasn't a marketing meeting or anything without me being there...

Red Bull: I have a specific question about "Remember the Time", and I feel like the song always stood out to me, just because of the register in which it's sung. He's lower than he is on all the other songs to this point from the previous album, more or less, and even the other material on this album. That had to be a conscious decision.

Riley: It's always my decision... So, Michael broke out on me, and the purpose of him singing that low was--I said, "You can't give everything away in the beginning", you got to gradually get them there. So, as you hear the song--this is the perfect song for escalation. It's like, you're climbing the steps and you get to the top of the stairs, and you get [sings climax of "Remember the Time"] and it was--he didn't do that around us. It's a certain thing when you go in the studio, it's like, certain things I do in the studio, I don't want y'all in here. Like when I play the vocoder it's very--only person I let in the studio and then I kicked him out was one of my producers, because he was in the back just laughing like crazy, because I'm up here trying to get all the feelings so while y'all hear this music the way it is, is because the vocoder really 'cause I'm screaming in that microphone. [fakes a scream] That's how it sound before putting it in the vocoder. And you got to literally--to get the feelings out of a vocoder, you gotta be uncomfortable, really uncomfortable, singing, screaming, losing my voice. So, I'll wait two days or a day of taking tea and all this stuff, and then finish it out. Same thing with Michael. Michael would sing that one part, and he's in that room just going hard, screaming, getting mad, throwing stuff, and that's how he gets the aggressiveness of that vocal. He'll go in and "bam". And I can remember one time the Anvil Cases fell on Michael, and all you heard was, "Help! Help! Help! Help me! Bruce, Teddy!" I said, "What happened?" Bruce [says], "Oh, the Anvil Case fell on him again." And I didn't know that Michael goes through a lot to get himself in that mode of screaming. And all of our cassettes, you hear him scream. You have to know that Michael is doing something to get himself in that mold--mad, aggressive, you know like, "I hate you so much right now", that type of thing. And I've actually seen it once, and it really gave me a whole lesson of why I do what I do.

Jermaine Jackson, brother. "You Are Not Alone"

That song was, as Michael told me, written with Diana Ross in mind; the one great love that, as far as he was concerned, escaped him.