

Creem Magazine Interview

Extracted from [1983 article](#)

*Date assessed by the fact that his home was being renovated at this time, and several other interviews take place during this renovation*

And we did get to talk last year, In a three-story condo in the San Fernando Valley – where Michael was, still is, staying while they rebuild his family house five miles down the road – filled with books, plants, art-work, animals, organic juices and various nephews and cousins and siblings of the Jackson family. La Toya was there in a cowboy hat. Little sister Janet was there to parrot my questions to Michael in a simpatico accent. Oh, I forgot, and there was a record collection ranging from Smokey Robinson (the first record he ever bought was 'Mickey's Monkey') to Macca, with stops at funk, new wave, classical and just about anything else. Hmm. The Jackson influences, eh?

"James Brown, Ray Charles, Jackie Wilson, Chuck Berry and Little Richard – I think they had strong influences on a lot of people, because these were the guys who really got rock 'n' roll going. I like to start with the origin of things, because once it gets along it changes. It's so interesting to see how it really was in the beginning." Michael's got a tiny, otherworldly voice. You've heard him described as childlike and angelic. You will again. He's painfully shy, stares at his hands, his shoes, his sister, anywhere where he can forget there's an interviewer around. He goes on:

"I like to do that with art also. I love art. Whenever we go to Paris I rush to the Louvre. I just never get enough of it! I go to all the museums around the world. I love art. I love it too much, because I end up buying everything and you become addicted. You see a piece you like and you say, Oh God, I've got to have this..."

"I love classical music. I've got so many different compositions. I guess when I was real small in kindergarten and hearing 'Peter and the Wolf' and stuff – I still listen to that stuff, it's great, and Boston Pops and Debussy, Mozart, I buy all that stuff. I'm a big classical fan. We've been influenced by all kinds of different music – classical, r&b, folk, funk – and I guess all those ingredients combine to create what we have now.

"I wouldn't be happy doing just one kind of music or label ourselves. I like doing something for everybody... I don't like our music to be labeled. Labels are like...racism."

A good enough reason for swinging from Streisand to Freddie Mercury, not wanting to become the figurehead of just one group of people. How does he choose who he works with? Anybody who asks?

"I choose by feeling and instinct," is Michael's [1983] questionnaire answer. What does he get out of them? "I feel it would be...*magic*." Then again, you've got to keep in mind the man lives for his work.

"My career is mainly what I think about...There's been so many other things, they come in all the time. It's just hard to juggle your responsibilities around – my music here, my solo career, my movies there, TV and everything else."

Is that what makes you happy, just working?

"Yes. That's what I'm here for really. It's like Michelangelo or Leonardo da Vinci," his voice trails off; he looks torn between sounding immodest and telling the truth, which, as he sees it, is that talent comes from God anyway, so don't go patting *him* on the back.

"Still, *today*, we can see their work and be inspired by it."

So as long as there's stereos, Michael Jackson lives then?

"Yes. I'd like to just keep going and inspire people and try new things that haven't been done."

To what extent has his belief in divinity influenced his life?

"I believe in God. We all do. We like to be straight, don't go crazy or anything. Not to the point of losing our perspective on life, of what you are and who you are. A lot of entertainers, they make money and they spend the rest of their life celebrating that one goal they reached, and with that celebration comes the drugs and the liquor and the alcohol. And then they try to straighten up and they say, 'Who am I? Where am I? What happened?' And they *lost* themselves, and they're broken. You have to be careful and have some kind of discipline."

Is he a very self-disciplined person?

"I'm not an angel, I know. I'm not like a Mormon or an Osmond or something where everything's straight. That can be silly sometimes. It goes too far."

It must be hard being an angel when you're acknowledged as one of the sexiest performers around, have girls camping in your backyard and the like.

"I wouldn't say I was sexy! But I guess that's fine if that's what they say. I like that in concert. That's neat."

What isn't neat is "Like you run into a bunch of girls, which I do all the time, you'll drive outside and there'll be all these girls standing on the corner and they'll start bursting into screaming and jumping up and down and I'll just sink into my seat. That happens all the time...*Everyone* knew where we lived before, because it was on the 'Map To The Stars Homes,' and they'd come round with cameras and sleeping bags and jump the fence and sleep in the yard and come in the house – we found people everywhere. It gets crazy. Even with 24-hour guards they find a way to slip in. One day my brother woke up and saw this girl standing over him in his bedroom. This one lady, who's 30 and she's crazy, and she said Jesus sent her there, and she's got to me...People hitch-hike and come to the house and say they want to sleep with us, stay with us, and it usually ends up that one of the neighbors takes them in. We don't let them stay. We don't know them."

More tales of crazy fans. One girl who tried to blow them up; another who screams at him in supermarkets. Must get a bit tough knowing who's your friend, sometimes.

"It *does* become difficult certain times. It's hard to tell, and sometimes I get it wrong. Just the force of feeling, or if a person's just nice without knowing who you are.'

Lonely at the top? "We know lots and lots of people because we have such a big family. But [I've got] maybe two, three good friends."

Things weren't much different though when he was growing up in Gary, Indiana. He remembers "a huge baseball pitch at the back of where I lived and children playing and eating popcorn and everything" and not being allowed to join in, but still reckons "I didn't really feel left out. We got a lot in exchange for not playing baseball in the summer. My father was always very protective of us, taking care of business and everything..."

"We went to school, but I guess we were even different then, because everyone in the neighborhood knew about us. We'd win every talent show and our house was loaded with trophies. We always had money and we could always buy things the other kids couldn't, like extra candy and extra bubblegum – our pockets were always loaded and we'd be passing out candy. That made us popular! But most of our life we had private schooling. I only went to one public school in my life. I tried to go to another one here, but it didn't work, because we'd be in our class and a bunch of fans would break into the classroom, or we'd come out of school and there'd be a bunch of kids waiting to take pictures and stuff like that. We stayed at that school a week. *One week!* That was all we could take. The rest was private school with other entertainment kids or stars' kids, where you wouldn't have to be hassled."

But spending your life almost exclusively with your brothers and sisters – don't you get on each other's nerves? Doesn't it get claustrophobic?

"Honestly, it doesn't, and I'm not just saying that to be polite. Thank God it doesn't."

Not even when they're out on the road together?

"No. We're so silly when we're on the road, and we just get sillier. We play games, we throw things at each other, we do all kinds of silly things. It seems like when you're under pressure you find some kind of escapism to make up for that – because the road is a lot of tensions: work, interviews, fans grabbing you, everybody wants a piece of you, you're always busy, the phones ringing all night with fans calling you, so you put the phone under the mattress, then the fans knock at the door screaming, you can't even get out of the room without them following you. You feel that all around you. It's like you're in a goldfish bowl and they're always watching you."

How do you get away from the madness?

"I go to museums and learn and study. I don't do sports – it's dangerous. There's a lot of money being counted on, and we don't want to risk anything. My brother hurt his leg in a basketball game and we had to cancel the concert, and just because of him having an hour of fun, thousands of people missed the show, and we were being sued left and right because of a game. I don't think it's worth it...I try to be real careful."

Even about talking to the press. Another reason he hates interviews is a fear of being misquoted. Magazines he reckons, "can be so stupid sometimes that I want to choke them! Like I say things and they turn it all around. I could kill them sometimes. Once I made a quote – I care about starvation and I love children and I want to do something about the future. And I said, one day I'd love to go to India and see the starving children and really see what it feels

like. And they wrote that Michael Jackson gets a kick out of seeing children starve, so you can see what kind of person he is!"

"Ryan O'Neal sent her a tarantula spider one time," he grins at the author. "That was good!" It's probably the nearest thing to a mean statement the man's made. You wonder how someone so sweet and shy and childlike gets to be such a demon onstage.

"I just do it really. The sex thing is kind of spontaneous. It really creates itself, I think."

So you don't practice being sexy in front of the mirror?

"No! Once the music plays, it creates me. The instruments move me, through me, *they* control *me*. Sometimes I'm uncontrollable and it just happens – *boom, boom, boom!* – once it gets inside you."

That doesn't mean that outside forces get the blame if anything goes wrong. Michael has complete control over every aspect of his career. And he criticizes his own efforts more than anyone else's.

"I'm never satisfied with what I do. I always think I can do it a lot better. I think," he considers, "It's good to be like that."

At 24, doesn't it get on his nerves being referred to as a "child"?

"I don't mind. I feel I'm Peter Pan as well as Methuselah, *and* a child. I love children so much. Thank *God* for children. They save me every time!

But how about a film of his own life, then? Will we ever get to see a film of Michael Jackson's magical life?

"No. I'd hate to play my own life story," he grimaces. "I haven't lived it yet! I'll let someone else do it."