

Lisa Robinson Phone Interview

Date confirmed in [Vanity Fair](#)

Lisa Robinson. "There Goes Gravity: A Life in Rock and Roll". autobiography

In February 1977, we talked on the phone about interviews. "People talk to you and they want to know about you," he said, "but interviews help entertainers one hundred percent. I don't [only] mean promotion—wise. I mean, when they ask you questions, it helps you to think about your life, to look at your future. It makes you think about what you're going to be doing in the next ten years." I asked him if he ever got bored. Only when he was stuck inside a hotel room with too many fans outside, he said. But, he was quick to add, sticking to the script that demonstrated his early Motown media training, he felt an obligation to his fans. "They made you who you are. They're the ones who buy the records. If an entertainer did a concert and nobody showed up, he wouldn't do the concert. So he owes it to them." I asked if he resented never having had a normal childhood. "No," he said. "There's such a thing as talent, and I was taught that this was given to me. If I didn't like doing it, if it [felt like] work, I don't think I would have lasted this long. I'd probably go crazy."

[Vanity Fair \(September 2009\)](#)

Interview with Michael by phone from his home in Encino, California, February 1977:

L.R. *You've been doing this for more than 10 years now; do you ever wonder, if you could have had a different life, what you'd be doing?*

M.J. I don't know . . . It's a lot of fun, you learn a lot of things, and you get into a lot of things. Right now, I write a lot of songs. I've been writing a lot of songs for a long time. I'm looking forward to recording them.

L.R. *What about the celebrity stuff, like when you come to New York and go, for example, with Andy Warhol to Regine's like you recently did?*

M.J. [Laughs.] It's part of being an entertainer. You know, people talk to you, and they want to know about you. And a lot of entertainers don't know this, but interviewers help entertainers 100 percent. I don't mean promotion-wise; I mean like when they ask you questions, it helps you to look at your future yourself, like when they ask you what you think you'll be doing in 10 years. Interviewers put [entertainers] in a position to think about their life—where they're going or what they should be doing or what shouldn't they be doing. So it's important, it really is.

L.R. *Do you think your brothers are relieved that they don't have the same burdens you do being the lead singer or do you think they're jealous of the attention you get?*

M.J. No, never. Everybody knows we have certain jobs that we do onstage, and my thing that I do is sing up front, and I dance and lead most of the songs. They know that's my thing and they do theirs.

L.R. *Did you ever have doubts, or worry that you wouldn't be able to do it?*

M.J. No, because it's something that I like to do. I never thought I couldn't do it—it's just a feeling inside of you.

L.R. *You never get fed up or exhausted or bored?*

M.J. I get bored sometimes . . . yeah. You have to wait in your hotel room, and all these fans are knocking on your door or waiting outside around the hotel, and all you can do is stay in your

room. You can't go anyplace. So that's when I would say I get bored. But you have an obligation to your fans—they made you what you are. They're the ones who bought the records, so performers who don't sign autographs and stuff are wrong. Someone who does that can't say he's right, because he's wrong . . . because if he did a concert and nobody showed up, he wouldn't do the concert. So he owes it to them.

L.R. *Do you go out with girls? Any dates?*

M.J. No, I don't date, no. I'm not really interested right now. I like girls and everything, but [laughs] . . . Oh, you think I'm one of those? No! I'm just not that interested right now.

L.R. *Most 18-year-olds don't have to get up every day and rehearse or tour or work 12 hours a day: they have girlfriends, they do sports, they have homework—they have a different life and they've had a different life for years. Does it bog you down?*

M.J. No, because it's something I like doing. If it was work, I don't think I could have lasted this long. I'd probably go crazy.

L.R. *Do you feel you have a special gift?*

M.J. Well, there's such a thing as talent. And, yeah, I would say that's true . . . For instance, with an artist, he can draw anything you look at—he can draw it. And then you take [someone else], who can't even draw a stick person. So look at the difference.

M.J. I like to be at home because we travel all the time, so if we had some time off, we wouldn't go on vacation. We do enough [traveling] when we're working.

L.R. *Who lives at your family home now?*

M.J. Me, Janet, Randy, and La Toya.

L.R. *None of the other brothers?*

M.J. Uh-uh. The rest live out and are married.

L.R. *Marlon?*

M.J. He's married and he's got a baby.

L.R. *I didn't know that. What is his wife's name?*

M.J. Carol . . . but don't print that.

L.R. *You're not supposed to say they're married? Not Jackie either?*

M.J. Right, none of them. Don't mention that.

L.R. *What? That's kind of silly . . .*

M.J. I know.

L.R. *O.K., change the subject. You're on Epic [Records] now—do you miss Motown at all?*

M.J. I miss the old days at Motown, the old days. When we first came there we used to live with Diane [Diana Ross] and we'd play at the Gordys'. We'd go to Disneyland and go bike riding and all those things.

L.R. *Have you seen Diana Ross in Lady Sings the Blues or Mahogany? Do you want to act?*

M.J. *Lady Sings the Blues* was much grander than *Mahogany* because she could get into it much more. It was about this singer, and drugs . . . A real actor can do any part, but I want to do something pertaining to show business. Like in *Mahogany*, Diana is great, but she's not a real actress [as much as in *Lady Sings the Blues*] . . . She inspired a lot of people, though.