

"Don't Let a Woman (Make a Fool Out of You)"

Date range confirmed by Joe King Carrasco in his ["Songfacts" interview \(archived\)](#) ("October of '81")

Joe King Carrasco, singer. ["Songfacts" interview \(December 20, 2013\) \(archived\)](#)

**Songfacts:** There's also been a lot said about the song "Don't Let A Woman Make a Fool Out of You," and the whole Michael Jackson connection. How did you get Michael to sing on that song?

**Joe:** There was a restaurant next to the Roxy in LA - it was a grill or something. A nice place. And that's where the song came from, when JP and I were in that restaurant. I had that song in my head: "If you want to be happy for the rest of your life, never make a pretty woman your wife..." [Jimmy Soul's "If You Want to be Happy"] It came from that kind of vibe. So we came up with that, "Don't Let A Woman Make a Fool Out of You," and we had it.

We were at Studio 55, which is on the Paramount lot. And, in fact, it was the same studio where Bing Crosby sang "White Christmas." We were in there recording, and all of a sudden, the Jackson 5 show up to mix their *The Jacksons Live!* record.

So we were in one side of the studio and they were in the other. My guys in the band were watching the World Series, and everybody started watching the World Series on the TV in the lounge. Michael was always in the office and I was always in the office trying to figure out stuff, too, for what I was doing.

He was a really nice guy. We used to stay in this hotel in LA called The Tropicana, and he said when he first came to LA he lived in the Tropicana - and that's where we were.

He'd hung out with Bob Marley, so I kept asking him a lot of questions about Bob Marley. I had a Walkman, and I had *Off the Wall* [Jackson's 1979 solo album] on it. And I said, "Have you ever heard your *Off the Wall*?" And he hadn't, so I gave him my Walkman. He was listening to it for several days, listening to *Off the Wall*.

We just kept talking, and one day I said, "Hey, Michael, nobody's getting this harmony in my band, can you do it?" And he said, "Sure." So he came in and sang the harmony. He sang a five-part harmony. I've got the tape of him singing a five-part harmony on the master tape. And then his dad walked in, and his dad freaked out when he saw him singing with us. But the guy was a real nice guy and he sang really good, man. He had perfect pitch.

**Songfacts:** Do you remember when this happened?

**Joe:** It was October of '81. I was playing him a lot of African music, too. I was really into African music and listening to that and some Reggae, and I said, "You should do some reggae or African kind of stuff." If he'd listened to me, he probably wouldn't have made it as rich.

But he had a really good voice, and it was interesting talking to him. He took me with him to check out mixes. It's really interesting, because there'd be all these guys in suits in a control room. They're all watching him to see his reaction to each mix. And then he had a white Rolls Royce and all these girls out in the parking lot were always hanging out. I don't know how many people he's collaborated with. I don't think that many in his career, did he?

...**Joe:** It seemed like he was sort of aloof from his brothers. I noticed that.

["Dallas Observer" \(August 29, 2013\) \(archived\)](#)

**“Dallas Observer”:** How did it happen that Michael Jackson sang backup vocals on your album *Synapse Gap*?

**Joe King Carrasco:** We were at Studio 55 in L.A. We were on MCA and the Jackson 5 was mixing in one room and we were in the other studio. There was an office in between. Michael didn't hang out with his brothers too much, and he would often just sit in this office. I started talking to him about Bob Marley. I wanted to know what it was like hanging around with Bob Marley. We kind of got to be friends. I had a Walkman and I had been listening to a lot of African music. He didn't have a Walkman and I had been listening to *Off the Wall*. He spent three days listening to his own album on that Walkman. We spent a lot of time together and one day, I told him that I didn't have anyone in my band who could sing high. He said he would like to sing on my album. His dad walked in, and I think his dad freaked out a little bit. Michael was a real nice guy, and we became good friends. His voice was amazing. He could do these amazing five-part harmonies. I have a tape somewhere of him singing those five-part harmonies.

**“Dallas Observer”:** I can't think of a stranger pairing than you and Michael Jackson.

**Joe King Carrasco:** I went into the control room with him and there were all these guys in suits. It was a pretty weird scene, but he was cool, and he was fun to hang out with.

[Allan Jones interview \(August 12, 2009\) \(archived\)](#)

It's 1982 and Joe is in London, as part of a whistle-stop European tour to promote his new MCA album, *Synapse Gap*. We meet at his Bayswater hotel, and the garrulous Texan is soon in full conversational swing, talking excitedly about the new record.

“Guess who I've got on the album, man, singing backing fucken vocals?”

I didn't have a clue. Bob Dylan? Ozzy Osbourne?

“Michael-fucken-Jackson, man!” Carrasco fairly shrieks.

I'm sure there were people in Birmingham, let alone Bayswater, who will have heard the dull thud of my jaw hitting the floor of Joe's hotel room. But it's all true, because Joe is now telling me all about this baffling alliance and how the world's biggest pop star ended up singing backing on “Don't Let A Woman (Make A Fool Out Of You)”.

“Oh, man, it was fucken wild,” Carrasco says, laughing hysterically. “He was in the studio next door to where we were recording. And I was just thinking, ‘Goddammmmm, here's the best fucken singer in the world, man, I gotta get him on my record.’ And I did, man. I fucken did. I just made friends with him.”

And what was he like?

“He's a nice guy. He's surrounded by all these bodyguards who keep him away from the real world. But one day, man, I saw him just sitting out in this office, staring into space. I just said, ‘Hey, Mike, why dontcha come sing on my record, man?’ And I just kinda made off with him. When his managers got back and found him in the studio with us, they flipped. But the track was down, man. It was too late!”

[“The Austin Chronicle” \(July 3, 2009\) \(archived\)](#)

Tex-Mex purveyor Joe King Carrasco holds the rare distinction of having the late Michael Jackson as a backup singer. In 1981, the King of Pop was mixing *The Jacksons Live!* at Studio 55 in Los Angeles as Carrasco & the Crowns were cutting their major label debut for MCA, 1982's *Synapse Gap*. “I loaned him a Walkman, because he had never heard *Off the Wall* on one before; he spent like three days listening to it,” recalls Carrasco, who currently resides in

Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, and recently released the soundtrack for his self-proclaimed and directed "trailer-trash epic" *Rancho No Tengo*. In return, the iconic thriller recorded harmonies for the reggae-tinged single "Don't Let a Woman (Make a Fool Out of You)." Jackson was paid union scale for the session – \$100. "When he did the session, his dad came in and kind of freaked out because he caught him in a different studio with us," Carrasco laughs in fond remembrance. "He had really incredible mic techniques for certain words and phrasings. He was really a perfectionist. It was neat to brush up against that level of greatness."