

## NASDAQ Opening Ceremony

["MTV News" \(August 30, 2001\) \(archived\)](#)

Michael Jackson celebrated his 43rd birthday — one day late — by presiding over the NASDAQ market opening ceremony in Times Square on Thursday morning (August 30). The appearance was also meant to kick off the promotional campaign for his new single ("You Rock My World"), new album (*Invincible*) and upcoming Madison Square Garden concerts on September 7 and 10.

The underlying message — that pop music is big business — is no secret, though it's rare for pop stars to embrace the stock market this openly, Bowie bonds notwithstanding. It's even rarer still for Jackson to appear in public. His last (unannounced) appearance was onstage with Jay-Z in June, and prior to that, at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame induction ceremony in March.

Many fans from around the world planning to attend the "Michael Jackson: 30th Anniversary Celebration, The Solo Years" concerts flew into New York early to witness this appearance, some carrying banners about their respective countries, others wearing hand-painted T-shirts with slogans like, "Hug Me Michael." Some 500 fans crowded around the seven-story MarketSite building, which flashed pictures of Jackson on its nine plasma screens, which framed the broadcast studio facing the street, as well as on the MarketSite Tower's video wall. A few minutes before the market's 9:30 a.m. opening, Jackson walked in as cheering fans crowded around the glass walls and windows of the lower level for a better look. Wearing a black suit, blue armband and striped dark shirt, Jackson waved and blew kisses to the fans outside as he was introduced to NASDAQ's executive vice president, David Weild, and NASDAQ CEO Wick Simmons, who presented him with a glass trophy.

"It's like floating in the air," Jackson said of an object encased in the trophy.

"Well, you're floating," Simmons told him, "right now, out there, in Times Square, on the big billboard that's up out there. You are floating so that everyone can see you."

"This is Times Square?" Jackson asked. "Oh ..."

"This is the *new* Times Square," Simmons said.

Simmons then explained to Jackson how and when to push the button that would light up the NASDAQ screens, the symbolic opening of the share-trading exchange. They counted down and at precisely 9:30 a.m., Jackson pushed the button to open the market. NASDAQ officials then presented Jackson with a 1934 Shirley Temple poster, while staffers rolled out a vanilla birthday cake lined with strawberries and sang "Happy Birthday."

"I love it, oh my god," Jackson said when handed the poster. Jackson blew out the candles, then added, "I'm deeply moved by this very special moment for me. Thank you, David, Wick and NASDAQ. Thank you so much. I love you and all the fans. Thank you."

Jackson attempted to leave, but NASDAQ staffers re-directed him back into the broadcast studio, where he got a brief tour as he fiddled with sunglasses in his pocket. He then got a piece of the birthday cake, which he took one bite of as staffers asked him questions and posed for pictures with him, including one woman with a baby. Though it's not clear if he remained in the building or immediately left, his official visit — as far as what could be viewed by the public — lasted about 10 minutes. A few minutes after he disappeared from view, fans outside the

building chased after a black Ford Expedition, which had someone in the back seat covered up by a blanket. Whether it was Jackson or not was not known.

Jackson is the first pop music figure of note to officiate NASDAQ's opening, according to the exchange's spokesperson. NASDAQ makes a practice of inviting celebrities to preside over the market's opening, from heads of state to star athletes, but prior to Jackson, the biggest name from music to do so was Crystal Bernard, who did so on July 5. Jackson was picked, Weild said in a statement, because of his "extraordinary vision and commitment to excellence in the entertainment industry."