

"Daily Mirror" Interview

*Date of interview confirmed in "The Mirror" ("yesterday [May 24, 2006]")*

["Daily Mirror" \(May 25, 2006\) \(archived\)](#)

The handshake is surprisingly firm - and the hug totally unexpected - as pop legend Michael Jackson grants me a private audience.

The singer was in buoyant mood yesterday when we met at the London offices of Harrods, owned by his close pal Mohamed Al Fayed.

He swept in at 1.05pm without fanfare, no bodyguards, no entourage - and barely a trace of make-up.

It was his first face-to-face interview since being acquitted of child abuse last year - and I wasn't sure what to expect.

But Jackson - who has often given the impression that he prefers to keep people at arm's length - greeted me like an old friend.

Smiling broadly he held out his hand, then threw his arms around me, giving me a whiff of his sweet-smelling perfume.

He looked totally different from the gaunt, hunched figure who emerged weighing just six stone at the end of his US trial last June.

And the 47-year-old star was more than happy to chat after finally emerging from his self-imposed exile in Bahrain.

He seemed relaxed as he talked about rebuilding his tarnished career and his plans to create a new Neverland - in Britain. He said: "I'm here in London on business for a couple of days. I love it here.

"I'm looking for a place to live. I've always liked the UK and I just love the fans here."

He grinned as he added: "I'm also visiting my good friend Mohamed - 'cos he's the man."

Jackson has lined up a series of business meetings in the UK and will be looking at a luxury properties in and around the capital.

He also plans to view places in Scotland and Ireland in a bid to re-create the funfair-style California ranch that was once his sanctuary.

Asked about his health, Jackson insisted: "I'm fine - very well thanks. I'm feeling good." He says he is also working on a new album - his first since *Invincible* in 2001.

Then, with a gentle pat on the back, he said goodbye and we went our separate ways.

As I left to catch the Tube back to the office and he headed to his chauffeur-driven limo, I could still detect the faint aroma of his perfume on my hand.

And I think I may have witnessed the first tentative steps of Jackson's emergence from the shadows.