

Memphis, Tennessee (The Jacksons Tour)

*Date range confirmed in The Commercial Appeal ("March 23, 1977. They were in Memphis for a concert the following evening [March 24, 1977] at Mid-south Coliseum.")*

Robert (Robot) A. Hull, [Rock's Backpages \(June 29, 2009\)](#) ([Mirror of full article](#))

As the story has been told, the Jackson 5 were appearing that evening in concert and had just visited the South's great R&B radio station, WDIA. Michael and his brothers were eager to please their fans, and that would mean going into the community to sign autographs. So WDIA planned a remote broadcast at a Woolco in the Southgate Shopping Center on South Third. Although Woolco was selling Jackson 5 recordings, the manager of the store had never even heard of the group. As a result, nobody at this particular Woolco had anticipated what would happen when they opened the doors of the store despite the fact that the store was actually selling tons of their records.

Of course, hundreds, then thousands, of fans rushed in to meet the young pop icons. One estimate is that at least 10,000 people had been waiting in the parking lot to see the group.

The WDIA handlers decided to put the Jackson 5 on the roof for everyone's safety.

Up there, Michael and his fans waved and dropped autographs down to the crowds. People were screaming one name: MICHAEL! MICHAEL! MICHAEL!

Many of the fans were angry because they had not gotten a chance to get close to the group.

The enormous crowd gathered into a storm, and people began looting the Woolco store, completely cleaning it out. The store was torn apart.

Eventually the Jackson family paid for the damages.

One eyewitness who was present at the Great Michael Jackson Woolco Riot describes the event through a similar experience that occurred in Memphis in 1977:

"The best way to explain it is like when Elvis Presley died. I was in Sessel's Grocery Store as a sacker across the street from Graceland when people heard Elvis died... People fell out in the aisles of the grocery store in tears. There were post cards with Elvis' picture on them. People took them and walked out of the store with the post cards and put them on the store front glass. People took fruit, busted the glass out, never removing the photo from the glass, cutting themselves..."

The Commercial Appeal (March 23, 2012) ([mirror](#)), references Image 002

Tito (from left), Michael, Randy, Jack and Marlon Jackson relax and catch up on fan mail in Memphis on March 23, 1977. They were in Memphis for a concert the following evening at Mid-south Coliseum. The day before, the singing brothers from Gary, Ind., visited Woolco's at the Southgate Shopping Center. The store's assistant general manager estimated the crowd at between 6,000 and 7,000. The flock caused an estimated several thousand dollars of damage in the process, but no injuries or arrests were reported. The Jacksons have been in Memphis about 10 days, taking a break during their two-month concert tour.

Chris Cadman, author. "Michael Jackson the Maestro". Black Echoes (April 2, 1977) ([article summary/quotes](#))

This was a small piece in Black Echoes in April, 1977 as the Jacksons learned they had been invited to perform at the Royal Variety performance in May 1977. Speaking from Tennessee to Kymme Jones, where he and his brothers were resting after a successful trip to Venezuela, Michael spoke of the poorly received 'Joyful Jukebox Music' album.

"They were old songs that would not have normally been put out. They were not true to the previous hit style of the Jackson material."

On returning to play in Britain for the first time in 4 years, Michael said:

"We're looking forward to seeing London again."

Michael also disclosed that he had written 3 new songs for the Jackson next album (Goin' Places) and had written a song for Barbra Streisand:

"I've written lots of songs including one for Barbra Streisand among other people."

After the Jacksons UK visit Michael said he would start work on a solo album. Concerning the possibility of a romance with Tatum O'Neil:

"Oh, that's just a rumor – I know Tatum very well, but that's just a rumor."

And films?

"We're looking over scripts and things now."