

"Say Say Say" Music Video / Short Film

Date of first day of shooting confirmed in "Club Sandwich" Paul McCartney fan club magazine ("October 4th is the first day of the shoot") and date range assessed by the fact that the video "was shot over two days" (Making Michael, Mike Smallcombe)

Bob Giraldi, director. [Rolling Stone \(June 24, 2014\)](#)

"Paul was terribly insecure about appearing next to Michael, in terms of dance," said "Say Say Say" director Bob Giraldi. "And who wouldn't, if you're going to go onstage and be choreographed next to Michael Jackson?" For the superstars' first and only video together, Giraldi envisioned "Mac and Jack" as Old West scammers, selling cure-alls and performing vaudeville routines. Paul even danced. "In all my years of working in film and commercials, I've worked with some of the worst divas and superstars of all time," said Giraldi. "Paul and Michael were not that."

["Club Sandwich" Paul McCartney fan club magazine No. 61 \(1983\)](#)

The original idea for the clip accompanying "Say Say Say" was Paul's. He was busy finishing of his "Pipes of Peace" album, and had his "Give My Regards to Broad Street" film to complete, but wanted you all to see him and Michael in "Say Say Say". So, it was pack the bags--and off we went to Los Angeles for four days.

The director was Bob Giraldi, who'd worked with Michael on his sensational "Beat It" video. The chosen location was a nice little town called Los Alamos, about 70 miles from LA (we later learned that this was the town where the world's first atom bomb was exploded). My job is to scout out the locations, and check that everything is okay. Fortunately, Trevor Jones is coming along. We've worked with Paul for some time, so we know what is required.

We were all staying in a little town called Buellton (which is famous for its pea soup!) while Michael was staying down the road in Stavanger (which is famous for its pastries!) Paul and Linda are safely installed in the place they'll be staying, and the next day I am due in drive Paul down to a meeting with Bob Giraldi to discuss the shooting. Paul takes one look at the hire car, though, and decides to drive me! It's a real space-age Corvette, the dashboard's all lit up with graphs, light, and things to tell you how many miles per gallon you're doing at a certain speed. It certainly makes a pleasant change to be chauffeured by Paul McCartney!

Los Alamos itself is an amazing place--a real old cowboy town, straight out of the 1880s; you half expect John Wayne to walk down the main street. You'll remember the scene in the finished video when Paul goes into the hotel, well, that's an incredible place too. The owner kept it just like a hotel out of the 20s and 30s, and everything is right, even down to the magazines and toilet fittings! We've hired this warehouse, where they have built the sets you see in the finished video, and Paul and Linda come down for costume fittings and Paul learns all his dance steps from a choreographer called Jeff who's great, really good and really fast. So, it's all over by four in the afternoon, Paul and Linda go back for a rest, and we all relax--the calm before the storm. I go and have a look at another one of the cowboy towns further down the Highway 101, it's great, and the only thing that stops it being exactly like something out of "High Noon", is the town's petrol station!

October 4th is the first day of the shoot, and we're all up ridiculously early, something like 5:30am! There's dozens of vintage cars on set when we arrive. They've all been perfectly restored for Hollywood films, and the only difference is that they're all fitted with automatic transmission--apparently actors can't act and change gear at the same time!

The first shot is just of Paul, Linda, and Michael looking over a truck. After being made up and in costume, Paul and Linda are on set, when it's, "Lights, camera... action!", just like in the movies. It all goes well that first morning, except that one of the grips falls off a ladder, and is a bit shaken, so we break for lunch early. He's okay, though, just a slightly sprained wrist. The local girls have laid on this beautiful barbeque for lunch. It's a lovely hot day, and the trestle tables are all set up, so we sit down and eat, and "Say Say Say"--whaddya know? It's all, "Meat, meat, meat", a 28 oz. steak is no big deal over here.

It's at lunch that the first of a series of amazing coincidences occurs: The lady who owns the ranch where we're filming is called Rita, and comes from Yorkshire! (She says that this bit of California is just like Yorkshire--except for the lizards and tarantulas!) After lunch, Paul, Linda, and I went out to meet a bunch of local schoolkids who'd come down with their headmaster. They all signed autographs and chatted to the kids and made everybody very happy.

After lunch, we move on up to the orphanage to film a scene. Paul and Linda's daughter, Heather, is in this scene, and she looks lovely. She runs across the lawn to meet Paul and Linda, who come up the hill with a big bag full of money for the kids. In the background, Michael's doing this spectacular dance routine on top of the fence.

There's a break in filming, and Trevor's gone off to help Linda sort some things out, when Paul asks me for a cup of tea. Now, normally, it's no trouble but when you're virtually in the middle of the desert, this poses a problem. I run to get some hot water, and wind up making the tea on a stone. It was a right rough old cup of tea, so I had to reboil the water to make a proper cup, which is something the Americans still haven't mastered. The location is really out of the way, so when filming's finished for the day. I take Paul and Linda's truck back while they hitch a ride back in Michael Jackson's "wagon"--a Rolls Royce!

The next day, we're back filming in Los Alamos in the Union Hotel. Paul is being filmed having a game of pool with this really tough looking character (who is really the film's director Bob Giraldi). We then move outside, to film an important shot of Paul, Linda, and Michael driving down the main street in this truck. Obviously, they attract quite a crowd, who were held back on one side of the street. Everyone was busy setting the shot up, when Trevor noticed that the crowd were reflected in the hotel window, which was lucky, as he managed to prevent the shot being filmed, saving an expensive re-take.

They then all move upstairs, to film a shot in one of the rooms. Linda's lying on the bed playing a guitar, while Paul is shaving. They're busy filming away, when Paul dabs his shaving brush on Michael's cheek, which was completely unrehearsed, but Michael's reaction was so great that they kept it in the finished film.

Earlier on, I'd got Paul and Linda some lovely omelets from the cafe next door to the hotel, and got chatting to an old guy there. He was about 77, and looked exactly like Buffalo Bill. He'd spent his entire life in Los Alamos, apart from one period during the war when he was stationed abroad--in Liverpool! Amazing. While they're filming inside, I got chatting to one of the security guards, who's writing a history of the town. Apparently, it used to be a real hideout for all the old

outlaws in the days of the Wild West. It was where the original "Alias Smith and Jones" used to hide after robbing stagecoaches and stuff. The guard agreed that he had another chapter to write in his book--the day that Paul and Linda McCartney and Michael Jackson came to Los Alamos.

The scenery round here is unbelievable, real cowboy country, horses, cattle, and the most incredible sunsets. The last shot of the day was Paul, Linda, and Michael bowling down the road in the van towards the sunset. The sun was in perfect position, just setting on the back of the hills, this great big red ball. The sunsets really are amazing, with the orange sky, and the background which goes all black, it looked marvelous, and we were lucky to get that shot that day, because the locals told us they'd been getting a lot of rain lately.

The last day of shooting--The scene in the warehouse/studio where the "Mac & Jack Show" really gets underway, with Paul and Michael dancing around in check suits. The "Fred Astaire" routine with the top hat goes a bit wrong when Paul's top hat keeps sticking to his head! Anyway, it's all sorted out, and Paul goes into costume as the magician with his magic cauldron. Before the day's shooting is over, Paul obliges with a couple of television interviews, and he and Linda go out and meet another party of schoolchildren and sign some more autographs. As Paul and Linda are getting changed, I go down to their car to find it covered in messages, scrawled by the fans in the dust. A quick wash and brush up, and it's as good as new. On dropping them off, Linda asks us in for dinner, which was lovely. Trevor and I eventually get back to our hotel, and relax with the crew over a few drinks, a welcome change from all the pressures of filming. On our last day, Paul drives the Corvette to Los Angeles, which he did--at 100 miles an hour! Because of that, we got to the airport really early, and went to eat in a Mexican restaurant nearby. It's no good hanging around an airport with Paul and Linda, they are always recognized, and things start getting crazy. On our way in, I go with them to the duty free shop, where they buy some tee-shirts and presents for the family, then onto the aircraft, and off they went. Trevor and I had a few drinks in the airport bar, and caught our plane on time. We slept most of the way back, and by the time we woke up we were back in dear old Blighty. Los Alamos already seemed like a dream. At least every time I see the video of "Say Say Say", I'll be able to recall those four action-packed days.

Mike Smallcombe. Making Michael

In October 1983, Michael and Paul McCartney travelled to the Santa Ynez Valley in Santa Barbara County, California, to film a video to promote the upcoming 'Say Say Say' single, which became Michael's sixth number one hit in America. The video was directed by Bob Giraldi and produced by Antony Payne, the pair who made the 'Beat It' video with Michael earlier in the year.

Michael fell in love with the Santa Ynez area, especially Sycamore Valley Ranch, which McCartney and his wife were supposed to lease for the duration of their stay. "Paul doesn't like staying in hotels, he likes his privacy," Payne said. "Before the shoot, Paul's manager Steve Shrimpton and I went up to Santa Ynez and started looking for houses for Paul to rent. Now this is not a place where you can really rent houses, all they have there are these big ranches." Payne and Shrimpton met with William Bone, a real estate developer who owned the 2,700-acre Sycamore Valley Ranch. "We explained our predicament and asked if Paul could rent the

ranch," Payne said. "As soon as we mentioned the name McCartney, Bill Bone's eyes just lit up, and right away he said it would be an honour to have Paul stay at this house. He explained that Paul could have the run of the place and that he would leave the property after the initial introductions. It was almost too good to be true under the circumstances."

Two weeks later, all the parties met at Bone's ranch ahead of the start of the video shoot. The McCartneys flew into Santa Barbara Airport by private jet, and Michael arrived from Los Angeles in his Rolls Royce with his mother Katherine and sister La Toya, who made a cameo appearance in the video. The Jacksons rented an entire floor at the Ramada Inn in nearby Solvang. "After the introductions, Bill Bone left the ranch, and we all walked around and saw quite a bit of this wonderful property," Payne said. "But a few hours later I received this strange call from Bill's butler, who told us Bill had changed his mind about Paul staying at his house and that he wanted everybody off the property by 4pm that afternoon. Paul and his wife were supposed to stay in the guest house, but they didn't stay a single night. We had no plan B, but luckily we found another place for Paul."

Michael's visit to the ranch may have been cut short, but it would leave a lasting impression. The video, which sees Michael and McCartney play a pair of con men who get away with selling a 'miracle potion', was shot over two days with a huge \$ 325,000 budget. During a lunch break on set, McCartney began explaining to Michael how he earned approximately \$ 40 million a year from his various music publishing investments.

"Everybody was sat around that table; the McCartneys, the Jacksons and some of the crew," Payne recalls. "And Paul started talking about how music publishing is the big thing, how he got involved with it when he married his wife Linda and how he owned the Buddy Holly publishing rights and many others. Michael was listening very intently. Usually he was very childlike, but when it came to music and business he became a real adult, he suddenly had his business head on." Michael took the advice and began investing in music publishing, spending about \$ 1 million on rights his attorney John Branca found for sale, which included the Sly Stone collection. McCartney would later regret the conversation.

Meeting Fan at Hotel Pool

["Rock" magazine \(February 1984\)](#)

"Hey, that looks like Michael Jackson!" I yelled.

"Maybe it's Diana Ross and she got a haircut", laughed my friend. Then she whispered. "No. it *is* Michael Jackson."

My body temperature was rising in the Jacuzzi bubbles at this little hotel in Solvang, California. Half an hour from Santa Barbara, and half a second from me, stood a legend.

Jackson looked petite, fragile. He was wearing a sweatsuit jacket, blush, and eyeliner. His levi cords barely reached his ankles, showing off your average white socks from Sears and a pair of penny loafers. No glitter, no leather. Over his shoulder was slung a camera sporting the longest telephoto lens I'd ever seen. Gee, just what you'd need to get a shot of an unapproachable megastar like Michael Jackson.

And here he was, walking calmly around the Chimney Sweep Inn in (gulp) Solvang. He was with--appeared to be babysitting--two children. It was my chance of a lifetime, and as luck would have it, I'd even brought my camera and tape recorder.

Slowly I approached, affecting a nonchalance I did not feel. I introduced myself; he took a step back. But the little blond boy spoke up right away, "Hi, I'm Jamie McCartney," he said with a distinct British accent. "My dad's Paul McCartney."

I couldn't believe this. Now Jackson spoke: "I'm watching him for the afternoon."

The other boy, whose name turned out to be Aaron, had apparently latched onto the pair just as I was attempting to do. He kept taunting Michael Jackson: "I know you're not Michael Jackson. I mean, sing me a song. Dance for me."

"Well, I don't have any music here", said Jackson.

"If you're really Michael Jackson, you wouldn't need music!"

Jackson smiled, did a little shuffle-hop, and snapped his fingers.

Feeling much bolder after that gentle response to outright insolence, I asked if I could take some pictures Of Michael and Jamie. Jamie stuck his face right into the camera, showing off like a trooper (must be in the blood). "You'll have to ask Paul if it's okay", said Jackson. Boy. would I love to ask Paul McCartney... you should only know what I'd love to ask Paul McCartney. "He's staying at the hotel down the street."

No photographer myself, I desperately wanted these pictures to turn out. Who better to consult than the man with the long lens? Jackson started adjusting my camera, saying, "Here, this should be right now. Take some pictures, but I want you to show them to me when they turn out. Don't shake, now!"

I started clicking away, getting Jackson to sit on the rocks, stand on the grass, move to the little wooden bridge over the brook. It was difficult for him to smile; that widely reported shyness is quite genuine.

Now, of course, I wanted some pictures of myself and Jackson together. I pressed a gentleman sitting nearby into service, and when Jackson put his arm around me, the rise in my body temperature was in no way attributable to Jacuzzi bubbles.

We walked a bit together, and I asked Jackson What he was doing in Solvang. "Me and Paul are doing a short movie up here," he said.

"A video?"

"Yeah, for Paul's new 'Pipes of Peace' album." The McCartney family was there, and Jackson's mom and sister, LaToya. Also, an enormous, muscular black man who glowered at me from the hotel balcony.

"That's Clinton, one of my bodyguards I have to keep around", said Jackson. "He's big, but he's nice."

Michael Jackson started to head back to the hotel with Jamie, and I turned away, thinking my time was up. "You can come too, you know," he said, Blink your eyes, and there I am sitting on the couch in his hotel room.

Little Aaron joined the party, sitting around as Foghorn Leghorn cackled in the background on TV. "What's your last name, Aaron?" asked Michael.

"Dickey", the boy replied. "My name is Aaron Dickey and I hate my last name."

"Do the kids at school tease you about it?", asked the singer. Aaron nodded yes. "Kids, or grownups, can be very cruel. Or very kind."

Feeling bold, I asked Jackson if I could do a full interview, but he said he couldn't due to contractual obligations with CBS. "I can give you a private number", he said, "if you promise not

to give it to anybody. I'll be in town soon to do the 'Thriller' movie, and I want to see those pictures."

I swore secrecy on the grave Of my still-living mother, and I did call.

Two weeks later, I was on the set of "Thriller", the \$1 million video being directed by John (Twilight Zone) Landis. I was there 'til five o'clock in the morning. Rock Hudson popped over. Christina Onassis stormed onto the set looking for Michael, and I played [the arcade game] Centipede with singer Steven Bishop, I even got to be in the video... for 5 seconds.

I spoke to Jackson briefly, but Clinton and Cecil — the other Mr. Universe of a bodyguard — put a damper on the conversation. We chatted about Solvang; Michael asked for my red leather pants, and I offered to trade for his black and white leather jacket. Film crews floated around doing mini-documentaries about the maxi-video, and "Life" magazine was preparing a full-page spread.

Considering the success Of the entire adventure, I'm now planning to beard Diana Ross in the frozen food section of Safeway, and then I'm heading out to Asbury Park to run into Bruce Springsteen at the laundromat.

I'll keep you posted.