

“Ebony” Magazine Interview

Interview takes place ~Mid-Late September 1982 / Printed December 1982

Date range assessed by the fact that Michael was “feeling good about the success of Diana Ross’ hit single ‘Muscles’”, implying it had been released for some time at the point the interview was given. Home renovation was also happening during a September 15, 1982 Rolling Stone interview, so the date range of Mid-Late September 1982 is most likely. The release dates of “E.T.” and “Thriller” (November 7 and 30, 1982 respectively) are too close to print date to be likely, so any mentions of the albums are likely before the release dates.

[“Ebony” magazine \(December 1982\)](#)

Superstar of The Jacksons reaches another career milestone with narration of the E.T. story and release of new album ‘Thriller’.

Michael Jackson is flying higher than ever these days. His two new albums – ‘Thriller’ and his narration of the story of the movie creature ‘E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial’ – have been released and, as is usual with any album that has Michael Jackson’s name on it, are sure to be chart busters. He’s feeling good about the success of Diana Ross’ hit single ‘Muscles’, which he wrote and produced. He’s super excited about a movie that he, E.T. producer-director Steven Spielberg and musician Quincy Jones are collaborating on, and he and his brothers in The Jacksons are getting together to do another world tour. Michael turned 24 in August. He says he has finally taken charge of his life and career (“I pay people and I tell them what to do”). There’s a new lady he likes a lot, and he’s as happy as he has ever been.

Happy except for one thing. “Ever since I was a little boy I’ve dreamed about being able to fly, and I still dream about it all the time,” he explains. He’s not talking about flying high in the young-rich-superstar sense. He’d like to just go into the yard of his California home, say or do something magical, and take off, soaring out over the San Fernando Valley. He knows he’ll never be able to do it, which is one of the reasons he said a quick “Yes” when Spielberg mentioned the E.T. album project, he says, explaining: “When I was doing that recording I really felt that I was E.T., and it was because his story is the story of my life in many ways.”

Michael Jackson and E.T. alike?

“Well, look at his story,” Michael says. “He’s in a strange place and wants to be accepted – which is a situation that I’ve found myself in many times when traveling from city to city all over the world. He’s most comfortable with children, and I have a great love for kids. He gives love and wants love in return, which is me. And he has that super power which lets him lift off and fly whenever he wants to get away from things on Earth, and I can identify with that. He and I are alike in many ways.”

Michael explains the album. “It’s a special package with a beautiful storybook so that people can read along as I narrate the story. There are sound effects from the movie, and you can hear the voice of E.T. in the background. I sing a special song that was written for the album, and Quincy Jones is doing the music. It’s being released all over the world, and Spielberg is using some special marketing techniques that should make it an all-time biggest storybook album.”

What about ‘Thriller’?

“Of course it’s a follow-up to ‘Off The Wall’ (Michael’s hugely successful solo album which has sold 7 million copies and had five hit singles, the most by any solo performer in history), and it’s

also produced by Quincy Jones,” Michael says. “What’s different about it is that we came up with some fast, catchy tunes and modern, futuristic sounds, and I think we’ll have at least seven hit singles off this one.”

As Michael talks there is the sound of construction equipment and workmen in every area of the Jackson family home. Michael is having the house renovated and enlarged, and although he won’t say how much it’s costing (“I think it’s boring to talk about how much anything costs”), there are reports that the figure is “over \$1 million.” Michael says he wants a “real nice place for my mother, because we’re very, very close, you know” and “I want it to be real nice because this is where I plan to spend most of my time until I get married and move to Switzerland.”

Married? When?

“I’m not saying, but it’ll be sooner or later, and I definitely plan to do it.”

Michael and actress Tatum O’Neal were a “hot” item in gossip columns for several years, so the question, ‘Will Tatum O’Neal be the lucky girl?’

‘I’m not saying. But I will say that Tatum and I had a really serious relationship. We both are so busy that things have cooled off, but we’re still real good friends.’

Have you had very much experience with women?

“No, just Tatum.”

What about sex?

“I believe you should be married before getting into any heavy stuff.”

Anybody you’re serious about now?

“Well, Brooke Shields and I talk a lot on the phone – an awful lot.”

So are you going with her?

“Just say we talk a lot.”

Any Black ladies in your life?

“Sure, but you wouldn’t take me seriously.”

Try me.

“It’s Diana Ross. I love her.”

Do you mean as a “big sister?”

“No, that’s not what I mean. See, I told you that you wouldn’t take me seriously.”

You’re not saying you’d like to marry Diana Ross, are you?

“Oh yeah. I’m saying that.”

But she’s so much older than you. You mean you feel something other than close friendship for her?

“Uh, huh. And what does age have to do with it? Look at it this way: how old would you be if you didn’t even know how old you are?”

Although he’s the one who’s reportedly picking up the tab for renovation of the family home, Michael doesn’t bother with such details as going over blueprints or giving instructions to the workers. He seems far more concerned about whether a caretaker has fed his pets – a llama, two fawns, a ram and an exotic bird he keeps on the grounds of the estate. “Attending to details of things that have nothing to do with my career really bores me,” he says. “If creative things are involved, then I’m interested and I take full responsibility. I’m in charge of everything.”

Michael planned the spectacular show (including a magic act) presented by The Jacksons during their last tour, and he says, “I’m working on something even better for next year.” He says

he could write a best-selling book about some of the things that happen on tours – “Especially the way the fans chase after us,” he says with the laugh. “They come after us every way they can, and the guys are just as bad as the girls. Guys jump up on the stage and usually go for me or for Randy.”

But that means nothing except that they admire you , doesn’t it?

“What about when they hide up under your bed in some of the hotels? Our security people find them and drag them out.”

Michael says he’s grateful for the adulation from fans, but hopes it isn’t because of a sexual attraction “or anything like that, because we never try to deliberately project sex onstage. If it happens, O.K., but I would rather have young people love us for a more positive reason. I’d rather that they see us as some young Black kids who took their talent and used it and made a success of themselves.”

Michael is reportedly one of today’s wealthiest young entertainers, but he says that only he and his accountants and the IRS know what he’s worth. “It’s something that I just don’t talk about,” he says. “All I’ll say is that I’m very, very wealthy and could retire today.”

He’s also one of the most popular, best-liked entertainers in Hollywood although he says he has “only about three really close friends.” He refuses to name them because “the people I don’t name would be upset.”

On these pages are photos of Michael and some of his friends, and photos from various periods in the life of the young superstar.