(part 1)

The Jackson Five and Michael Jackson

Compiled by Shamma M. Raghib

THE Jackson Five rose from humble beginnings in Gary, Indiana. The original members were the three eldest sons of a steelworks crane driver (and ex-guitarist for the Falcons) Joe Jackson: Jackie (Sigmund Esco Jackson), Tito (Toriano Adaryll Jackson), and Jermaine (Jermaine La Juane Jackson) along with two cousins, although they were replaced by the two youngest Jackson boys - Marlon and Michael - the following year.

The brothers had started their informal music education by sneaking off with their father's guitar and when Joe Jackson discovered this fact, he bought them their own instruments. As the boys continued to improve, Joe devoted himself to moulding them into a well-rehearsed group that covered Motown and other soul/R&B hits of the day.

When Michael was 8, the group won a major talent contest with their rendition of the Temptations' "My Girl". By now, Joe had gone part time at the mill and was managing the band full time, as they were already traveling hundreds of miles to perform. Joe booked them for their first professional gigs at a local night club, Mr. Lucky's.

The owner of the only recording studio in Gary, Keith Gordon, had came to see the boys practice at home and agreed to give them a chance. In winter of 1967, in a studio in Chicago, a simple R&B number called "Big Boy" was recorded and released on the Steeltown label. It was a small hit in the local Gary charts. The album was followed by one more release on the label in 1968, "Some Girls Want Me For Their Love".

The Jackson 5 wound up at Motown through the importuning of Bobby Taylor, a performer and producer who caught their act at Chicago's Regal nightclub. At Motown, Berry Gordy took a hands-on interest in the Jackson 5, bought the group out of their Steeltown contract and moved them out to Hollywood, where the rest of the family followed them. Much of the band's early repertoire was written, rehearsed and recorded in California under Gordy's tutelage.

They were matched with "the Corporation," a Motown production team groomed to replace the recently departed Holland-Dozier-Holland. When it came time to introduce the Jackson Five (Berry Gordy decided on the slight change of name) to the world, Diana Ross did the honors at a Beverly Hills Club, which gave many the false impression that she has something to do with discovering the group.

In January 1970, their first release, "I Want You Back," reached #1 on the pop and R&B charts. Its follow-up, "ABC," unseated the Beatles' "Let It Be" from the top position that April.

