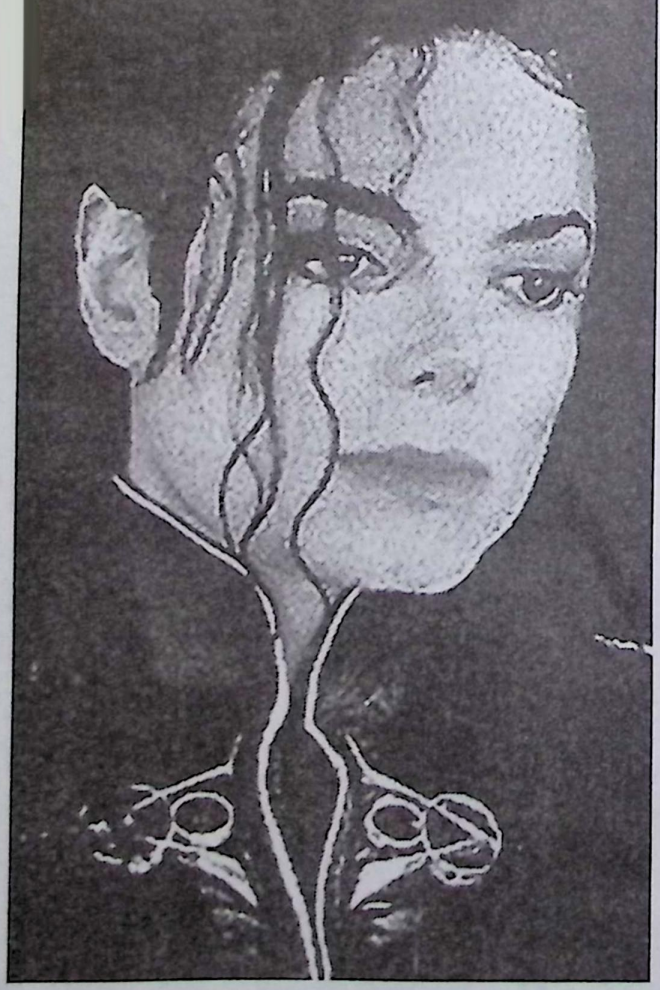
Michael Jackson (part II)

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(Continued from last week)

JACKSON'S eternal childhood image however did not prevail in the songs that he sang. In 1982, "Thriller", Michael's second album with Quincy Jones, was released, and went on to become one of the most commercially successful albums of all time. The accompanying video in the song "Beat It" was equally spectacular, portraying Jackson as a master of dance. The "Thriller" album and singles won Jackson a further seven Grammies and amidst this run of hits, Jackson slotted in 'Say Say Say', a second chart-topping duet with Paul McCartney.

He accepted the largest individual sponsorship deal in history from Pepsi-Cola in 1983; the following year, his involvement in the Jacksons' 'Victory Tour' sparked the greatest demand for concert tickets in the history of popular music. Michael Jackson had by now become an almost mythical figure, and like most myths he attracted hyperbole. A group of Jehovah's Witnesses announced that he was the Messiah; he was said to be taking drugs to change his skin color to white; it was claimed that he had undergone extensive plastic surgery to alter his appearance; and photographs were published that suggested he slept in a special chamber to prevent himself ageing.

Michael's next albums were deemed disappointing after the phenomenal success of Thriller. The long-awaited "Dangerous" arrived at the end of 1991 and justifiably scaled the charts. This was a gutsy techno pop album, with Teddy Riley contributing to a number of tracks. The lead-off single "Black Or White" became a huge transatlantic number 1, topping the U.S. charts for seven weeks.

Until 1992, his refusal to undergo probing interviews had allowed the media to portray him as a fantasy figure, a hypochondriac who lived a twilight existence cut off from the rest of humanity. He attempted to dispel this image, and succeeded to a degree, with a carefully rehearsed interview with U.S. talk show host Oprah Winfrey in 1992. The televised program was shown all over world, during which viewers saw his personal funfair in the back garden, and watched as Jackson spoke of his domineering father.

However, the unthinkable happened in 1993, just as Jackson's clean image was at its peak. Allegations of sexual abuse were made by one of Jackson's young friends and the media had a field day. Jackson's home was raided by police while he was on, clearly disturbed, Jackson cancelled a number of performances due to dehydration. No charges were laid, and things began to calm down until November 1993, when Jackson left the USA and went into hiding. Additionally, he confessed to being addicted to painkillers and was seeking treatment. After this admission, Jackson's long-time sponsors Pepsi-Cola decided to pull out of their contract with the now damaged career of the world's most popular superstar. The media were handed more fodder when he married Lisa Marie Presley on May 26th, 1994, perhaps in an attempt to rebuild his image.