

Off The Record

By Colin White
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Michael Jackson here, Michael Jackson there, Michael Jackson everywhere!

For the past few months, thanks to ultra-extensive media coverage, we (in our role as the American mass media audience) have witnessed hundreds of examples of Michael Jackson overkill.

Why?

Also, thanks to good ol' American commercialism, we (in another of our many roles, this time as typical American consumers---well, some of us are typical, anyway) have been force-fed so much Michael Jackson paraphernalia that many of us are unable to swallow it anymore.

Again I ask: Why?

The obvious answer is, of course, popular demand.

Yes, popular demand; that nasty little term which incites corporations to create silly little products that normally would never even see the light of an assembly line if it weren't for the extraordinary gullibility of the typical American consumer.

"What products?" you ask? (Sorry, no other options are available.)

Well, not only am I referring to things like the famous (or is that "infamous?") sequined "glitter" gloves, but also to ridiculous items (of Jackson's own creation) like the brand new 3-D Talking View-master version of Jackson's (chiller of a) **Thriller** video.

What's next? A Michael doll, maybe? (Pyrotechnics not included; however, each doll comes equipped with its very own Bic lighter...)

Popular demand: a term which inspires journalists and broadcasters around the world to compete neck-in-neck for the highest ratings.

One of the favorite subjects of media competition this summer was the Jackson brothers' Victory Tour, the rock'n'roll traveling circus that caused more controversy and media attention than Vanessa Williams and Geraldine Ferraro put together (and, naturally, Michael Jackson was the center of all the attention).

But none of that really matters anymore, not even the outlandish four-ticket/\$120 mail order scheme (although I admit that \$30 a ticket is a mighty hefty sum to pay for a concert lasting no longer than an hour-and-a-half). It's all dirt under the collar now.

What actually does matter is



the everlasting effect that all this media exposure will have on the pop superstar himself.

"What do you mean?" you ask?

Let me explain. Remember disco, hula hoops, and fuzzy dice hanging from the rear view mirror?

Those were all fads, (along with hundreds of thousands of other favorite pastimes and celebrities of the past), and are now all but buried. But at one time, every one of them was commercialized and over-advertised, (by way of the mass media), in its own respect.

They will soon be joined by such things as break dancing, plastic shoes, and, yep, you guessed it, Michael Jackson (accompanied by all his cutesy little idiosyncrasies, including moonwalking, black loafers with "glitter" socks and matching gloves, dark sunglasses, and band uniform reminiscent of **SGT. PEPPERS LONELY HEARTS CLUB BAND**).

Jackson is a product of his own imagination (a successful product, I might add), as well as a prisoner of fame and fortune. (I bet he can't even shop for his own groceries anymore---oops, never mind. He probably owns his own grocery store, anyway.)

But no matter how much the American public adores Michael Jackson now, his popularity is doomed unless the newshounds of the world (and especially this country) allow him a little privacy every once in a while. So **Beat It**, guys!

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