

Janet Jackson Is A Big Girl Now

By Erika Campbell
Layout Editor

*In darkness we are all alike.
Only wisdom and knowledge separate us.
Don't let your eyes deceive you.*

—J. Jackson 1814
(ending quote of Jackson concert)

Saying it simply wasn't enough. On March 3, in the Dean E. Smith Center, Janet Jackson proved she was not anybody's little anything. You are right,, Julie Brown, Janet Jackson is big. Real Big.

After a mediocre performance by newcomer Chuckii Booker and a hyped up welcome by Julie Brown, MTV's first black female VJ, Janet Jackson took control of the stage, the attention of over 20,000 people and a breathtaking performance.

For two and a half hours Jackson presented a spectacle crammed with enough special effects to make it a viable contestant for a MTV best video of the year award. Flames, fireworks and a live panther were all incorporated into a show that also included Jackson's precise dance sequences, her funky beat, and her thoughtful lyrics.

Yes. Thoughtful lyrics.

"Rhythm Nation 1814", the album and the tour, is a confirmation of what Jackson so vehemently protests in "Control". "Look at me! I'm not just Michael's little sister and I'm not Mrs De Barge. I'm Janet and I'm in control the album seemed to scream. She sang songs as bad as Michael's, danced with the help of terpsichorean Paula Abdul, and almost got a Grammy for best album of the year. "1814" proves that she has matured by focusing her work away from her egocentric fight for autonomy and instead, tackles social evils such as racism, illiteracy and education. "Rhythm Nation 1814", the tour, played up the songs that most displayed her new shift in attitude. In concert there is a definite break between "Control" and "Rhythm Nation", announced by a video of newsreel clippings that is similar to big brother Michael's Man In The Mirror. The audience is bombarded with shots depicting racism. Hunger. Poverty. Boom! It's Rhythm Nation 1814 and Jackson lets us all to know that we must change our world. The two songs with the most thought provoking lyrics, State of the World and Information Society, are played up with hard-core dance routines

and elaborate costuming "Ignorance...No! Bigotry...No! Illiteracy...No!" chants Jackson.

Although Jackson made this attempt to convey her disappointment of the state of the world, she did so through her lyrics and the chants and special effects. She omits the most obvious manner of communication: talking. Very rarely, if ever, did Jackson make a personal, spoken comment to the audience about the way she felt. In failing to do this, Jackson does not make the personal commitment to social change that she could be making. It is very easy for the audience to watch the well-timed, precisioned show and leave the ideas about change in the Dean Dome. But hey, what did people pay twenty bucks to see? A show, regardless of the amount of social education included. And Jackson gives them there money's worth.

Throughout the show, Jackson keeps energy level high. It was as if she peaked with her first song, "Control", and was her best for the full two and a half hours. And when the music had stopped, the dancing was over, and only her ending quote was left on the screen, the people



Janet Jackson rocks the Dean Dome with "Control"

PHOENIX/PAUL CORY

filed out of the Dean Dome amazed, big, bad and all grown up! humming the last strains of "Rhythm Nation". Yes, Janet...Ms Jackson...You're

Off-Black On The Silver Screen...

"Attention! I want you to know that I do not like white people! So that means I'm enjoyin' this —!" —Eddie Murphy in "48 Hours"

Ahh, looking back on the 1980's. The changes, the people, and of course, the films. Miles and miles of clichéd one-liners, overly curvaceous physiques, and whack overprices for side popcorn. The one thing I never saw (correct me if I'm wrong) was a good, original spy-thriller with a black lead.

Think about it: have you ever seen a movie like this? No, not "Action Jackson" (the name alone makes me throw it in the same pile as blaxploitation flicks like "Superfly"). "Action" wasn't blatantly stupid, I'll admit, but calling a muscular, afro-wearin' (fake Billy Dee Williams lookin') black man "Action" isn't the kind of intelligence quencher that I long for...with apologies to Carl Weathers, of course.

Let's talk about the King of Comedy, as proclaimed by the MTV/ BET generation: Eddie Murphy. In what I see as his best effort, "Beverly Hills Cop," he is a foul-mouthed but gallant detective, with a foul-mouthed boss, who runs figure eights around infinitely naive whites. Not quite a black James Bond,

eh? Murphy is undoubtedly flawless in this type of role, but it fall short.

What else is there? There are the "Lethal Weapon" films, with Danny Glover, but he isn't the lead, and he and mega-mogul Mel Gibson are police detectives (What is this about black actors and the police department? I guess that's better than always being in the plethora of pimps and pushers. What's next—black actors and fictitious Third World countries?!). Billy Dee Williams attempted a couple of second class action adventures, but he'll always be Billy Dee Williams to me. In fact, I can't take him seriously; I find myself constantly expecting him to pull out a bottle of Colt 45 and hear the Billy Dee Williams Ladies singing the "Smooth Operator" jingle in the background.

The reason I feel it important to have

Point After Touchdown

By Chris L. Brown



a believable, African-American role model in one of these model roles is simple: kids (heck, adults too) need to believe that anything's possible. Especially in the black community, where I foresee many leaps and bounds of achievements in the '90's, the sight of a debonair black man being whisked to safety by an auto-piloted helicopter after infiltrating enemy domain for some nameless governmental gadget (whew!) is a spank in the right direction.

My suggestion: have Blair Underwood ("L.A. Law") play Dwayne Dashing, agent of internal affairs for the United Nations, and his sidekick of equally important status could be Monique Mystique, American born security operative for the Kenyan Consulate in N.Y., as defined by Tracy Wolff (Glover's daughter in "Lethal Weapon 2"). Together, they ward off Boss

Hogg, an, evil, southern, fast food chain owner out to monopolize catering services to the U.N. thus ousting through taste bud warfare. Of course, Boss Hogg would be a special self-portrayal role done by "Senator" Jesse Helms (OOOOOH! A little political stab, there), who would get killed in the end by an intense audio blast of the bass-thumpin' Michel'le's latest release.

Hey, Hollywood, quit stereotyping blacks. Simple as that. Spike Lee seemed to be you against the entire world...in a "daze," if you will.

If I were to ever make it in that Californian nest of glamour and glitz, I would work toward demythification, although current efforts are doing well (on the minute scale of existence in which they toil). Eddie Murphy's last two films, "Harlem Nights" and "Coming to America," signify his efforts to diversify the screen image of African-American. "America" was especially creative. Murphy really let his (grab your shatter proof glass) "Souuill Glooow!!" And then what happened? Some northern coffee-with-cream columnist named Art Buchwald tries to sue him for allegations of idea stealing. Yeah, right. I'm sure that Eddie Murphy, the sole creator of the "I got some ice cream" routine, would look towards a

wrinkled, round, ridiculously rank old-timer to get an idea for a medium that attracts mostly hip, young people. I heard that Buchwald is Helms' second cousin. So, in conclusion:

People often ask me if I want to be like Eddie Murphy, and I say yes. Not because his revenue can fill Kenan Stadium twice over (you think I'm kidding?), but because he's in a position to make some serious changes for the better, which he's taking advantage of. Unfortunately, a lot of people's idea of black culture is what they see or read, as opposed to what they experience. So, I guess I will just have to keep permeating those pathways.

If for nothing else, so some of these muggs can get a clue!

Think
Black Ink