

Jacksons Rose To Fame Slowly

BY HILLEL ITALIE
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER
 NEW YORK (AP) --- Tracing the Jackson's history can be as simple as turning on the radio. There's two decades worth of music: "I Want You Back" to "Dancing Machine" to "Lovely One" to the new "Nothin' (That Compares 2 U)."

And don't forget a few addresses like 2300 Jackson Street in Gary, Ind., where the family grew up; 253 West 125th Street, the location of New York's Apollo Theater; or 2648 West Grand Boulevard in Detroit, once the home of Motown Records.

Five talented, ambitious kids Jackie, Tito, Jermaine, Marlon and Michael a demanding father and the great Motown label helped lift the family from near poverty in the steel belt to swimming pools and luxury homes in California.

They take nothing for granted, spending months in the studio to perfect their records and carefully avoiding uncomfortable topics in interviews: legal battles, family squabbles, sister LaToya's recent Playboy photos.

Jackie, Tito, Jermaine and younger brother Randy Jackson the group's current lineup are looking back now. They call "2300 Jackson Street," their first album since 1984's "Victory," a tribute to 25 years in show business and the support of their parents, Joe and Katherine Jackson.

The two oldest Jackson sons, Jackie and Tito, talked recently about the album and the family.

"We thought it would be nice to give some things to our mom and dad who worked hard in the earlier days, made a lot of sacrifices to buy us instruments and make costumes for us and take us to Chicago and St. Louis," Tito said.

"We always wanted to do this as youngsters, to be professional singers and entertainers, and we reached that goal," Jackie said. "We try to tell youngsters you can reach that dream if you work hard."

Divorces and sibling rivalries have taken their toll, firmly shaking the very roots of the family tree.

Then there's Michael. For a time, he was the decade's hottest entertainer. Sales of his "Thriller" album surpassed 30 million as youngsters all over the world emulated his trademarks of moonwalking and wearing one sequined glove.

But the other brothers didn't seem impressed, maintaining the Jacksons were all equal partners. A little luck, Jermaine once insisted, and he would have been in Michael's shoes.

The 1984 "Victory" tour was a public relations disaster. Michael didn't want to do it, and openly distanced himself from the tour's promoter, boxing impresario Don King. Organization was shoddy and some fans resented the \$30 ticket price, accusing the group of shutting out the people who put them on top.

Yet, the Jacksons are still together. "We're all united and standing strong, and still today we're one big family." That's what they sing on the title track of "2300 Jackson Street," written by the four brothers plus Gene Griffin and Aaron Hall. Siblings Michael, Janet, Marlon and Rebbie make guest appearances, as do 16 nieces and nephews.

"We were recording another song and Teddy (co-producer Riley) was sitting at the piano, playing his favorite Jackson songs," Tito said. "One of the songs was 'That's What You Get for Being Polite,' and we just started singing behind him, '2300 Jackson Street.'"

"All the kids were there. We had to bring balloons, and cookies and everything. There's some little bitty ones that were running all over the place, hitting the microphones."

The original 2300 Jackson Street is where Joe and Katherine Jackson raised nine children: Maureen (Rebbie), Sigmund Esco (Jackie), Toriano Adaryl (Tito), Jermaine, LaToya, Marlon, Michael, Randy and Janet. The boys slept in one bedroom, the girls in another.

"We sang from bunk beds," Jackie recalled. "Tito and Jermaine at the top, Michael and Marlon in the middle, and me and Randy at the bottom. We'd sing in harmony and just fall asleep."

Jackie, Tito, Jermaine, Marlon and, finally, Michael were soon singing together, pushed along by their strict father. Billed early on as Ripples and Waves Plus Michael, they were renamed soon after a neighborhood woman heard them practice and called out, "Listen to the Jackson Five."

In 1967, the Jackson 5 appeared on Amateur Night at the Apollo Theater in Harlem, the starting point for James Brown, Dinah Washington, Ella Fitzgerald, Jackie Wilson and many others. The Jacksons earned a standing ovation from one of

the world's toughest audiences.

"New York City was always exciting to come to," Tito said. "In Gary, there were no tall buildings and the people seemed quite different. In New York, there were taxis and theaters and excitement. In the Apollo, if they liked you, they let you know, and if they didn't, they let you know."

Discovered by singer Gladys Knight, the Jackson 5 headed for the modest house on West Grand Boulevard. They auditioned for Motown, the most successful black-owned record company in

history, the label of Marvin Gaye, Stevie Wonder, Smokey Robinson, the Supremes.

"We all come from the same classrooms," Tito said. "We were taught by the Temptations, Berry Gordy and (writing team) Holland-Dozier-Holland. I remember seeing Diana Ross and the Temptations on TV and thinking we were them. When our TV broke down, we'd just listen to the records."

Gordy, the company's founder, quickly flew the young group to the West Coast and went to work on songs with a staff of writers


called The Corporation.

From the piano sweep that kicked off "I Want You Back" to the stunning ballad "I'll Be There," the Jackson 5 were sensations, the hippest kids on the block. Decked out in flared slacks and flashy shirts, they ruled playgrounds and dance floors. Gordy called their music "Soul Bubblegum."

By 1971, they had four No. 1 singles, their own Saturday morning cartoon show and a cover on Life magazine.

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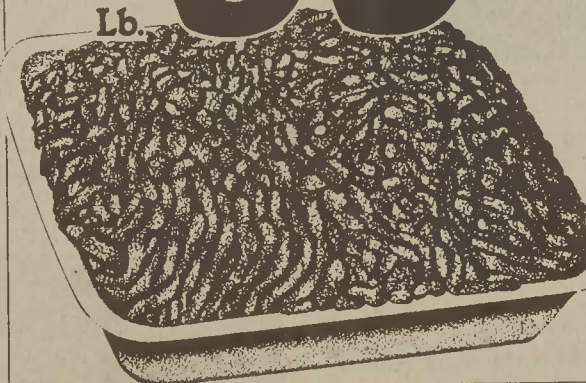
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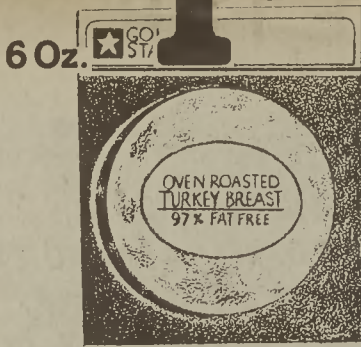
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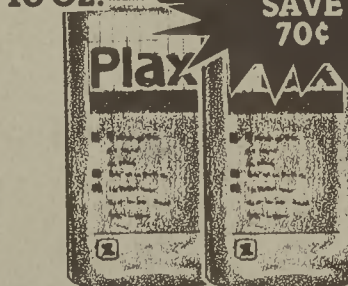


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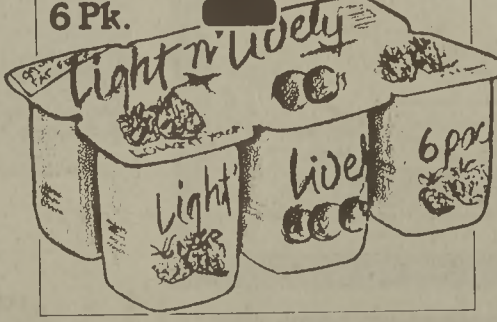


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