

# Can Jackson handle latest blow?

By Nekesa Mumbi Moody

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — In the 10 years since Michael Jackson first stood accused of child molestation, the superstar has managed to eke out two platinum albums, a handful of hits and some highly rated television specials.

Yet his fan base has shrunk, and he's been ridiculed and reviled by the general public for his bizarre appearance and behavior. His new single, "One More Chance," didn't even register on Billboard's Hot 100 chart.

Now his imminent arrest on another molestation allegation could be the final nail in the coffin of his career.

"I think Michael Jackson's career is not over — it's still ongoing — but it's already been severely diminished," said Andy Pemberton, editor in chief of Blender magazine. "He appears from the outside a very disturbed individual."

"He has a huge fan base, especially in New York, and I'm very very curious to see what the audience is going to say," said Jeff Z., program director of New York City's WKTU. But "if the allegations are proven, we would probably take off all of Michael Jackson's songs."

Sean Ross, vice president of music and programming

for Edison Media Research, says if Jackson is to recover, "he would have to make a great record, plus he would have to be at a label he was not at odds with, plus, it would probably take some restoring of his personal reputation."

On Tuesday, the same day Jackson's "Number Ones" greatest hits album came out, authorities in Santa Barbara County searched his Neverland ranch in connection with molestation allegations by a single underage accuser. On Wednesday, they announced an arrest warrant had been issued.

It comes a little over a decade after Jackson was forever tainted by allegations that he molested a 13-year-old boy. Jackson denied the accusations, and charges were never filed, but he reached a reported multimillion-dollar settlement with the child.

Yet in truth, his career had already begun to slide by then. His eccentric behavior in the late '80s and early '90s — from sleeping in a hyperbaric chamber to wanting to buy the Elephant Man's bones — had already caused fans from his "Thriller" heyday to abandon ship. Along with his continued plastic surgery and his skin tone change from dark to light (due to vitiligo, he says), he was garnering more attention for his freakish persona than his music.

In 1995, he made a comeback attempt with the double-disc set "HIStory." It sold

more than two million copies, yet garnered only one major hit, "You Are Not Alone," and was considered a commercial disappointment. In addition, his quickie marriage to Lisa Marie Presley was perceived as a public relations ploy, and his continued friendships with children turned many fans away. Another quickie marriage to his nurse, Deborah Rowe, who bore him two of his three children before they divorced, also befuddled many.

Since then, Jackson has made so many missteps it's hard to keep count. Just over the past 18 months, he's drawn criticism for dangling his baby over a balcony (he apologized), keeping his children masked when they travel outdoors, and his goofy behavior in a courtroom during a lawsuit.

Closeups of his face — seriously altered from plastic surgery — draw gasps. Then there was Jackson's racism accusation against then-Sony Music Chief Tommy Mottola.

And in an ABC special earlier this year, Jackson told interviewer Martin Bashir that he was still sleeping in the same bed with children, although he denied there was anything sexual about it.

Still, Jackson has had success in the wake of his troubles that other stars would envy. He's been inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame twice (once as a member of the Jackson Five), received several honorary

awards and garnered support from high-profile celebrity friends, many of whom feted him during his 30th anniversary concert special, which CBS aired to high ratings in 2001.

Only last month, he was given the Humanitarian Award at the 2003 Radio Awards.

His last album, 2001's "Invincible," sold approximately two million copies, which are considered great numbers for most artists, especially a performer whose career has spanned more than three decades. Jackson's albums, however, are much less profitable because he spends millions of dollars making them.

"One More Chance," the only new song on his "Number Ones" disc, was produced by R. Kelly, whose talent and career are flourishing despite child pornography charges stemming from an alleged encounter with an underage girl. But when "One More Chance" was released to radio last month, it barely got any play on pop stations and only moderate attention from urban radio.

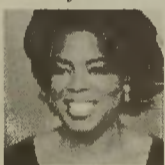
Even WKTU, which Jeff Z. described as a huge supporter of Jackson's music, wasn't playing it. "My audience really hasn't looked for the new single," he said. "We were waiting to see how well it was going to do and what the perception of him out there really was."

With Jackson's arrest and possible trial, that perception might be beyond salvation.

## TV talker Oprah accepts humanitarian award

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PHILADELPHIA — Syndicated talk show host Oprah Winfrey was awarded the



Oprah

Marian Anderson Award on Tuesday for her efforts helping

minority students and families.

Winfrey, 49, who received the award from Mayor John Street and musician Quincy Jones, a 2001 winner, said she hopes to "light up the

world."

Winfrey said she stands on the shoulders of people like Anderson, a black opera singer from Philadelphia who fought discrimination to become the first black singer to perform with the Metropolitan Opera in New York. The award, established in 1998, honors artists and performers for their humanitarian contributions.

Winfrey has transformed her celebrity into activism by starting numerous charities including Oprah's Angel Network, a charity that raises money from viewer and celebrity donations. The

money has been put toward scholarships and building homes for Habitat for Humanity, as well as the construction of 34 schools in 10 countries.

In 2005, she will open the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls, an education program in South Africa. She is also the spokesman for A Better Chance, an organization that offers scholarships to minority high school students to attend prep schools.

In addition to her philanthropy, Winfrey testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee in support of the

National Child Protection Act of 1991.

## Stroke hasn't slowed Guillaume

By Lynn Elber  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES — Robert Guillaume never considered hiding the lingering effects of his 1999 stroke — or hiding out — from an industry unforgiving of physical imperfection.

"I was not so vain as to try to pretend that nothing had happened. That never concerned me, how people might respond to something which is very common," he said.

Guillaume, who was co-starring in ABC's comedy "Sport Night" when he was stricken, has kept his career

on track despite muscle weakness that he said forces him to "gimp about."

He returned to "Sports Night" after recuperating and remained with the show until its premature end in May 2000. His character, executive producer at a sports news channel, was portrayed as coping with a stroke.

There have been guest appearances on TV shows including "8 Simple Rules for Dating My Teenage Daughter" and "B. Smith with Style" and a part in the upcoming film "Big Fish" with Ewan McGregor and Albert Finney.

For DIY, the Do It Yourself cable channel, Guillaume provides the introduction for the five-part series "Enable Your Home," showing Monday through Friday (Nov. 24-28) at 7 p.m. EST.

In the first episode, a kitchen is fitted with adjustable counters and appliances for a retired doctor in a wheelchair. Bathroom improvements for an arthritic homeowner and ways to create a more livable living room are featured in the second and third episodes. In the fourth half-hour, an apartment is adapted for the vision-impaired.

## Is Jay-Z really retiring? 'The Black Album' would take him out on top

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verse, I'm only biggin' up my brother/ Biggin' up my borough, I'm big enough to do it/ I'm that thorough, plus I know my own flow is foolish." And then he immediately quotes Biggie yet again.

To those who don't like his subject matter: "I dumb down for my audience and double my dollars/ They criticize me for it but they all yell 'Holla!'/ If skills sold truth be told I'd probably be/ lyrically Talib Kweli."

Whether or not you've heard of Kweli, Jay's point is proven.

He's still gangsta, of course, shooting and stabbing and quick to "leave your smarts on the side of your garment." But Jay's voice sounds deliberately weary at times, and at others simply amazed at himself, at how good he's become and how much money he's made. Like the pimp on "Threat" says, he's sincere. Maybe that's why it's easy to believe this is

his last album.

Then again, Jordan came back not once but twice, and Jay-Z has clearly stated his intention to become a music executive. "No I'm not through with it/ In fact I'm just previewing it/ This ain't the show I'm just EQ-ing it," he says. As "The Black Album" comes to an end with Jay-Z reminiscing over a bluesy track, you don't know whether to tip your hat or start clapping for an encore.

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