

The Journal of Michael Jackson Academic Studies

VOLUME 1: ISSUE 1

Edited by Elizabeth Amisu & Karin Merx | July - September | 2014



The Journal of
Michael Jackson
Academic Studies

Volume 1: Issue 1
July – September 2014

ISSN: 2452-0497

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Editorial

When people talk about Michael Jackson, they tend to draw from the rumours that surrounded his life. But Michael Jackson was an artist with a major cultural impact. Up until now, we see artists copying his music style, dance style, and even the music video would not have been developed into what it is now, if it weren't for Jackson, who pioneered this medium in the early eighties with his short film, *Thriller*.

Every period of time gets its own icon and Jackson was one that ruled for four decades. However, Jackson never received the appropriate credit for his work. In his life as an artist, he was primarily dismissed due to false allegations, his personal breaking of rigid societal codes, and simply because he was an astronomically successful black artist.

After Jackson's untimely death, his music was re-appreciated and many formerly unpublished songs were released. The first major release of these posthumous works were from the controversial album, *Michael*, in 2010. This album was contentious mostly because several of the tracks had disputed vocal tracks. Further new tracks with new arrangements would be found on *Immortal* and *Bad 25*.

In May of 2014, the posthumous album, *Xscape*, was released, which also caused heated debate, but on the whole it was received more positively than the first. Although the master himself did not sign off this release, with *Xscape* he posthumously claimed his tenth number one album in the United Kingdom.

This academic journal started after its editors, myself and Elizabeth Amisu, had a conversation about Jackson and how necessary it was to study his work to gain more insight into his creativity. We decided to develop an academic journal on Jackson, which would be the first one of its kind. In this first issue we start with one of the first academics that actually started serious research into the work of Jackson, the academic, Joseph Vogel.

The first issue of *The Michael Jackson Academic Studies Journal* also features co-founder and co-editor academic, Elizabeth Amisu's book review on Vogel's very insightful book *Earth Song*. In 'The Isle is Full of Noises', Amisu explores the representation of Jackson's rather complex fictional representation. To commemorate Jackson's birthday on August 29, she wrote 'Heard it on the Grapevine' which is also included.

In September, Bloomsbury published the 100th edition of the '33 1/3' book series, written by musicologist, Susan Fast and dedicated to Michael Jackson's 1991 'coming-of-age album', *Dangerous*. We have also included my academic review of this book. Lastly, in 'Throwing Stones to Hide Your Hands', Amisu explores the conflicting personas of Jackson.

Karin Merx

Articles

Earth Song: Inside Michael Jackson's Magnum Opus

by Joseph Vogel (Blake Vision, 2011) Book Review

By Elizabeth Amisu

Man in the Music: The Creative Life and Work of Michael Jackson (Sterling, 2011) was a huge and well-researched text, which will doubtless become a staple in schools, universities and colleges the world over when the level of Jackson's genius is finally accepted on the international academic stage and given the respect and study it deserves.

<http://michaeljacksonstudies.org/article/earth-song-inside-michael-jacksons-magnum-opus-by-joseph-vogel-blake-vision-2011/>

'The Isle is Full of Noises': Revisiting the Peter Pan of Pop

By Elizabeth Amisu

Michael Jackson has oft been given the epithet, Peter Pan of Pop, however, this article presents his association with fictional characters as far more complex. It also discusses Jackson's parallels with Shakespeare's Ariel and the authors, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Oscar Wilde.

<http://michaeljacksonstudies.org/article/elizabeth-amisu-the-isle-is-full-of-noises-revisiting-the-peter-pan-of-pop/>

‘Heard It On The Grapevine’: Are We Losing Michael Jackson All Over Again?
By Elizabeth Amisu

From the German fortress of Ehbreitstein to the ancient city of Trier and beyond there is a meandering valley called the Mosel which hosts some of the most beautiful vineyards in the world. Reisling grapevines are draped over doors and along winding streets. Brothers Grimm fairytale houses are adorned with ornate calligraphy. They remind me of Neverland Valley Ranch. Why? Well, around Michael Jackson’s birthday it becomes nearly impossible to write around him. He is the fallen hero as well as the singing seraphim.

<http://michaeljacksonstudies.org/article/heard-it-on-the-grapevine/>

Dangerous by Susan Fast (Bloomsbury, 2014) Book Review
By Karin Merx

Dangerous is a must read for every Michael Jackson fan, non-fan, critic or music lover. Dr. Susan Fast meticulously researched Michael Jackson’s 1991 album in a way that has never been done before and in doing so she puts Jackson back where he belongs; in the spotlight as the highly talented black musician and artist he was... and he was dangerous too!

<http://michaeljacksonstudies.org/article/dangerous-by-dr-susan-fast/>

‘Throwing Stones to Hide Your Hands’: The Mortal Persona of Michael Jackson

By Elizabeth Amisu

Drawing on the emerging scholarly study of ‘Jacksonism’, a movement typified by the study of the multimodal art, political impact and cultural significance of Michael Jackson, this article deconstructs the mythological personas of the artist by exploring both his cultural deification and many subsequent attempts to degrade his deified status.

<http://michaeljacksonstudies.org/article/throwing-stones-to-hide-your-hands-the-mortal-persona-of-michael-jackson/>

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Edit: Elizabeth Amisu and Karin Merx

Cover and Logo design: Karin Merx

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