

ROCK EXPRESS

人形を観ることで魅らせてほしい。

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A PLUMMETING
ODYSSEY IN
JAPAN

PINK FLOYD JUST HANGAR-ING AROUND
GOODBYE WHAM! HELLO **GEORGE MICHAEL**
R.E.M. SIGN OF THE TIMES

THE CARS
KNOCKING ON THE DOOR



JACKSON



I HAVE NO MOUTH AND I MUST

SCREAM



IN



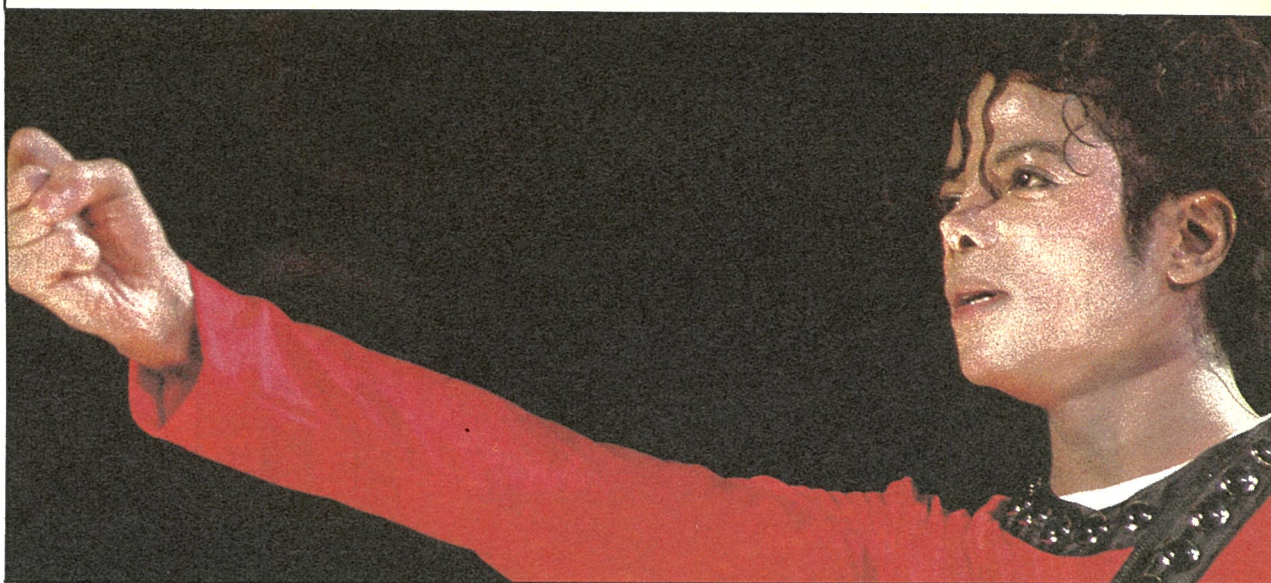
JAPAN



ドキュメンタリーが一番いいねえ

AM

(WITH APOLOGIES TO HARLAN ELLISON)



A ravenous, rapacious media/public relations beast was awakened by the release of MICHAEL JACKSON'S latest LP. A shell-shocked BRAD KRUGER staggers out of Japan to tell the real story
SOUVENIR SNAPS: GEORGE BODNAR

SOMEWHERE OVER THE PACIFIC OCEAN:

NOTHING like a close brush with death to chase depression from the mind, and set your priorities straight. They say the first hundred yards are crucial. After that, you're homefree. As the pilot hit the throttle, and the jet screamed against the brutal kamikaze winds of Typhoon #13, I gripped the armrests, and lifted the 747 by sheer force of will.

It wasn't until we had reached an altitude of 32,000 feet and were barrelling through the midnight air at 550 m.p.h. that normal breathing returned. Noticing my white knuckles, a wrinkled old man sitting next to me said, "You all right? You look like death."

"There is nothing more exhilarating," I said, "than confronting your own fears."

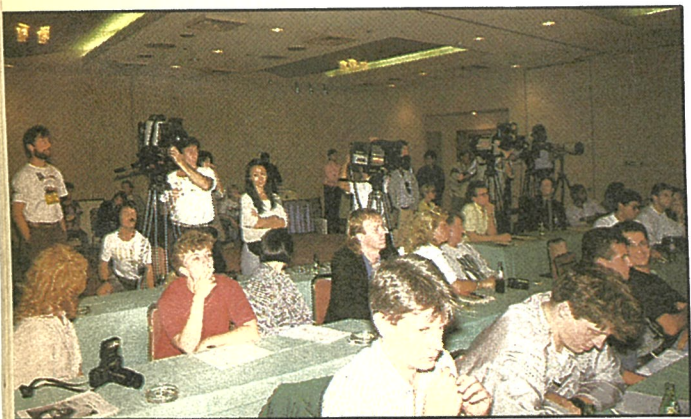
"Hey, listen," he said, gently, "would you mind letting go of my leg?"

For the past week, I had wandered the streets of Japan aimlessly — a victim of culture shock, prejudice, jet lag and general neurotic disarray — trying to dig up something substantial to write. A plummeting odyssey into the center of Michael Jackson's Japan Tour, as it were. Now with the Land of the Rising Sun fading to a memory, I could finally relax.

"I don't believe it," the old man said, "I just saw a preacher step into the cockpit."
Another illusion shattered.

JACKSON IN JAPAN

FOR 15 MINUTES, QUINCY RODE DOWN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD, WHILE REPORTERS DROOLED FOR EVEN THE TINIEST MORSEL OF NEWS. IN THE END, AFTER THE APPLAUSE HAD SIMMERED DOWN, REPORTERS CLAMORED OVER EACH OTHER, NOT FOR INTERVIEWS, BUT FOR AUTOGRAPHS



"THIS IS an outrage! I can get in to see the President of the United States, but I can't get in to see Michael Jackson!"

A fat Brit grumbled this as he read the agreement he would have to sign in order to obtain press credentials. Nobody cared. Obviously a neophyte, his pleas fell on the ears of callused souls. The other reporters shoved him aside in their hurry to grab a copy for themselves.

Located on the 19th floor of the prestigious Akasaka Prince Hotel, the Press Room offered a panoramic view of Tokyo so grand even the most ardent suicide leaper would pause to think twice. That's about all it offered. The Press Room served as a point to gather journalists and tell them that they would be told nothing throughout the tour. A Depressing Room, if you will...

Intense paranoia has run rampant whenever the press and Epic have met lately. Epic has been trying hard to resurrect Michael Jackson's career, to recreate the illusion, the fantasy, the magic... and that's not easy when there's always someone poking around, trying to explain the entire process.

The paranoia began mounting months ago with Epic fearing a severe media backlash over the eccentricities of the reclusive Jackson, lingering greed rumors from the *Victory* tour, and the general media blackout around Jackson for the past four years. Media people were cautioned not to comment publicly on *Bad* before hearing select tracks of the album. Additionally, advance copies would be forwarded only after a secrecy and silence agreement was signed. Pretty heavy stuff for a record — even a record following up the 38.5 million selling *Thriller*. Secrecy agreements, sneak previews for record industry people only — it seemed pretty important. And the media played along. The excrement hit the fan when the label shipped the record out three days before the official release date.

In the process, Epic demonstrated what seems to be a successful new approach to dealing with the press. Play hard to get. Give them nothing. Treat 'em like mud, they'll stick like mud. The result: an instinctive reaction that there must be something important happening here.

About 20 journalists lined up at the Press Room's side office, hoping to get press credentials. At the more personal level, the press gets something a little different. Strategic ambiguity. The hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil sort of thing. Sitting beside a table covered with VIP passes, Media Relations man Glenn Brunman, gave spontaneous interviews. "Remember," he said, on conclusion, "everything's off the record." And for a moment, you pause and think, maybe there was something important there, and vow to go over your notes. It takes a while to confirm that nothing Brunman said was worth quoting.

For the past four years, Jackson has not given an interview for print. At this point, he probably couldn't, even if he wanted to. Each answer would only raise more questions. "Quincy's lived with Michael in the studio for the past three albums. If you can't talk to Michael, Quincy's about as close as you can get."

Predictably, some reporters were jubilant that a press conference was being held. Otherwise it would be back to the old stuff again — something everyone was afraid of. The same old quotes reworked for another year. Or worse, they could get serious, and



dress up as maids and indulge in room-service eavesdropping, or grovel through garbage dumpsters for a revealing shred of notepaper cast out from the celebrity's room. All part of the job, of the adventure, as it were. Not that any of them would mind this. Far from it, in fact they would draw straws for the right to go first.

On this note, it should come as no surprise that the Quincy Jones press conference was a severe disappointment, amounting to little more than 15 minutes of Jones rehashing "Michael's wonderful and misunderstood" stories. A soggy bone for a tired and hungry watchdog press to gum into the night.

Quincy Jones sits at a conference table, facing eight rows of seated reporters. For the first two minutes, a creeping horde of photographers is given free rein. Amidst the sounds of motordrive cameras and squeals of "Quincy!" the pack grows to the point that, for a while, Quincy fades from view.

The question of the day, and the one drawing the best response, asked if Quincy didn't think Michael's lifestyle was a little unreal.

"Yes," Quincy responded, "he's been in the business since he was five years old. It's very difficult to be that successful and, I guess, that famous that young. But I think that considering what he's all about in music and in business, I think Michael's overwhelmingly sane and normal. I've seen a few that have had just one record and go absolutely nuts, and they can't even get on to their next record. There's a lot of things to deal with because the music business is a little unreal anyway. Nobody deserves as much attention as the people get, or as much money or adulation. So you have to have a very strong center, I think, to hold onto your

**BALANCED
AND
NORMAL? IS
THAT WHAT
THAT IS?**

balance and equilibrium. I think he has that. He astounds me that he's so balanced and normal around the people he works with."

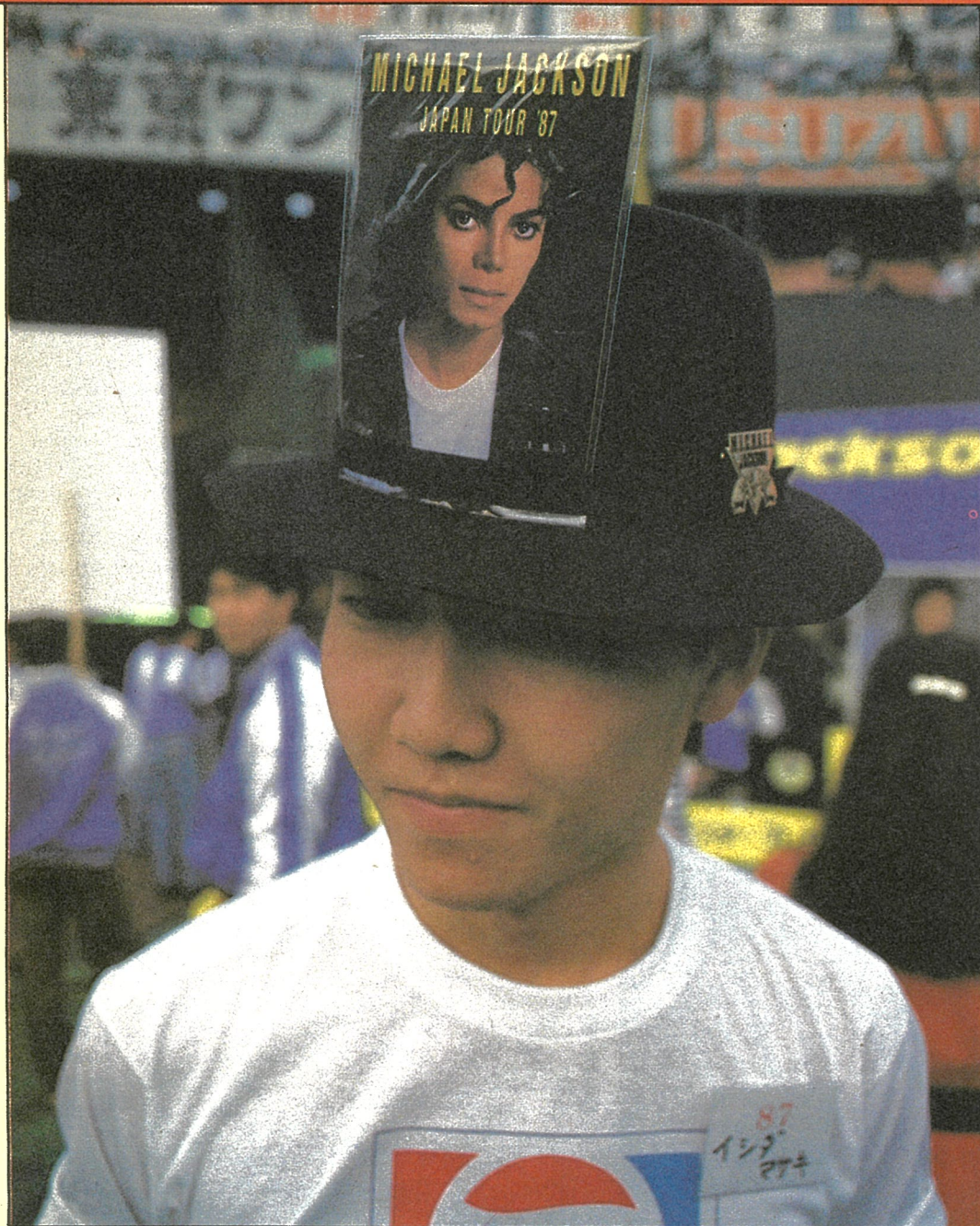
Balanced and normal? Is that what that is? Facelifts up the gazoo, a mini-Disneyland for a home, the life of a recluse, disguises in public, a hyperbaric

chamber, in-depth conversations with mannequins, bidding over a million bucks for the remains of the elephant man, and an affinity for small children and animals. Balanced and normal.

Of course, weirdness is relative. But relative to what? It all depends on your scale of judgement. Freud would have given him a clean slate. Commenting on sexual perversions, Sigmund Freud wrote, "Certain of them are so far removed from the normal in their context that we cannot avoid pronouncing them as pathological. This is especially so where the sexual instincts goes to astonishing lengths in successfully overriding the resistances of shame, disgust, horror or pain. But even in such cases, we should not be too ready to assume that people who act in this way will necessarily turn out to be insane or subject to grave abnormalities of other kinds."

Sort of locks up the Adam's apple for a second or two. Realistically, however, the strangest thing about Jackson is that he isn't all that strange. It's all relative. Keith Richards had blood transfusions to get

JACKSON IN JAPAN



across international borders; the band leader of Joy Division slashed his throat and tried to pull his face off from below. It was said he was into drugs. Hell, I had a roommate who would crawl around outside the apartment on his knees for two hours each night, frantically searching the cracks for cockroaches, just so he could give them a jolt with the old microwave. And that was before he got weird. Jackson bids on the bones? This guy would dig them up.

Jackson has spent most of his life seeing the world through the bulletproof windshield of a limousine, with flocks of people throwing themselves on the hood just to get a look at him. These are the same people who slammed doors in his face or sicked their pit bulls after him, when he canvassed their homes, *Watchtower* in hand. You can start to get a feel for why he would say something characterized as outlandish like, "I'm just not like other people anymore. I've spent all of my life on stage and, now, that's the only place I can really live. In a crowd, I'm afraid. On stage, I feel safe. If I could sleep there, that's what I'd do."

Yet, if you zoom in for a closer look, the weirdest thing about Jackson is that he is indeed so normal. Even this weirdness thing is a fiasco, a grand facade, which is what it's all about.

"I love to create magic," Jackson has said. "To put something together that's so unusual, so unexpected that it blows people's heads off. Something ahead of the times. Five steps ahead of what people are thinking. So people say, 'Whoa! I wasn't expecting that.'"

Shock value. So much so that only this year did the Tokyo Tower's Wax Museum put a lifesized clone of Jackson in its lineup. Why the wait? "Well," Mr. Fujita, president of the International Leisure Corp. said, "the most difficult thing about making the Michael doll was keeping up with his changes. You see, he has been through a series of cosmetic surgeries and it's hard to keep up with his latest look."

He is a product of the times, of the era. It is no coincidence that as Jackson sold so many copies, Professional Wrestling reached its peak in popularity. This says some very troubling things about our society. But I don't have time for truth. I'm having too much fun without it.

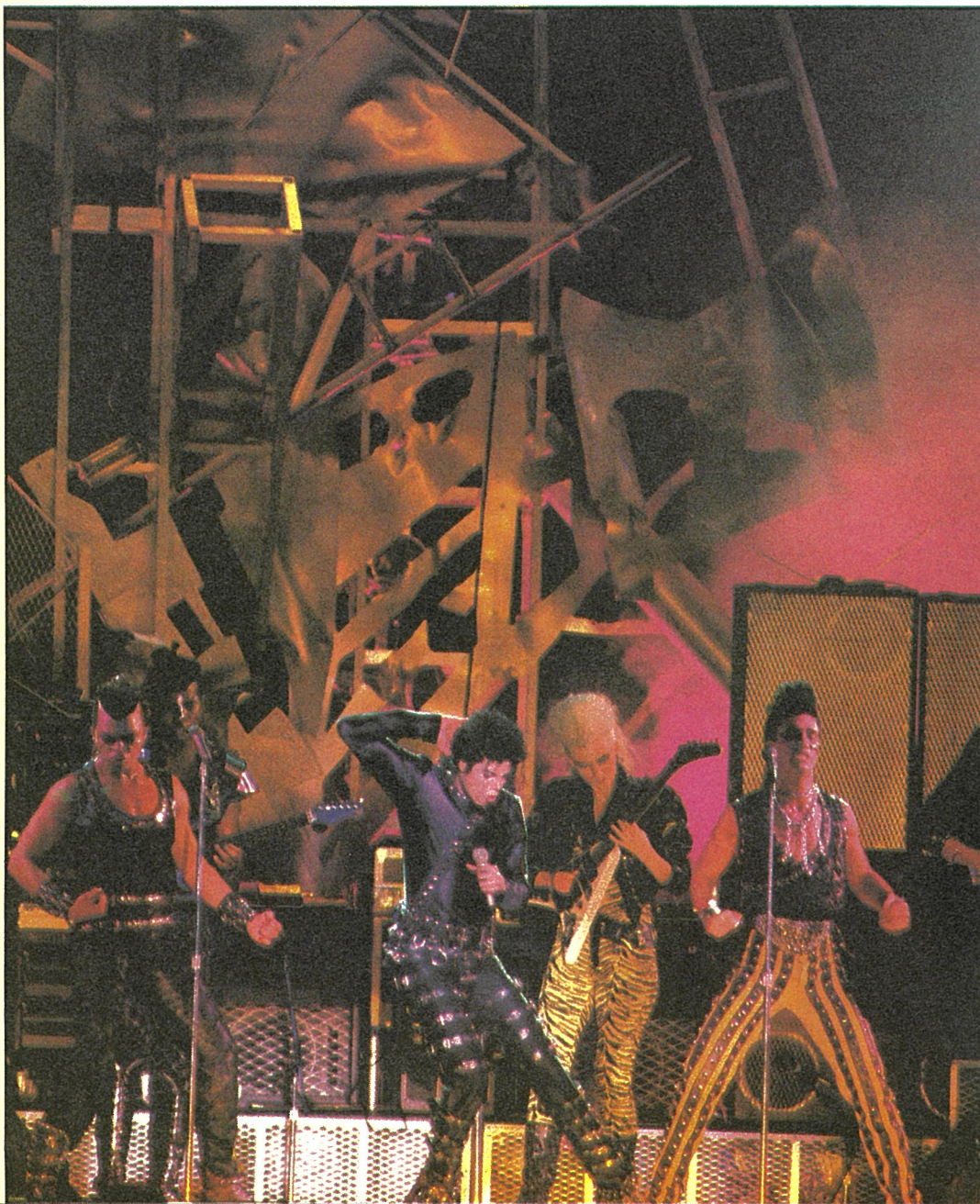
役者になって60余年、「新しい芝居」に燃や

JACKSON'S first live concert performance in four years, and I can't remember a thing about it. Not that I wasn't paying attention, mind you. But after the events that took place, I feel lucky to have escaped with my sanity. Memories place a close second.

The press section was situated on the edge of foul ball territory in Korakuen Stadium. Directly behind an 80-foot lighting and film production tower, I could barely make out one of the 24x18-foot video screens through the diamond-shaped foul ball netting. Hemming in the tower and also blocking my view, was the VIP section, stuffed to the brim with record industry executives, their friends and families. A barren island of frantic white Americans surrounded by a calm ocean of Japanese, they partied loudly. It looked like the only decent seat in the house. I would settle for nothing less.

Running a quarter mile security gauntlet





stretching through unknown catacombs and hallways, however, could hardly be considered child's play. Far too much for one man on his own. Talking quickly, I convinced another reporter to make the attempt with me.

The most obvious reason was Strength In Numbers. Too obvious, frankly. Sure, I wanted him along in case something went wrong, but only so I could throw him to the authorities. I'm not proficient in Japanese, but I know enough to get myself out of messy situations. "Hello" and "This man is a Terrorist" generally suffice.

"All right," I said, huddling outside the VIP gate, "here's the plan. Remember, this is Jackson territory. Who knows what they've stored down below. Our only hope is to act like junkies. Terrifies them! They give drug fiends lots of room. Repeat after me, 'Give me drugs, give me drugs.' Talk loudly, wave your arms, bug your eyes out, fidget, shiver, act desperate." He looked pathetic, as clean as an Ivy Leaguer.

Desperate times call for desperate actions. Without a thought, I drove a shot hard into his solar plexus.

Immediate improvement.

Bent over in the fetal position, struggling to control the gag reflex, my sidekick looked like death with radiant red eyes. The color had drained from his face. Veins swelled on his neck. He looked up, and groaned, "Wha'd'r'ya, nuts or something?"

"No time for apologies. You look mah-va-lous," I said. "Even better than I expected. One other thing, try not to over-act. We'll get enough of that in the VIP box."

Approaching the first check point, my sidekick leaned over and whispered, "What if this doesn't work?"

"Too dismal to think about." I handed him a tourist flyer I'd been carrying around. "The warriors," it read, "who were known by the generic term of samurai, or 'servitors', placed great emphasis on the military virtues of bravery, honor, self-discipline, and the stoical acceptance of death. Suicide by gruesome and extremely painful means of cutting one's own abdomen became a sort of ritual used to demonstrate willpower and honor. Vulgarly called hari-kari, or 'belly slitting.'" My sidekick gulped. "They're very big on tradition here. With any luck, these vipers would do the job for you, and then place the sword in your hand. Who knows. You could end up with a hero's burial."

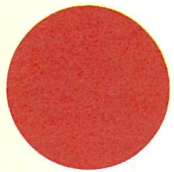
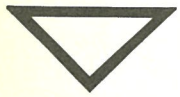
From that point, everything faded into that strange haze that censors all third parties from risking their lives vicariously. I remember my sidekick yelling "Banzai!" charging down the stairs past some guards, and out the end of a long, lime-green hallway. The next thing I knew, we were on the infield, squinting in the daylight, and cutting a path toward the VIP section.

"What if that guard comes after us?" my sidekick asked, looking over his shoulder.

"It'll never happen," I replied, "We all look the same to them."

A frightening thought after taking a quick glance over the entire area. Individually, it was a sordid lot:

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TERRIFIES THEM.
THEY GIVE
DRUG FIENDS
LOTS OF ROOM'**



THESE FAT, SICKLY CREATURES, BARELY ABLE TO BALANCE ON THEIR UNDER-NOURISHED LEGS, ACTUALLY BEGAN TO MOVE TO THE MUSIC. I THOUGHT OF KURTZ IN 'HEART OF DARKNESS' WHISPERING, "EXTERMINATE ALL THE BRUTES!"

a menagerie of gangsters, yuppies, Ivy Leaguers, about 80 Archie and Edith Bunkers, and a couple of models. Collectively, it seethed like a blinding migraine. Terrible, just terrible. We cut a path toward the models.

Suddenly, the world's smallest bouncer, a black midget, jumped in front of us. He was wearing a Jackson Tour T-shirt, and had those electric, Hitler-youth eyes I've seen in the empty skulls of hundreds of bouncers. He stood in our way, spread-eagled, blocking further progress.

My sidekick reared back, preparing to kick him in the groin. Violent thoughts like these creep up on you naturally in this environment. Osmosis.

I jumped in front. "We're with the press. Where are our seats?"

"No autographs!" he barked, ignoring anything I said, "No autographs!"

Incredible. The fallacy of their bloated self-importance runs to even this, the lowest depths of their echelon. Genuinely amazed, I looked over the VIP section. "Who," I asked, "would I want an autograph from?"

Stunned, he replied, "Uh, I don't know."

In the blink of an eye, heads turned toward the stage. Jackson's manager, Frank Dileo was ambling toward the VIP section, which meant the show was about to begin. Dileo looks like a small Italian sumo wrestler with a pony tail, and carries the enlightened persona of someone who throws rabbit punches to the groin at a whim. When he passes by, it is an instinctive reaction to bend, cross your legs and flinch, the whole time pretending you haven't noticed him. With the midget bouncer mesmerized, I saw our chance. Again, we vanished among the VIP's, and took our seats for the show.

For a while, things looked pretty good for Jackson. The audience was hooked, but that was a given. His downfall was the VIP section. A few moments after his opening with huge *Close Encounters Of The Third Kind* lights, to the beat of *Startin' Something*, a terrible thing happened.

The people in the VIP box started to move to the music. These fat, sickly creatures, barely able to



balance on their undernourished legs, actually began to move to the music. I thought immediately of Kurtz in *Heart Of Darkness* whispering, "The horror, the horror. Exterminate all the brutes!" As they gained momentum, things only got worse. It was like an electrified mausoleum. Outcasts of *Night Of The Living Dead* having fits on an electrified floor. There was simply no way Jackson could compete. I couldn't take my eyes off the spectacle.

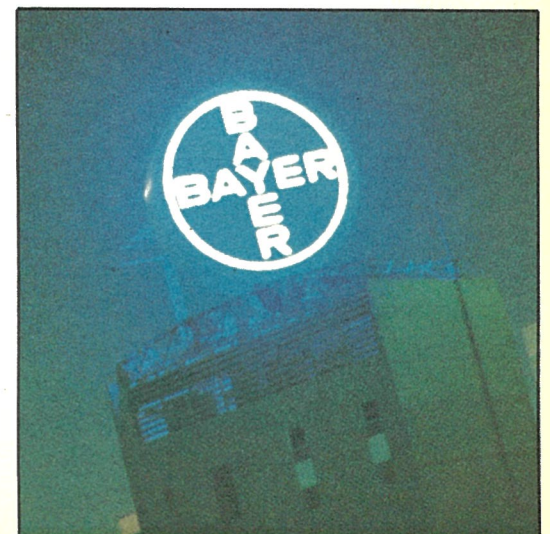
The problem, of course, is that while mesmerized by this compelling display, the only thing my notes show about Jackson are jumbled fragments: world's fastest moondancer; resurrection of the glove; fiberoptic guitarist looks like a firefly in heat; *Thriller* is in, the Jehovahs are out. The rest of the notes — pages and pages — analyze the reaction of 40,000 surrounding Japanese to the VIP section. Interesting of course, but try explaining that to your editor.

「王将」の坂田三吉は、やっぱり辰巳——と、

ONE HUNDRED and Fifty Bucks a night is what it costs to rent a Tokyo hotel room the size of a jail cell, and I sat in mine, staring at the 40-foot-high, blue neon Bayer Aspirin on a rooftop across the alley, regretting ever making the trip — alone in a city of 12 million, and without a story. But there is always a way to get a story.

Jason Claymore is one of the last living Americans who can say "Death Before Dishonor" without doubling over in laughter. A freelance Private Investigator, Claymore has eight years of Karate, three years of Marine training, and two semi-automatic M-16's tucked away in the hope chest at the foot of his cot. He has spent half of his life living vicariously through action movies on television or video. Only one thing makes Claymore better than the rest: Claymore is an adrenalin junkie. A quality that cannot be taught. Claymore lives for life-threatening situations. If anyone could break Jackson's tightly woven net of security, and get me an interview, it was Claymore.

(continued on p. 45)



MICHAEL JACKSON

(continued from p. 26)

Converting his "War Room" into our research headquarters was Claymore's idea. Dismally gray, and reeking of mildew, Claymore converted it from "a pantry to an exact replica of my Viet Nam bunker. Ever seen anything like it? Didn't think so." Hours at a time, Claymore would sit in closed conference, hunched over a drafting table cluttered with maps, blueprints, and textbooks on guerrilla warfare, immersing himself in the project. "The success of any trap," he would quote, "lies in its fundamental simplicity. The reverse trap, by the very nature of its single complication must be swift and simpler still — Robert Ludlum." Every so often, he'd look up and glare into the eyes of the Jackson *Bad* poster glued to the wall. Breaking into a cold sweat, he would hiss, "There's only one thing I haven't figured out," (again looking at the *Bad* poster), "why the hell do you even want to interview this creep? He doesn't even look like Michael Jackson."

Amazingly, Claymore never did make it to Tokyo. The day we were scheduled to leave, I found him in the War Room, broken-down and sobbing. Something about his wife saying No, and "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned." I left him, alone in the dark, curled in the fetal position beside a ton of surveillance, assault, and climbing equipment tagged for Tokyo. "You're on your own now!" he yelled after me.

Which was true, and being on your own means you can play dirty, 'cause no one's gonna know the difference.

There's a high risk game played by only the slyest, most aggressive journalists, that borders on the edge of deceit and poor ethics. Call it leverage, if you want. They don't teach it in journalism school. The trick to winning is to get screwed over on assignment — wilfully or erroneously — and then demand compensation. If successful, a reporter collects the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. If not, he ends up with nothing — even less than the reporters who simply go with the flow.

Hardly a spectator sport, the intricacies of the game are utterly fascinating to players of the game. All of which are a little too drawn out for explanation here, and I mentioned it only as a prelude to my phone call to Brunman demanding the impossible: in return for the terrible seats I received behind the production stage, I wanted an interview with Jackson.

"MR. JACKSON will see you now," a voice said, which was strange because he was sitting directly in front

of me. Backed by a panoramic view of Tokyo during the day, he was fidgety, walking, sitting, standing, sitting, unable to relax. You could see in his eyes that he didn't trust me. But that's hardly worth mentioning. After less than a week in an environment swarming with the music industry's top public relations parasites, my eyes must have looked like starry orbs from hell. The music industry has never been a place to let down your guard.

I shook Jackson's hand. As cold and clammy as a dead salmon. Something strange was developing. We both knew it. Jackson reached for a glass of water, but missed with his first swipe. Suddenly, we both figured it out, and chuckled a bit before the horror sank in. Before reality came up for another breath. At the same time, we looked down and see that his hand is still in mine, severed — like one of those cheap gag hands — only this time it's for real. Blood was oozing all over my pants. "Don't worry," Michael said, giggling, "It's magic. An illusion." With the swipe of an arm, half his face vanished. "Geez," he said, starting to sound concerned, "I don't know what to say. I guess I'm a little embarrassed." Teeth fall out, bouncing like dice on an arborite table. An eye drops, splatting against the floor.

The door explodes open, with manager Frank Dileo landing at Michael's feet. Turning to goop, Michael says something about a diet book in the works. But he's melting. "Michael," Dileo cries, "What have you done?" Michael shrugs his shoulders and crushes his head. Dressed in white coveralls, Dileo sets wiping up the mess with a squeegee. Then, he notices me. "Uh, we're experiencing a little technical difficulty. Please do not adjust your sets, adjust your sets, adjust your —" and his head cracks off at the neck.

"AAAUUURRRGGGHHH!!!" I awoke in a cold sweat, screaming, waving my arms, and running naked through the halls of the Shiba Park Hotel...and would have streaked right out the ninth floor window, if I hadn't collided with that Kirin beer machine. Panting, I grabbed my wrist and felt for my pulse. Strange voodoo rites? Or just a simple nightmare? No, nothing is as simple as it seems in this camp. It just gets worse at every turn.

"You got no friends in this world but your mother," a record executive once told me. At first, you just try to laugh these things off. But then, they get a hold of you. In the end, you discover God and pray that you've got it under control with his help. And this is after less than a week. Jackson's been immersed in this environment since the age of five.

Twenty-four years surrounded by these vultures.

GRIM FATALISM and hellish images such as these crept back into the system as the plane wrenched itself free from the clutches of Typhoon #13, and tore a hole through the midnight sky. Fourteen hours in the air is a little too long for any theory to hold up under close scrutiny, especially the theory of aerodynamics, which has been spitting airplanes out of the sky with such frequency lately even the wire services are yawning. Earlier in the day, Tour Photographer Sam Emerson handed me some rare Jackson photographs. "If the plane goes down," he joked, "eat these before it crashes."

I looked out the window, trying to catch one last glimpse of the Land of the Rising Sun, but could see nothing, nothing but a brutal gray haze wreaking havoc on anything not bolted into concrete. For a moment, I felt a slight pang of guilt, like that of a soldier leaving the battlefield while the war is still being waged. It didn't last long. J.P. Donleavy said that "Writing is turning one's worst moments into money." That being the case, I should be able to make a bundle on this one. □

PINK FLOYD

(continued from p. 36)

from *Dark Side Of The Moon*, *Welcome To The Machine*, *Shine On You Crazy Diamond* and the title track from *Wish You Were Here* as well as *Another Brick In The Wall*, *Comfortably Numb* and *Run Like Hell* from *The Wall*.

It's as though Pink Floyd had never been away. The giant pig still floats menacingly above the crowd's head, the Spitfire bomber still explodes on cue into the video screen, the lasers dazzle, the rear-screen project glows amongst a plethora of lights, videos and special effects. There're even two aerial lighting rigs which fly around independently like escaped UFO's.

What counts most though is the music — and it's almost a relief to know Pink Floyd can still pull it off. Musically, the band was flawless — utilizing the latest technology to augment their own instrumental prowess. It was worth the price of admission alone to listen to Gilmour's acoustic intro to *Wish You Were Here* — the effect sending collective shivers up and down the audience's spine.

It has to be noted that Gilmour and co-vocalist Carin did struggle on some of the vocals — Waters isn't entirely replaceable — especially on the show-closer *Shine On You Crazy Diamond*. Still, considering the heavy weight borne on Gilmour's shoulders, his performance and those of his colleagues were impeccable. *On The Turning Away* could easily become a Floyd classic.

Backstage, Wright reflects the thoughts of everyone when he says he's never felt better about being in Pink Floyd. "There's such a great spirit here, everyone's enjoying working with each other. I hope we do another album together — I'd love to contribute to the next one."

Mason was equally enthusiastic. "Just the idea of getting behind the drumkit again and playing with your own band makes it all worthwhile. With the modern technology available to us, I knew we could do a better job and the idea of breaking new ground makes the challenges worth it."

David Gilmour still seems to be convincing himself that touring as three-quarters of Pink Floyd is better than not touring at all. "I know there's probably a lot of confused people out there — people who saw both Roger's and our show and wish we could somehow get back together again. But I know in my own mind it wouldn't work. It would be absolute torture, absolute misery — our attitudes are too fundamentally different."

And with that — another chapter unfolds! □

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