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News - Local / Metro  
 Friday, Jun. 26, 2009

# Taylor: Jackson is our Elvis

By OTIS R. TAYLOR JR. - otaylor@thestate.com

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Michael is our Elvis.

Michael Jackson, a global pop star who was tainted in recent years by sordid details of his personal life — and lawsuits — died Thursday. He was 50.

The confluence of Jackson and Elvis can't be ignored. Both the King of Pop and The King, respectively, died suddenly.



- Photo illustration /The State

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**Otis Taylor Jr.**  
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Jackson once was married to Elvis' daughter, Lisa Marie.

Both Jackson and Elvis ended their lives as tragic figures, tattered remnants of their mystical, bigger-than-life images.

Both deaths were beyond shock, belief.

And their deaths ended eras.

"(Elvis) was the single solo performer of the '50s and '60s," said Gaylord Fields, editor of Spinner.com, AOL's music Web site. "You can say the same thing of Michael Jackson of the '70s and '80s.

"When you think of an era, you think of Michael Jackson."

Jackson's "Thriller," has sold more than 50 million copies worldwide. His death is the end of big albums, the last link in the chain of big singles on 45s, tapes and CDs.

"It's huge. It's like Elvis.," said Marc Eliot, the writer who co-authored James Brown's 2005 autobiography. "This is generation-ending."

In "I Feel Good: A Memoir of a Life of Soul," Brown said Jackson "danced for Berry Gordy of Motown the way he learned watching me."

"Michael was like a boy to him, a child," Eliot said. "Whenever he saw him, he wanted to take care of him."

Brown died on Christmas Day in 2006, and Jackson was at the funeral in the dilapidated James Brown Arena, thousands of seats removed from the prestigious stages the men once owned.

Jackson did owe some of his moves — slick

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and graceful feet, sly hip gestures and grunt-like ad-libs — to Brown.

"In R&B, James Brown and Michael Jackson are the two best to ever to do it," said Charlamagne Tha God, a national radio personality. "You know Michael was a fruit off the James Brown tree."

This is bigger than Brown.

Today Charlamagne, a South Carolina native and morning host of The Beat 100.3, an urban Philadelphia station, said he'll play Jackson songs — and the songs of artists who sampled Jackson — during his show. He won't be mourning; this will be a teaching opportunity.

Jackson represents an era in which talent included dancing and singing, in which pop performers were a part of the songwriting process. Just check the liner notes of his albums.

"I'm going to take this time to teach the babies who Michael Jackson really was," Charlamagne said. "To them, he was a crazy white lady."

Jackson's lightening skin, molestation allegations and subsequent trial dimmed his stardom and appeal.

"Most people think of him as a freak, and he was obviously eccentric," said Elayne Rapping, an American studies professor at the State University of New York at Buffalo. "But his iconic place in popular culture history is indisputable."

Rapping, who teaches a class on popular music, recalled the emergence of MTV, the cable channel that began as a video network. Jackson was one of the first black performers on the channel.

"I remember (Jackson) being one of the few artists who really made MTV," Rapping said. "There were few really exceptional videos when MTV started.

"And one was 'Billie Jean.'"

Several other videos — "Thriller," "Beat It," "Black or White" — are timeless.

B Paiz, the program director and afternoon host for local station The Beat 100.1, is in Los Angeles for Sunday's BET Awards. He said the streets around UCLA Medical Center had been blocked off.

"People are everywhere," he said. "People are not letting it set in."

Jackson's fans have remained loyal.

I am one.

The sole reason why I was voted most talented in Irmo High School's class of 1995 was because of my Jackson-esque moves, the moonwalk and the "Smooth Criminal" lean.

Michael is my Elvis.

"Everything stopped," said Eliot, who is also in Los Angeles. "There is a definite feeling that a moment of our lives has passed."

Reach Taylor at (803) 771-8362.

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**cowboys06 wrote on 06/29/2009 08:57:54 AM:** Carmenita77--Your comments are very CORRECT. Thank you pointing out those facts. I thank God Almighty above that the truth does not need people like these haters and naysayers for validation.

Baptist--I know what it takes to get to heaven. And, no one knows what type of relationship Michael had with God. Based, on his previous comments through out the years, Michael definitely believed in God. God knows the heart and that is how we are judged. So, before some began to judge, bridle your tongue for some of the well know people we may think made it to heaven, may not have. It's strange how some preachers preach the Word of God and on the flip side spread hate; and try to use the Bible to validate the hate. Think about that. I can name one.

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**cowboys06 wrote on 06/29/2009 08:36:56 AM:** Part 2--Blade, prior to Michael, music videos were barely a thought. Artists were rather afraid of doing videos because they felt that people may be less likely to come to their concerts because they could be seen on video. But they were wrong. Michael, however, was not afraid. He embraced it and changed the music industry...period. Thriller is still the biggest selling album of all time (over 60 million sold to date); and he sold over 750 million albums world wide. Elvis, nor the Beatles, can never top that. Before Off The Wall, if an artist sold 500,000 copies of an album, it was considered a success. Since, then, 500,000 is almost a flop. Besides, Michael had more talent in his pinky finger, that Elvis had in his whole body. So, there is no comparison. Blade, you can love Elvis as much as you want. That's cool. But realize the facts. Michael Jackson is and will be the World's Greatest Artist and Entertainer.

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**cowboys06 wrote on 06/29/2009 08:21:54 AM:** Blade--I am not nor are many others comparing Michael Jackson to Elvis. That does not make sense because Michael Jackson was and is far more bigger than Elvis ever was. And, that is a fact. Rock and Roll was created and originated by people like Chuck Berry, Little Richard and others great musicians from the South who did not receive credit. Blacks had created and were enjoying rock and roll while whites were still doing the waltz and playing jazz (another form of music created by African-Americans. Blade, Elvis did not create anything musically. He borrowed (and sometimes stole) the creativity of others, repackaged it, and present it to another group of people. Elvis only changed the concept of Rock in the minds of white Americans at that time. Michael revolutionize, innovated and created. Music--the performance of it and the marketing of it--has not been the same since Michael Jackson's Off The Wall and Thriller albums. That is another fact. (to be continued).

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**carmenita77 wrote on 06/29/2009 06:16:51 AM:** One stream of thought that was prevalent during the 50's and 60's was that because of the racial climate, it would have been James Brown who became king of rock and roll, which evolved into R&B. Many folks will adamantly deny this and argue you up and down, but you had to be living during those times in order to understand why things came out the way they did. Again, anyone who wants to rebut this should really read their music history before trying to dispel this truth. I speak from facts and what I experienced this during my lifetime.

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**carmenita77 wrote on 06/29/2009 06:03:06 AM:** Regardless of all the negative stuff surrounding Michael Jackson, just his impact on the music world alone can never be erased. Folks can continue to post all the ugly and nasty comments they wish, believe what they wish, and rationalize their attitudes, the facts will not be changed. Luckily, the majority of folks appear to be celebrating his legacy-- and this is what will keep his memory alive. Some of these naysayers posting in this forum will be some of the same folks who will be trying to capitalize on his name - - doing as an old Indian saying goes "speaking in forked tongues"-- and I say, speaking out of both side of their mouth".

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**carmenita77 wrote on 06/29/2009 05:53:54 AM:** Depending on one's age, many people may not know that if Priscilla Presley (Elvis's wife/ex-wife) had not taken over the management of his estate and that of Graceland, that Elvis would just be another memory in the hearts of his ardent fans, just another name in music history that was here at some time in history. Graceland, the home he named for his mother, was in worse shape than Neverland is today. Without Priscilla's intervention, many of you folks might not even know about Elvis. So I suggest that folks learn their history before posting. One news report states that we learned all the negative stuff re Elvis after his death, but learned re Michael's while he lived, all because of the magic of TV and the Internet.

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**newusa wrote on 06/26/2009 09:10:10 PM:** Who in your mind supported MJ, blade?

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**blade wrote on 06/26/2009 09:00:24 PM:** He never was and never will be anything like Elvis, Elvis change the entire concept of Rock and Rock. So to anyone, especially those liberal buttheads in Hollywood who think he should be compared to Elvis..... you are so wrong, it is no wonder he got away with so much, look who supported him.

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**newusa wrote on 06/26/2009 08:26:20 PM:** baptist, do you live out there in Lexington County near any of the "perverted monsters" reported in one day on this site earlier this week?

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**newusa wrote on 06/26/2009 08:14:25 PM:** Wonder if Gov. Sanford was an MJ fan. If not before, I'm sure he became a fan within the last 24 hours.

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