Michael Jackson, Inc.: The Rise, Fall, and Rebirth of a Billion-Dollar Empire

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Michael Jackson, Inc.: The Rise, Fall, and Rebirth of a Billion-Dollar Empire Zack O'Malley Greenburg The surprising rags-to-riches-to-rags-to-riches story of how Michael Jackson grew a billion-dollar business.

Michael Jackson is known by many as the greatest entertainer of all time, but he was also a revolutionary when it came to business. In addition to famously buying the Beatles' publishing catalogue, Jackson was one of the first pop stars to launch his own clothing line, record label, sneakers, and video games—creating a fundamental shift in the monetization of fame and paving the way for entertainer-entrepreneurs like Jay Z and Diddy. All told, Jackson earned more than $1.1 billion in his solo career, and the assets he built in life have earned more than $700 million in the five years since his death—more than any other solo music act over that time.

Michael Jackson, Inc. reveals the incredible rise, fall, and rise again of Michael Jackson's fortune—driven by the unmatched perfectionism of the King of Pop. *Forbes* senior editor Zack O'Malley Greenburg uncovers never-before-told stories from interviews with more than 100 people, including music industry veterans Berry Gordy, John Branca, and Walter Yetnikoff; artists 50 Cent, Sheryl Crow, and Jon Bon Jovi; and members of the Jackson family. Other insights come from court documents and Jackson's private notes, some of them previously unpublished. Through Greenburg's novelistic telling, a clear picture emerges of Jackson's early years, his rise to international superstardom, his decline—fueled by demons internal and external, as well as the dissolution of the team that helped him execute his best business moves—and, finally, his financial life after death.

Underlying Jackson's unique history is the complex but universal tale of the effects of wealth and fame on the human psyche. A valuable case study for generations of entertainers to come and for anyone interested in show business, *Michael Jackson, Inc.* tells the story of a man whose financial feats, once obscured by his late-life travails, have become an enduring legacy.

Michael Jackson, Inc.: The Rise, Fall, and Rebirth of a Billion-Dollar Empire Details

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Empire Zack O'Malley Greenburg

From Reader Review Michael Jackson, Inc.: The Rise, Fall, and Rebirth of a Billion-Dollar Empire for online ebook

Karen Moriarty says

As Zack Greenburg walks his reader through the maze of Michael Jackson's financial life, he demonstrates how the thread that ran through all of the phenomenal, record-breaking successes of the King of Pop was the man himself.

As in most things Michael Jackson, the media have typically provided over-the-top and misleading coverage of MJ's business dealings, overlooking his entrepreneurial prowess, visionary acumen, and genius. Zack reveals the surprising inside stories of MJ's acquisition of the largest music catalog in history, of his fantastical 2700-acre Neverland that reflected his core personality, and of the stratospheric earning power of the King of Pop. He also interprets the downfall of MJ and of his financial status in a thorough, credible, and interesting way, in parts difficult to read because of the pathos and victimhood in the story.

Although the public was fed negatively skewed material about MJ's finances across the years, Zack shows how the lens and yardstick with which MJ was perceived and measured were generally inaccurate and distorted. He presents the reader with a fascinating case study of the King of Entrepreneurship, who set the bar in so many areas for other artists to follow his lead. He was a game changer, whose soft voice and steel will combined to effect new ways of marketing music and monetizing celebrity. MJ studied the greats - in music, dance, and finance - and then became greater, a goal that he set for himself as a very young man.

MJ was indeed a trail-blazer in everything he did - dance, music, film, life-style, philanthropy - with risk-taking decision-making, out-of-the-box thinking, driving ambition, and a level of perfectionism that fueled his bigger-and-better obsession. And MJ achieved his #1 status in the music industry in spite of his poverty-level childhood, barriers of racism, and numerous obstacles that included false charges of criminal behavior related to children.

Using insights from his own background as a child star, Zack Greenburg demonstrates a real understanding of the "delicious, terrible, reality-bending world of show business." MJ dealt with that world for his entire 50-year life. He went from very poor to very wealthy to both poor and wealthy at the same time! During his last years MJ held valuable assets but was cash poor, which situation compelled him to return to rigorous preparations for a return to the stage. His untimely death, at the hands of his doctor who was treating him for insomnia with inappropriate drugs, ironically reversed the downward spiral of MJ's finances with dizzying speed. Today he is the highest-earning celebrity, and it was his intelligence, hard work, and creativity that have achieved that pinnacle.

Zack's writing is both fluid and powerful. It is somewhat similar to poetry in that he uses vivid images, similes, metaphors, and concise sentences. The writing style is one of the greatest strengths of this book. Having interviewed more than 100 people from MJ's life from various periods of his life, Zack also used many other primary sources to validate his extensive research.

Michael Jackson, Inc. is a must-read for Michael Jackson fans and for anyone who is interested in the financial workings of show business. It is a compelling study of the cost of fame and fortune and of the mind of the genius who was Michael Jackson.
Karen Moriarty, Author, "Defending A King ~ His Life & Legacy"

Ann says

I found this book fascinating on several levels. First of all, just on a human level, I loved hearing about the beginnings of MJ's music career singing with his siblings in the Jackson 5. It was there that not just his family but other critics saw a unique talent in Michael that was not present in the other members of the singing group. Joe Jackson, MJ's father, started out managing the Jackson 5 and then seeing that MJ had unique talent, began pushing him to sing. The rest is history. As he became more and more of a successful celebrity figure, his perfectionism drove him to ever greater levels of entertainment. He became almost his own worst enemy, never being satisfied with anything he did until it had become the biggest, best, most extravagant ... and promised to bring in the biggest cash flow. I had never really read anything about MJ and had only really read what was in the papers ... often reflecting sensational stories that were circulated at the time but were not altogether true ... and some just plain false.
His business mind was what came as a surprise to me. MJ was one of the most business savvy of entertainers. He had some early good advisers but really made a lot of his own business decisions and had ideas that were original with him. The result was a multimillion dollar career in music that not only successful in life, but left his children an estate that has continued to be incredibly lucrative.
I feel like the one thing that would have kept MJ more balanced in life, would have been a healthy dose of humility that comes from understanding that there is room for only one God in our lives ... the one who created us to love and worship and serve and submit to Him. Michael began to have what seemed to me a unhealthy idea that he could be perfect ... that he was invincible ... and only One is perfect and invincible... and that One is God Himself.

Amar Pai says

Jackson's estate is generating mad cash to this day.

$100,000,000's. Jay-Z Puff Diddy Dr Dre eat your hearts out

Ahmad Moshrif says

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Ana Rusness-petersen says

Michael Jackson, Inc. is a well researched book that details and transitions well from one chapter of Michael's life to the next. The layout and order of the book helped me to understand a little more completely how and where Michael's commanding oversight and financial wisdom may have been overtaken by doubts and poor decisions - which is what I found myself struggling with after recently reading "Remember the Time" about the last years of Michael Jackson's life.

The first hand interviews and cited sources were beneficial - I have to admit to being a bit jealous that the author got to talk to John Branca at least three times.

And I loved the cover art.

Despite the obvious research that went into writing this book, which was well-written and transitioned from one topic to the next, I couldn't help feeling that there was something missing. Some spark or deeply rooted curiousity or ... something.

Renald Micallef says

Since I was 5 years old I became a Michael Jackson fan, thanks to his BAD album and worldwide dominion at the time. I remember seeing magic manifest on TV and I was hooked. Now at age 32 I am grateful to have been alive when the King of Pop was alive. I remember where I was in particular instances of my life when a new song, a new video and any new venture came out from Him. Basically I am his biggest fan on the small island of Malta, and that sure would suffice as an under-statement.

As a fan I highly recommend this book. I learnt a lot of new things about the King of Pop by reading this book. We all knew about Michael Jackson's artistic genius, but not everybody knew about his business acumen. While in this book, one can read about His artistic collaborations and successes, the reader is given a perspective of the business modus of operandi of Michael Jackson. He broke all records, not just in charity, in concert attendance and album sales, but also in business deals for an artist. This book therefore is not only for the fans but also for those studying business, and for any other person who wants to study the greats.

MJ once said 'study the greats and become greater'. He lived by this motto and it showed all through his perfectionism in whichever area he worked.

Cullen Haynes says

Michael Jackson, the undisputed King of Pop, was at a time, the most in-demand entertainer and famous person in the world; earning approximately $1Billion USD over the course of his lifetime.

While no one would dispute his obvious talent onstage, his unconventional antics off it garnered him his other famous moniker; Wacko Jacko.

Love him or hate him, Greenburg’s book goes deep behind the powerhouse that was the Jackson brand, showing a business savvy and shrewd operator who’s main downfall was lack of a trusted advisor to tell him, No!

Michael Jackson Inc. tracks the prolific rags to riches to rags to riches story of one the most polarising yet iconic figures of all time.

Kerry Hennigan says

I read this book in three stages – starting first from Chapter 14 – Invincible? And reading through to the end, since this is the most confusing as well as intriguing time for Michael's business affairs, in my opinion, and probably the time least understood when the topic is raised in articles. I then went back to the Dangerous and HIStory years, and finally, having satisfied my curiosity about my favourite eras, started back at the beginning of the book.

A lot of information in Michael Jackson, Inc is familiar to the well-read MJ fan – especially anything sourced from Michael's Moonwalk biography or from published or taped interviews. What Jack O'Malley Greenburg does is looks at the triumphs, tragedies, successes and excesses in a business context.

He adroitly connects up a lot of the dots which have remained confusing for too long with respect to who was responsible for which deals and who introduced Michael to some of the good, bad or indifferent business connections throughout his career.

Some of these names are familiar to us – but what was their background in the music (or other) business and their credentials generally for advising or steering the career of the King of Pop? For the first time I felt I had gained some understanding of some of these key players in Michael's career. I discovered how some fleeting characters attached themselves to the Michael Jackson bandwagon – and in many instances left it in worse shape than they found it.

At no time is Michael absolved of his penchant for spending more than he earned. It's obvious from the first hand interviews the author conducted with some individuals or information obtained from other industry sources that too many of his advisers were reluctant to say 'no' to Michael because they did not what to jeopardize whatever role they played in his inner circle.

Particularly when it came to perfecting his art, the word 'no' was not acceptable to Michael.

However, as some savvy individuals discovered, saying 'no' with reasonable cause could win Michael's respect and pave the way for a successful partnership or business deal. It's a pity there weren't more of these scrupulous types gaining Michael's trust in the 90s and 00s.

I guess it's easy to look back in hindsight from the remote perspective of a fan and wonder how the most successful entertainer of all time couldn't see he was being manipulated into lining the pockets of others at his own expense. One of MJ's musician friends once explained to me that Michael preferred to go into a situation thinking and expecting the best of people.

Not surprisingly this would eventually change in cruel and devastating ways that must have truly wounded his spirit.

Michael Jackson, Inc is a book that actually goes beyond its brief without succumbing to sensationalism. Subsequently it succeeds in imparting greater understanding of the mechanisms at work in the entertainment industry and the influence that industry wheelers and dealers can have on an artist's creative output.

Of course at the end with the commitment made to return to performing, Michael called back some of the team that had helped him build his business empire in the 80s. We can only wonder what might have happened if he had stuck with these individuals all the way through.

Review by Kerry Hennigan
25 Dec 2014

Vicki says

I received a pre-release copy of this book from a local bookstore and would consider it one of the best books I have read all year. Rather than focus on Michael Jackson as an individual, this book describes his business genius and how he built an empire. Changed my perception of "the king of pop". Well written, informative, and interesting.

Michael says

Zack O'Malley Greenburg has done his research and interviews for his book and it shows. This book could have gotten bogged down with information about Michael Jackson's personal life but Greenburg never let's that happen. He assumes that the reader has some knowledge of the performer and focuses mostly on his business life. Discussing how Jackson at a young age already showed a giving nature by taking the money earned performing with the Jackson 5 and buying candy for other children in the neighborhood.

I found it interesting that Jackson was so hands on with his business dealings. Instead of people deciding his opportunities Jackson was hands on many times approaching people with business ideas before he was approached.

This hands on attitude was also prominent in his work touring and recording. A couple different people share stories of how he wanted to know every job around the tour worked. One example was how the lighting system worked so that he could better describe what effects he wanted on stage and also understand what the lighting technician was telling him.

Everyone interviewed talks about how he was a genius at business and was well learned, reading everything he could get his hands on and constantly asking questions. One of the areas he was very educated in, thanks in part to Paul McCartney, was acquiring music publishing. It is thought that he would purchased the publishing rights to songs that he intended on recording in the future.

Greenburg does cover some of the child molestation stories but only as how they relate to his business and money earning. Also discussed is how Jackson went from having one of the best circles of business advisers to letting them go and hiring people that many questioned why they were working with him. He also go involved in some questionable business deals and started spending more time in courtrooms than performing.

I would suggest this book for anyone that is interested in the music industry and want a view of how it works from the actual business side. It helps that this education comes from the books of a musician that earned billions of dollars and foolishly spent a lot of it to only go back to having billions after dying.

Mark says

A fascinating look behind the scenes of the MJ empire and a look into his life pre, during and post his heyday and untimely death. I can remember hearing a lot of the crazy press and allegations that surrounded him when I was growing up, it is nice to hear a more balanced and objective viewpoint and to find out more about the whole person. Clearly a troubled individual with obsessive perfectionist tenancies when it came to his work but a lot of very positive things about him too and a whole lot about the industry that I had no idea of. Enjoyed it.

Nada says

To be honest I was very much hesitant to read this book, I had it on my shelf for so long before finally forcing myself to read it. The book has a great potential and the author is crafty, however, for a person who spent many years studying, researching and following every aspect of Jackson's life and death I found many gaps in Greenburg's book.

To be more clear, it seems to me that the author didn't research well. He claimed to have over 100 sources but he seemed to only take John Branca's account on almost everything that happened and the author never once asked any of the one hundred sources about Branca. No. He swallowed everything that Branca said as a fact. Period. By the time I reached half of the book I started to wonder if the author's ulterior purpose was to write a book about John Branca.

When I reached to the last two chapters in which the author was discussing the estate after Jackson's death, my heart sunk. To my utter surprise (disgust) the author was relishing on how much the estate is doing great and how it would've never gotten this great–with as many accomplished projects if Michael were alive because he'd not approve to do this and that. Really? How could you seem this amused that he's dead so he wouldn't stop such “greatness” from materializing ? The author made it appear as if this is a happy ending.

Most of the other sources are suspicious and the other half are useless–he even interviewed Justin Bieber for crying out loud! The book needed a better editor as well.

The only positive element is that the author shed some light on Michael Jackson's financial empire and how a savvy businessman he was providing a few credible amusing stories here and there.

I tried so hard to like the book and enjoy it because there is a great potential but the author felt highly insincere and with some sort of an agenda. He took many things out of context to fit certain claims and his sources' claims. He had no understanding of Michael Jackson nor did he try to because he relied heavily on his “sources.”

Overall, I found this book to be a disappointment and unfair to Jackson in many aspects and felt like the author was speaking about some sort of a myth because of the extensive lack (disregard?) of Jackson's own perspective and logic on almost everything. It's still a bit better than most of the books out there but unfortunately it offers nothing new unless you are a fan or interested to read a book about John Branca's triumph.

Deb says

It took a while getting through this book, because I found myself going to YouTube again and again to see the video that matched the songs mentioned in the book. It was a real breath of fresh air watching the young Michael Jackson singing and dancing with his brothers. Even at such a young age, it is quite evident that he had great talent.

The book also mentions a documentary about Michael's life. The documentary is a very slanted, sensational look at Michael's facial surgeries and sleepovers. Greenburg's book allows me to see a very different Michael than the documentary is trying to portray. Michael grew up without benefit of enjoying his own childhood, with a very abusive father. For this reason, he is very giving to children, and aware of his facial features. By this time in his life, he is also using some of the strange techniques he learned from reading "Humbug" by P.T. Barnum, and some really wild stories are circulating about him.

After reading the book, the documentary takes on a whole new life. I can see the Michael who never wants to grow up, living in Peter Pan's Neverland, and climbing a tree in his back yard. I see the patience he has for the fans who reach out to him, and the autographs and hugs he gives to those adoring fans. Most of all, I see the love he has for his own children, and the needy children he invites to his zoo and park.

John says

This was the first music business biography I have ever read! The author, Zach O’Malley Greenburg does a phenomenal job discovering how Michael pursued his business interest. I would love to read more business biographies on other legends from the industry.

From the inception of his music career, Michael received bad management, his dad Joe Jackson was clearly out to make money. This mentality left Michael with a "must have attitude." If you look at the numbers they are flat out staggering, not what Michael took in but what was going out. I feel that his biggest asset was John Branca.

Mr.Branca was hired after Joe Jackson was fired and played a huge part in the production of Thriller along with obtaining the rights to the ATV catalog.

Lessons to be learned from this book. If you want to be the best in the industry than you need to create content that sells and you need to study your ass off. Michael was an avid reader and asked good questions.

Tony says

I really enjoyed this book. I think Zack did an amazing job of interviewing a lot of people and compiling a lot of info into a book that is packed with a lot of facts and figures and details but is still thoroughly entertaining. I think this book is the best book on the market, maybe the only book on the market, when it comes to Michael Jackson as a business man. It really gives an in depth look into Michael as the great business man that he was and I think it is a must read for any Michael Jackson fan.
