



MICHAEL JACKSON

101

BAD 30



BAD

MICHAEL JACKSON

MICHAEL JACKSON

101

BAD 30



Andy Healy

 Andy Healy 2017

Under the Creative Commons licence you are free to share, copy, distribute and transmit this work with the proviso that the work not be altered in any way, shape or form and that all written works are credited to Andy Healy as author. This Creative Commons licence does not extend to the copyrights held by the photographers and their respective works. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License.

I do not claim any ownership of the photographs featured and all rights reside with the original copyright holders. Images are used under the Fair Use Act and do not intend to infringe on the copyright holders.



MICHAEL JACKSON

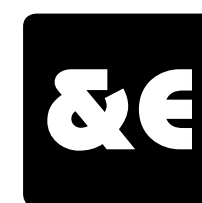


BAD 30

Dedicated to Michael for proving that great artists continue to push themselves to grow, for taking chances and pushing their art forwards.

This special BAD Supplement is also dedicated to the producers, engineers, songwriters and musicians who helped bring Michael's vision and music to life.

By a fan for the fans.





30 BAD

How do you top the biggest selling album of all time? How do you top a cultural phenomenon? How do you top yourself?

These were just some of the questions that faced Michael Jackson as he prepared himself to record the follow up to the global smash that was *Thriller*.

For Michael, the answer was, as it had always been since the age of 5, to put in the work. To spend hours, days, weeks, months and years writing, crafting and perfecting the songs that would eventually form *Bad*.

But looking to top, match or even come in the same stratosphere as *Thriller* was going to be a daunting task. But Michael was up to the challenge.

In the 5 years since the release of *Thriller*, Michael had spend 2 years riding the crest of that wave, recorded and toured with his brothers for *Victory*, developed and starred in *Captain EO* and set about writing another landmark album.

Writing and recording with a trusted set of musicians and collaborators at his Encino studio, Michael reportedly produced over 60 songs for consideration for *Bad*.

Reteaming with producer Quincy Jones for what would become their final outing in their sonic trinity, development for the project began in November on 1986 and proper recording commenced in January of 1987 and continued through to July of that year.

Continuing to grow as a songwriter and producer, Michael wound up penning 8 of the album's 10 tracks and shared co-producer credits with Jones. It was clear that Michael was growing in confidence and looking to expand his musical horizons.

Of note is just how filmic the album is. Each song paints a visual picture and many contain sound effects to further place the listener in a specific setting or mood with sound. Jackson was also pushing the idea of developing aural identifiers for each track. Not content with songs just starting on the downbeat, he crafted instantly recognizable vamps to build excitement before the music had even began. Whether it's the growl of "The Way You Make Me Feel" or the emerging synth rise of "Another Part Of Me", each track on the album had one.

For all the pressure he faced in following *Thriller*, Michael rose to the occasion delivering an album that is perhaps stronger than its predecessor. And whilst it may not have outsold it (and really which album could) *Bad* did deliver it's own landmark moments and birthed an unprecedented 5 consecutive Number 1 hits, well surpassing its predecessor haul of 2.

More importantly though, *Bad* shows an artist still growing and pushing himself. Stretching into new territory and striving for more. And for that fact alone, it should always be regarded as an overwhelming success.



Anticipation has a sound. And it sounds exactly like the four ascending synth stabs of the opening vamp to 'Bad'. As the first notes on the album they both mimic the building anticipation of what Michael will deliver, as well as our expectations for bigger and better things.

Against bristling accents that bubble and brew under a climbing bass line, this is Michael's response to the speculation about whether or not he could equal, or even top, the success of *Thriller*. With 'Bad' Michael throws down the lyrical gauntlet. When he declares, "And the whole world has to answer right now" it isn't an overstatement, it's a declaration of funk. That line alone reflects the challenge and pressure of having to prove himself once more. And he more than rises to the occasion.

Underpinned by the crawling, taunting groove 'Bad' has Michael teasing out the lyrics as he spits out each line like venom. And with a promise of what's to come he boasts, "My friend you have seen nothin'."

The musical progression of the track acts as a sonic groundswell with ebullient organ and a synth bed that swarms and carries the song to the chorus. Added to the mix are Michael's own vocals as instrument, tweaked and played back through the (at the time) state-of-the-art Synclavier mimicking the intonations of a Wah-Wah guitar - credited as "How Now Brown Cow" in the liner notes.

Add to the mix Michael's harmonies stacked layer upon layer, doubled, tripled, quadrupled until they form the heavenly Jackson choir and even the dubious "really, really bad" lyrics slide their way past the cringe meter with ease.

Jimmy Smith's blissful organ solo in the middle eight takes the song to another

level as MJ struts his stuff, reclaiming the funk from the imposters who clamoured for glory in his absence. And who doesn't smile hearing "because I'm smoooooth" with those horns hitting all the right notes.

Originally conceived as a duet with his contemporary Prince, 'Bad' was initially worked on under the code name 'Pee' (as in P for Prince). Brought into Westlake Studio D to hear the track, Prince declared the song was a hit and didn't need him on it. Whether Prince wasn't feeling the track, felt that there was no room to contribute, or as he stated to Chris Rock that with the opening line "There's a problem right there," it wasn't to be. A while we might lament the missed opportunity to hear two greats in their prime trading licks, it ended up being the right decision.

As a solo track 'Bad' allows Michael to stake his claim and own it from top to bottom. It is *his* statement, his answer to the world, and remains rightfully so.

This is his answer to a questioning world who wondered, "Could he do it again?" "Did he still have it?"

With this opening salvo he answered with a resounding yes. And in turn, the whole world did answer sending the song and album to the top of the charts around the world.

For added funk, listen to the original album version that features sharp horn stabs from the first chorus through the remainder of the song. Removed from subsequent pressings of the album to fall more in line with the short film, the original mix adds an extra layer of funk that is undeniable.

As album openers go, 'Bad' continues in the grand tradition of groove led instant classics of 'Don't Stop To You Get Enough' and 'Wanna Be Startin' Somethin'' and still packs a punch 30 years on.







With a pure pop sensibility, 'The Way You Make Me Feel' is one of Michael's catchiest compositions. His vocals are near flawless and there is a sense of joy in his delivery that is very reminiscent of the finest moments from *Off The Wall*.

From the opening growl of an engine starting up (tweaked and modulated by the Synclavier in the search for new sounds) and the panned tom fills, energy and joy are embedded in the track from the first measure. The tight shuffle beat (inspired by Michael's Mother, Katherine who, when listening to Tears For Fears chart topping 'Everybody Wants To Rule The World,' suggested Michael write a song with an old time shuffle groove) provides an instant hook while Michael's ad-libs and the taunting "Go on girl" (which he transforms into "gone girl" by the end of the track) brim with a sense of unabashed joy.

The first verse sets the scene perfectly in a maelstrom of desire with Michael loving everything about the object of his affection from "the groove of your walk / your talk / your dress." He sings with passion, with pure adoration, and a playful sense of longing that lets him tease out in the delivery of each line.

The lyrics also gives us a glimpse into Michael's sense of dynamics of relationships, perhaps most telling that he feels the need to "work from 9 to 5 / to buy you things just to keep you by my side." A notion he's expressed before in other songs about the demands of relationships. But he is also quick to promise more than just material things, swearing to keep his love "sat-is-fied" in perhaps the first hint of a more sexual Michael. Still, it is more alluded to than his explicit contemporaries at the time of Prince and Madonna. Michael feels happy to hint at rather than be explicit, and the innocence of the song

remains light.

With a deep mix of musical layers from jagging synth strings to hot 'n' sexy horn blasts and of course that intoxicating shuffling swing beat, 'The Way You Make Me Feel' is a high dose of elastic funk and was destined to be a hit.

Once again Michael proves there's not a backing group that comes close to the beautiful harmonies he layers in the chorus. Soft and sweet, these 16 voiced harmonies float effortlessly above the track allowing for the grittier lead vocal to be more grounded in this raw appeal for love.

Like a lot of Michael's classic dance numbers there isn't so much of a bridge present in the song but rather the creation of space to let the groove takeover. Stripping everything back to the bare essentials the song grooves along in the middle eight with just the driving beat and the effervescence of that bouncing bass line to punctuate.

'The Way You Make Me Feel' is also notable for two more things. Firstly, it showcases Michael's love of playing with the sounds of words to fit with his percussive expression in the way that he teases out "biz-i-ness" to heighten the playfulness and an almost seductive teasing (and echoing back to a similar refrain from *Destiny's* "All Night Dancing." And secondly for the mystery piece of ear candy he placed at the end of the track at the 4:52 mark teasing us with what sounds like the muted plucking of guitar strings. A little flourish to keep the ear fully engrossed and entertained to the end.

And entertain it does.

Perhaps the undisputed pop hit off the *Bad* album, 'The Way You Make Me Feel' is a song that is as quintessential a Michael Jackson track as and you are ever going to find.



INSIDE THE GROOVE

As with many of the songs off *Bad*, it's worth exploring the instrumental version of 'The Way You Make Me Feel' as it reveals the multitude of sonic delights hidden within its seemingly sparse production.

Listen to the crispness of the snare in the verses and the sharpness of the clap accents in the chorus. The booming of the bass drum. The heat of the horn blasts and they way they alternate from short stabs to long drawn out approaches. Get inside the ever-expanding and contracting bass line and the sinewy guitar licks.

Tracks like 'Bad' 'Another Part Of Me' and 'Dirty Diana' all reveal extra layers of musicality when the instrumental versions are listened to, and gives you a new appreciation for all the work and minute detail that went into creating these landmark songs, the multiple layers of ear-candy laid into the grooves to keep your ear entertained and your feet moving.





At first 'Speed Demon' can come across as a bit of filler track on *Bad*, especially after the one-two punch of the album openers. But to view it as such doesn't do it justice for what it represents in Michael's evolution as a composer.

Once again using sound effects to give his songs a filmic quality, 'Speed Demon' kicks off with a motorbike revving up and driving by our aural plain with an almost 3D like quality to it. It's a nice cue to how Michael will use spacial awareness of sound in the track. With an industrial funk foundation, Michael accents the groove with his own beatboxing that jumps from the left speaker to the right. With the initial verse comprising of just beat and synth bass, Michael's vocals are placed front and center. And then the chorus hits and we are met with wondrous lush harmonies and fluttering bass slide underpinned by popping funk bass slaps.

The build in the second verse adds a classic funk riff on guitar, and a more impassioned vocal delivery by Michael as he hits lines like "No Stop and Go" with force.

Unquestionably the highlight of the song is the glorious bridge that features Michael double-tracking the vocals in flawless falsetto, even giving a lyrical wordplay nod to The Jackson 5's "The Love You Save" along the way. This heavenly flight of fancy builds us to the blistering midi sax synth solo of Larry Williams matching note for note the heat that Jerry Hey lays down on trumpet, with a wonderful reprise by Jerry in the songs extended coda.

From the bridge the song is pure fire. There's a subtle key change build. A layering of percussive accents, electronic beeps and further sound

effects. Plus who can deny those pure funk guitars that remain taut and tight throughout, and of course that frenzied trumpet run of Mr. Hey.

Michael's vocals are gritty and raw. Adjusting his delivery on each pass, twisting and twirling words giving them new inflection and prominence. Especially with the loaded word "Boy." Initially, when Michael utters this word in the first chorus it feels a little throwaway, casual almost. But by the time the final part of the song plays out, Michael is adding a sense of taunting to the line. He adds menace to it. Listen to the bite when he extends it with "Pull over Bo-oo-oy / Pull over Boy / Pull over Boy". Now place this in context of race relations between black Americans and the police, and the demeaning and demoralizing use of "Boy" when levied against black men and the song takes on a momentary, but powerful, social context.

Whether or not this was Michael's intent, his way of sliding social commentary and depictions from his community into the track, or just the listeners outtake is up for debate. But it does make interesting food for thought, providing a punch to otherwise light lyrical content that deals simply with the issues of escapism and living in the moment.

Whilst some may deride the song for its lyrical simplicity, musically it has ambitious moments that makes it worthy of further exploration. A standout track for it's high octane funk, 'Speed Demon' remains a fan favorite and showed that Michael could still funk with the best.





The opening to 'Liberian Girl' is another example of how Michael uses sound design to whisk the listener out of their life and into another place and time. Here the sounds of exotic birds transports us to a new world. One filled with wonder. And like a new day dawning the intro awakens us to a tale of perfect love and desire.

Like a painter, Michael uses sound to sketch out a landscape for us to explore, and his choice of percussive and musical accompaniment places us deep in a steamy, exotic locale. Even the spoken word intro in Swahili (translated to "I love you too, I want you too, my love!") is there to set the scene.

For all the talk of Michael being calculated in his compositions and only pursuing hits, 'Liberian Girl' flies in the face of that argument. Here, Michael is exploring sounds to provide a more filmic backdrop for his lyrics, and his choices are anything but conventional. His deliberate selection of sounds and instruments from pan pipes, to spiralling sitars, to enchanting chimes, help create a distinct sound for the track with instrumentation not usually enlisted for mainstream pop fare.

Once again, the way Michael uses phrasing and a range of mid and high notes is a master class in eliciting emotion. Recorded as 16 tracks of harmonies the way he layers them provides even greater richness to the track. Just listen to the range contained in the harmonies that support the ad-libs in the final minute of the track ranging from touch the sky highs to soothing lows.

In stark contrast to today's cut and paste recordings, these vocals weren't duplicated for each pass nor were they duplicated for each chorus, instead Michael sang each part in place throughout the entirety of the song. The fact that there is very little audible difference between the first chorus and

the last shows just how in command of his instrument Michael was.

Michael's lead vocal is smooth and seductive. There's a sensuality here that reels you in as each word parts his lips. His voice floats around you, dipping and soaring with ease. This legato vocal performance is amongst Michael's finest and showcases a sense of power and control.

Just listen to how Michael layers and builds the final chorus and then takes flight off the utterance of a single word, "Girl". The harmonies glide as they elongate the word, drawing passion from it. And in the third and fourth pass Michael adds a top note to it that is just beyond sublime.

Whereas some of the tracks from *Bad* can feel dated due to the choice of hot at the time sounds, 'Liberian Girl' doesn't feel tied down to a specific time and place. The softer, more organic production gives it a timeless quality that makes every listen a chance to discover something new.

If a song on an album that has sold over 30 million copies can be considered a hidden gem, then 'Liberian Girl' is that track. Its beautiful composition, arrangement and production places it in the same sphere as songs like 'Human Nature' and 'Break of Dawn' and the vocal performance rivals the touchstone moments of 'Lady In My Life' and 'Butterflies'.





For all the talk of Michael wanting to create albums jam packed with hit after hit after hit, he also knew the power of contrast. He knew that in order for the peaks to really hit, you had to have valleys. This might explain the placement and inclusion of the somewhat throwaway track 'Just Good Friends'.

Hardly a shining moment on *Bad*, 'Just Good Friends' is a curious inclusion. Granted it brings two powerhouse performers together in having Michael and Stevie Wonder trade off behind the mic, but these 2 greats deserved a better song than this (and that got it on the Stevie penned 'Get It' from his *Characters* album.)

A true child of the 80s, 'Just Good Friends' reflects where funk-pop was precisely in 1987. Similar to another '87 smash, Whitney Houston's 'I Wanna Dance With Somebody (Who Loves Me)' the song builds off a multilayered percussion led drum machine groove and fritzing synth bass.

A playful song, it does feel like an upbeat rehash of 'The Girl Is Mine' and as a result is the only moment on the album that feels like Michael isn't pushing things forward.

This may be due in large part as it is one of only two songs on the album not penned by Michael. That said, the song was originally offered up when at a dinner party Quincy was asked if he needed anything for Michael's album and he reportedly replied, "We need a hit!" If that recollection is true, then it's surprising to think that 'Just Good Friends' might have been considered the saviour of the album.

Production wise, the song holds up to the dedication that was afforded

all other songs on the album and, if anything, it might suffer from a little too much production.

Michael's vocals are on par with anything else on the album, and of course Stevie brings his A-Game. With each taking a verse and chorus by way of introducing the duet, the delivery is flawless, but the interplay from the bridge onwards is where the song really comes into its own - despite the ironic choice to have Stevie sing "I can see the signs."

With Stevie doing Stevie, and Michael throwing down soon-to-be trademark ad-libs, the interchange between the two is where the song shines. Supported by Motown inspired backing harmonies Michael seems to enjoy the simplicity of those "Do, do, do, do / Never shows she cares" repeats.

On any other album, by any other artist, this may have raised above most. But on *Bad* the level of quality tracks is just so high that 'Just Good Friends' comes off a little worse for wear. It's sadly disposable and instantly forgettable. In fact, if you were to ask most Michael fans to name their favourite Michael duet this may not even register. For all the schmaltz of 'The Girl Is Mine' that song was still inherently Michael. 'Just Good Friends' comes off as poorman's cover and unfortunately just not good enough.

With the amount of songs demoed and recorded for *Bad*, one can't help but imagine what a Stevie Wonder and Michael duet on a track like 'I'm So Blue' with Stevie on harmonica, or 'Don't Be Messin' 'Round' could have sounded like, and how it would have raised *Bad* to even greater heights.







ANOTHER PART OF ME

As the closing song to the Disney 3D extravaganza *Captain EO*, 'Another Part of Me' debuted to the public several months in advance to its official release on *Bad* as an electro-funk intergalactic jam.

A hybrid of dance-funk it shuffles along accentuated by synth horn blasts, lush layered harmonies and ad-libs. The hi-hats in particular hint to the embryonic new jack swing sound that would rise in popularity in the later part of the 80s and own much of the musical landscape in the early to mid 90s.

Lyrically the focus is on a common Jackson theme of belonging, a sense of global unity and oneness. Michael sings with a sense of hope and optimism clearly present in his voice as he sings about our interconnectedness and mutual dependency. You can almost hear his smile as he sings, "We're sending out / A major love / And this is our / Message to you."

Supported by funk guitar, firing horns and sweeping synth pads that trill to the stratosphere, 'Another Part Of Me' is a perfect slice of funk guaranteed to get the head bobbing and the feet moving.

On record, it holds its own but performed live it found new life with a funkier edge to it especially in the extended jam coda.

As the 6th single off *Bad*, it broke the winning streak being the first single off the album failing to reach the Number 1 spot on the Billboard Chart (though it did hit Number 1 on the R&B chart).

Like some of the overly reliant electronic synth tracks off *Bad* it does have a slightly dated feel to it. That said, 'Another Part of Me' still has the ability to transport thousands of people back to their first viewing of *Captain EO*, and for sentimental reasons alone, it remains a fan favorite. Thankfully though this it offers so much more than just a nostalgic trip.





While Michael had dabbled with elements of Gospel on and off throughout his career it wasn't until *Bad* that he stepped up to the mic and delivered his own take on a gospel track.

Written by Glen Ballard and Siedah Garrett critics might argue that this isn't a true expression of Michael's, but the way he emotionally invests in the song he transforms it and truly makes it his own. Michael invests in every word of the song and imbues the lyrics with soul, heartache, hope and inspiration all at once.

Introduced with a sparse arrangement for the first verse you can really hone in on the way Michael delivers all the warmth and hope of the track simply with his voice and finger snaps. Michael's soothing vocals kick up a gear as he bites into, "That's why I want you to know." Even in the first chorus the arrangement is deliberately kept to a minimum to allow the message that "change begins with you" to resonate. It isn't until just after the first chorus that the song is fully fleshed out musically.

The way Michael interprets the lyrics shows true mastery. His vocals are honest and dripping in humanity. The way he twists and climbs the melody to the chorus shifts the song to another level. And on the repeat chorus, Michael hits certain words with power to cue you in that a change is coming. And with that glorious, stop-start and choral emphasis on "Change" the song takes flight.

And it's from the key change at the 02:52 mark that Michael really makes the song his own. With Michael in call and response mode, he just lays it all out there, taking on the role of both preacher and convert. His impassioned pleas are underscored

by the choral backing that lays a strong Gospel foundation for him to leap from. He's given the space to just let his passion come through in the delivery of each line.

Just listen to the way Michael hits the series of "That man / that man / that man" each one delivered with increasing passion.

Each passing phrase, each ad-lib gives the song energy, and vibrates through the speakers and into your heart.

Michael is in his power as a vocalist going from sweet to commanding in one phrase. This is Michael the preacher leading the love revival.

As he sings, "You've got to stand up / stand up / stand up / and lift yourself now" you feel moved into action.

And of course, it wouldn't be a Michael Jackson track without some trademark "Hoo" or "Shamone" moments.

For music critics and fans alike, 'Man In The Mirror' has become Michael's 'Imagine.' And rightfully so. Beautifully crafted and composed by Glen and Siedah, and wondrously delivered by Michael, 'Man In The Mirror' is as much a song about the individual as it is the collective. A song about impacting the world around you by starting with the impact you make on yourself. The power of its message is in the simplicity of the arrangement, allowing Michael's vocals to carry and deliver it, full of heart and conviction. No one can match the intensity or vocal power Michael does here as he lays it all out.

'Man In The Mirror' offered the world a new Michael and was undoubtedly the unexpected standout of the album.









As he did with *Thriller* Michael's choice of lead single for the release of *Bad* was not what the public was expecting. Rather than hitting with a hard dance track, he chose 'I Just Can't Stop Loving You' to lead the charge, a soft and sweet ode to lasting love.

With a somewhat unconvincing spoken intro (removed from later issues) 'I Just Can't Stop Loving You' builds into a joyous declaration of unstoppable love; a love that gives one comfort and purpose.

Although the duet was initially offered to Barbra Streisand and Whitney Houston, the choice of Siedah Garrett as vocal partner was a masterstroke of production. With MJ the balladeer and Siedah as his soulful counterpoint, their voices meld and intertwine so effortlessly it is hard at times to distinguish who is singing which line.

Dispensing with the heavily electronic sound of the rest of *Bad*, 'I Just Can't Stop Loving You' is a song lush with organic instrumentation. A masterful pop ballad that brims with romance, the song lifts at the chorus. There is a shimmery brightness to the production that glistens without being too glossy. Michael's vocals range from impassioned, to aching, and sung in his more natural register it gathers in confidence from the bridge onwards as Michael lets loose with joyful ad-libs.

It showcases Michael's ability to write simple, yet evocative lyrics that allow for him and Siedah to draw out certain phrases. Listen to how he sings "At night when the stars shine / I pray in you I'll find / A love so true." He writes with economy but with purpose allowing space amongst the words to be drawn out or contracted at will.

Sure, it's fun to imagine what Barbra Streisand or Whitney Houston might have added to the track (and Whitney would have been the more convincing choice) and how their powerhouse vocals would have played off against Michael, but with an album that had the potential to have 3 such duets (with Stevie and the proposed Prince duet) it may have given the slight some critics were hoping for with the "need for star power to fill out the album."

Siedah, a gifted singer who brings a believability to the song, was the perfect choice. With her as a duet partner the focus was placed on the beauty of the song rather than who was signing it with Michael.

'I Just Can't Stop Loving You' remains a lasting reminder of Michael's ability to craft beautiful arrangements where both bold, brash timpani strokes can be matched by sharp fingersnaps. He proves that he as a song writer he could hold his own no matter the genre and write timeless melodies and lyrics like the greats of Davis & Bacharach.

And whilst it may not have been the lead single people were hoping to follow up from the juggernaut of *Thriller* (you can't help but feel people were hoping for 'Billie Jean Part II') it showed Michael's wide ranging appeal as it soared to the top of the charts. It might have been a gamble that left many scratching their heads, but it certainly paid off.

Bookended by the sublime 'Man In The Mirror' and the dynamic 'Dirty Diana', a lesser song would collapse under the pressure. But 'I Just Can't Stop Loving You' shines brightly as the sweet, innocent love song it is and more than holds its own with the rest of the songs on the album.



Following on from the runaway success of 'Beat It', Michael continued to explore his affinity with rock with this tale of life on the road and the persistent advances of groupies.

Once again Michael uses sound design to place us in the middle of the action with a roaring crowd welcoming us to the heady seduction of fame and all its trappings. Here, Michael finds himself the relentless focus of a fan's obsession and try as he might to resist, the unfolding lyrics show that this time temptation might be too strong.

Whereas in the past in songs like 'Billie Jean' and 'This Place Hotel' the seductress/femme-fatale character had Michael playing victim, 'Dirty Diana' evolves the narrative to a place where Michael is a willing, if not remorseful, participant.

Lyricaly, the first verse shows Michael well aware of what is going on and even rising above the temptation, calling it out as he sings, "I know you're every move / So won't you just let me be." Here, his delivery is one of quite confidence but as he transitions in the B section of the verse and recounts Diana's sexual confidence his delivery is more jagged and threatening as he recalls "I am the stuff that you want / I am the thing that you need." With the final line before the chorus, "She trapped me in her heart" there's fear and anguish present as if Michael knows this girl won't take no for an answer.

Underpinning the lyrics is a brooding musical setting. There's a foreboding, dark presence in the spacial synth beds, the rattlesnake hi-hats, the hard hitting rim shots and the cracking whip snare. The music is enticing, intriguing Michael to explore the seduction.

With each passing verse Michael's resilience weakens and Diana's seduction becomes more alluring. In the second verse he lays out the trade of sexual favors for a moment

in the spotlight as she promises to "be your everything / If you make me a star."

Guest guitarist Steve Stevens (of Billy Idol fame) is given room to play throughout the song rather than just a "solo" moment (a la Eddie Van Halen's turn on 'Beat It') and the song benefits from it as his playing gives the track a consistent raw, gritty edge to it. And Michael's masterstroke of proving a gap in the melody by dropping a note in the chorus riff adds tension to the phrase. It makes the whole chorus that much more threatening.

When Steve Stevens has his moment in the spotlight, he delivers a dynamic guitar solo that echoes the spiralling out of control situation Michael finds himself in. It provides the perfect musical moment to convey a sense of heightened passion and the warning of temptation.

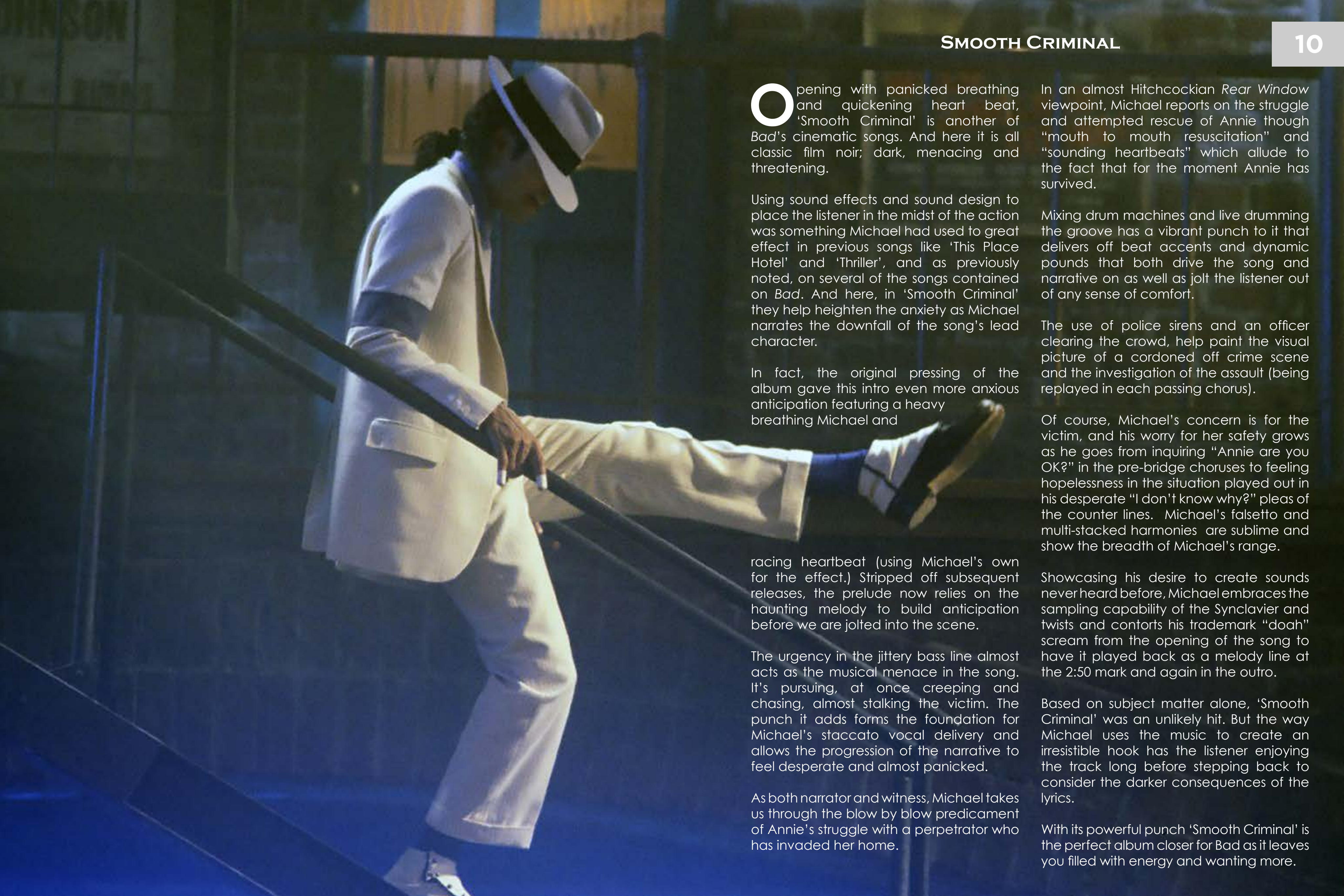
But the solo isn't what appears as the mutitracks from the session reveal. Rather than being one piece, Stevens played for roughly 10 or so minutes ranging from straight soloing to various manipulations courtesy of his guitar peddles to deliver everything from siren sounds to laser-like triggering. This session was then chopped, spliced, and stitched back together to become the solo we all know.

Cellos (a film noir mainstay) lead us into the third verse where Michael tries once more to resist before finally giving into temptation. It's a turning point both in the song but also in Michael's wider lyrical narrative as he becomes a willing participant in lust. The final line just twists the track once more as Diana claims ownership over her prized seduction exclaiming, "He's not coming back / Because he's sleeping with me."

'Dirty Diana' is classic MJ in rock mode and proved once again there wasn't a genre he couldn't take on and excel in.







Opening with panicked breathing and quickening heart beat, 'Smooth Criminal' is another of *Bad*'s cinematic songs. And here it is all classic film noir; dark, menacing and threatening.

Using sound effects and sound design to place the listener in the midst of the action was something Michael had used to great effect in previous songs like 'This Place Hotel' and 'Thriller', and as previously noted, on several of the songs contained on *Bad*. And here, in 'Smooth Criminal' they help heighten the anxiety as Michael narrates the downfall of the song's lead character.

In fact, the original pressing of the album gave this intro even more anxious anticipation featuring a heavy breathing Michael and

racing heartbeat (using Michael's own for the effect.) Stripped off subsequent releases, the prelude now relies on the haunting melody to build anticipation before we are jolted into the scene.

The urgency in the jittery bass line almost acts as the musical menace in the song. It's pursuing, at once creeping and chasing, almost stalking the victim. The punch it adds forms the foundation for Michael's staccato vocal delivery and allows the progression of the narrative to feel desperate and almost panicked.

As both narrator and witness, Michael takes us through the blow by blow predicament of Annie's struggle with a perpetrator who has invaded her home.

In an almost Hitchcockian *Rear Window* viewpoint, Michael reports on the struggle and attempted rescue of Annie though "mouth to mouth resuscitation" and "sounding heartbeats" which allude to the fact that for the moment Annie has survived.

Mixing drum machines and live drumming the groove has a vibrant punch to it that delivers off beat accents and dynamic pounds that both drive the song and narrative on as well as jolt the listener out of any sense of comfort.

The use of police sirens and an officer clearing the crowd, help paint the visual picture of a cordoned off crime scene and the investigation of the assault (being replayed in each passing chorus).

Of course, Michael's concern is for the victim, and his worry for her safety grows as he goes from inquiring "Annie are you OK?" in the pre-bridge choruses to feeling hopelessness in the situation played out in his desperate "I don't know why?" pleas of the counter lines. Michael's falsetto and multi-stacked harmonies are sublime and show the breadth of Michael's range.

Showcasing his desire to create sounds never heard before, Michael embraces the sampling capability of the Synclavier and twists and contorts his trademark "doah" scream from the opening of the song to have it played back as a melody line at the 2:50 mark and again in the outro.

Based on subject matter alone, 'Smooth Criminal' was an unlikely hit. But the way Michael uses the music to create an irresistible hook has the listener enjoying the track long before stepping back to consider the darker consequences of the lyrics.

With its powerful punch 'Smooth Criminal' is the perfect album closer for *Bad* as it leaves you filled with energy and wanting more.







Built around a jingle-jangle jazz inspired counterplay, 'Leave Me Alone' was initially left off the *Bad* album release and only included as a bonus track on the CD edition. A surprising move when you consider it has held up better than some of *Bad*'s less notable fillers.

With a shuffling rhythm behind him, Michael delivers his lover's marching orders and won't accept any attempts to make amends as he warns "don't you come walking, begging back".

He laments all that he has given to the relationship, but instead of drowning in sorrow he sees the casting off of deadweight as an opportunity to move on... "ain't no mountain that I can't climb baby" he sings defiantly, and with the tables turned notes "all is going my way."

It's perhaps a case of incessant manipulation and deception that he is riling against, so with the exit clearly marked in "the choice that we make / and this choice you will take" Michael exclaims to just go and "leave me alone". Freed from a bad relationship, he is there to have the last laugh.

Whilst the short film is clearly targeted at his media persona and those in the tabloid press, it's incorrect to draw the same inference in the lyrical content of the actual song. To claim such, actually devalues the intent and purpose of 'Leave Me Alone' as a musical composition.

With 'Leave Me Alone' Michael seems more relaxed in his vocals, bringing back some of the unbounded joy of earlier career recordings.

Take for instance the blissful layering of harmonies in the chorus as each voice reaches higher and higher until the final refrain touches the heavens.

Hear the carefree nature with which he scats in the instrumental breakdown, his every playful utterance fed back through a Vocoder as he becomes at once both instrument and vocalist. Even in his ad-libs there seems to be a bit more pep in their delivery.

Once considered a *Bad* cast-off, 'Leave Me Alone' does what all great Michael Jackson tracks do. It presents him in a new light, surprises the listener, and has a timeless quality to it.

It's no wonder that 'Leave Me Alone' continues to be a fan favourite long after it was pulled from the reserve bench and given a moment to shine.







I hope this exploration into BAD has made you
want to revisit and dig deeper into the album and give it another listen.
Send comments, feedback and thoughts to **mj101@outlook.com**



mj101series.com
twitter: [@mj_1_0_1](https://twitter.com/mj_1_0_1)





MJ 101 - 101 Greatest Songs



MJ 101 - The Short Films

Also available at mj101series.com



MJ 101 - The Remixes



MJ 101 - The Performances

MICHAEL JACKSON

IOI

BAD 30

