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On Michael Jackson



Synopsis

Michael Jackson was once universally acclaimed as a song-and-dance man of genius; Wacko Jacko is now, more often than not, dismissed for his bizarre race and gender transformations and confounding antics, even as he is commonly reviled for the child molestation charges twice brought against him. Whence the weirdness and alleged criminality? How to account for Michael Jackson's rise and fall? In *On Michael Jackson*—an at once passionate, incisive, and bracing work of cultural analysis—Pulitzer Prize-winning critic for *The New York Times* Margo Jefferson brilliantly unravels the complexities of one of the most enigmatic figures of our time. Who is Michael Jackson and what does it mean to call him a "What Is It"? What do P. T. Barnum, Peter Pan, and Edgar Allan Poe have to do with our fascination with Jackson? How did his curious Victorian upbringing and his tenure as a child prodigy on the "chitlin' circuit" inform his character and multiplicity of selves? How is Michael Jackson's celebrity related to the outrageous popularity of nineteenth-century minstrelsy? What is the perverse appeal of child stars for grown-ups and what is the price of such stardom for these children and for us? What uncanniness provoked Michael Jackson to become "Alone of All His Race, Alone of All Her Sex" while establishing himself as an undeniably great performer with neo-Gothic, dandy proclivities and a producer of visionary music videos? What do we find so unnerving about Michael Jackson's presumed monstrosity? In short, how are we all of us implicated? In her stunning first book, Margo Jefferson gives us the incontrovertible lowdown on call-him-what-you-wish; she offers a powerful reckoning with a quintessential, richly allusive signifier of American society and popular culture.

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Customer Reviews

The book was OK

This book was a good surprise for me. Very well and elegantly written, like a poem, insightful, psychologically wise, compelling like Michael dancing: elegant and sensual... Analytic and sensitive, made me feel compassion in a good way, loving him, heartfelt for his unacceptable passing. I'm still mourning...In a sea of "books about MJ", this is really provocative, a pleasure to read... Thank you, Margo for so brilliantly taking us through his life, like The Philadelphia Inquirer wrote: "calls for rumination, not scorn. Her jazzy style makes this book a literary entertainment of its own".

I have read countless MJ books and this one was nothing special in comparison to the ones I had read prior.

She is pretty hostile toward Jackson, and not always fair (imo). A good writer, a little snarky at times.

This Book is a disaster. I opened the book and read through the first pages, last pages, and found out a rudeness in its author. She didn't show a basic respect towards this music icon (let us not mention the other impression Michael left on this earth). There is no pre-word, no after-word about Michael and why she is writing about him. Instead she started with calling the first chapter FREAKS....I feel hurt and I feel offended and think: "how can a so called well-educated person be so rude and ignorant? Sure she is entitled to have her opinion, and I don't have to like it. But before you talk about somebody, you owe that person the basic courtesy to talk about him first for its identity with some kindness. Especially when this person does have so many accomplishments the world has witnessed and he has touched millions of millions people's life with different ages, races,

nationalities,....."I was deeply woken by Michael's music and his ups and downs, especially his sufferings in the last decade of his life. Then I develop a strong affection towards him and want to really know him through his own music, words, and thoughts, as well as through the impression he left onto others. I have to say, I am a new fan who just know him in 2014. Then I started to buy his music and read anything I can find about him. This Book is a disaster. Don't buy it....Since I have been a loyal customer to , they gave me refund without asking me to send this book back. But I don't even want this book in my book collection. I think I will just burn it. Normally I am a balanced person, but this author's attitude is too outrageous for me to accept.

I've never read a book quite like this. If you're expecting a biography of Michael Jackson, clearly this is not it. Nor does this actually contain any trivia type information that's straightforward, educational, historical, etc. Instead, the book is more like a rambling literary analysis, an advanced essay, or a term paper for Psychology 101. The author simply wanders on about her opinions, comparing Michael and his popularity with a number of other cultural influences. It's obvious she's a big fan of his, and appreciates his talent - other reviewers that state otherwise really didn't understand what they were reading (or never even picked up the book to begin with). Unfortunately, fact-checking is clearly not this woman's strong suit. Page 121 mentions the jury pool being from North County, California. The only problem? There IS no such county as "North County"!!! *lol* A baffling error that any bright high-schooler could tell you, but I guess it's true what they say about New Yorkers, and not bothering to know any other area of the country's geography except NYC. Margo Jefferson brings up this imaginary county not once but TWICE in the paragraph! I literally cringed when reading it, I felt so bad for her. Another strikingly inept mistake she made was identifying an MJ song as "Have You Seen My Childhood". I'm like wow - lady, did you ever actually let ANYONE else read this before it was published? Have an MJ fan glance it over, as a second set of eyes? But aside from those couple mistakes, I still enjoyed this book. Quite a short read too, only 146 pages long, and the book itself is tiny - at least 1/2 the size of a regular hardcover book. But again, this is NOT a cut-and-dry bio written in normal everyday language, so don't expect that. "On Michael Jackson" is more like an academic analysis of him as a celebrity and a cultural influence. Which if you're into that sort of thing, you should eat up. Every MJ fan should read this, you probably won't agree with everything she says (I know I didn't) but it's all at least food for thought.

Ignore the one star reviews of this book! Margo Jefferson is on target when scrutinizing the inner workings of Michael's life and mind. "On Michael Jackson" is written through the perspective of

academics and investigative journalists, or what I refer to as the "eyes in the sky". This book is not a tribute to an idol by a love sick fan! So if that's what you're looking for, be gone! This is adult reading for sentient minds and for some reason MJ's most ardent fans can't handle the truth. Mostly a thesis with biographical snippets sewn in, Jefferson's work discusses the controversial points of Michael's childhood, stardom, and sexual disorders. More importantly, it comments on America's obsession with the negative aspects of celebrity culture and the entertainment industry's exploitation of child stars. It's also telling of Jackson's paradoxical nature. I was shocked to learn that Jackson, a man who was constantly reaffirming his compassion for children and humanity, never cried once after seeing David Lynch's "The Elephant Man" over twenty times. While this little manuscript was written before his death, I believe the work is more about us than him. What kind of a society are we that we allow spectacles such as the disintegration of a troubled, aging star to feed our need for entertainment. In defense of Margo Jefferson, she must be one formidable writer if she has managed to set off so many people with only 150 pgs.

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