

The Jackson 8: A 'Thriller' at the Grammys

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The Jackson 8: A 'Thriller' at the Grammys

By ROBERT HILBURN,
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Michael Jackson set a Grammy record Tuesday night by finishing first in eight categories in the record industry's 26th annual awards ceremony.

The victories during a nationally televised program at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles shattered the Grammy mark of six established by singer-songwriter Roger Miller in 1965, the year his "King of the Road" dominated the charts.

Accepting the best album award for "Thriller" early in the program, a nervous and generally taciturn Jackson, said, "This is a great honor. . . . I'm very happy."

When he later picked up the record-breaking Grammy, the 25-year-old pop sensation took off his dark glasses in a victory salute.

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KEN HIVELEY / Los Angeles Times

Michael Jackson with an armful of Grammys; the rock star won eight in all, including best record.

JACKSON: New 'King of the Road'

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The awards show was held on the same stage where Jackson suffered second- and third-degree burns Jan. 27, when his hair caught fire during the taping of a television commercial.

Jackson, whose "Thriller" is the biggest-selling album ever at 27 million, was also cited for best record ("Beat It") and as best vocalist in three areas: pop, rock and rhythm and blues.

He also won best children's album ("E.T.—the Extraterrestrial"), best rhythm and blues song ("Billie Jean") and best record producer, an award he shared with Quincy Jones.

Jackson's sweep overshadowed the four victories in the classical competition by Sir Georg Solti. The awards gave Solti a career total of 23 Grammys, three more than the former leader, composer Henry Mancini.

Police Win Four

"Thriller," a stylish blend of pop, rock and rhythm and blues strains, has produced an unprecedented seven Top 10 singles. Until now no solo album contained more than four Top 10 singles. Epic Records spokesmen believe that the Grammy exposure and the excitement generated by an upcoming Jackson tour eventually will push worldwide sales beyond the 35 million mark. No other solo album has sold more than 12 million copies.

Other key winners in the presentation by the National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences were the rock group Police, which won four honors, and producer Quincy Jones, whose four victories pushed him into a fourth-place tie with Stevie

Wonder on the all-time Grammy list with 15.

Before the program, industry observers debated whether Jackson's enormous success with "Thriller" would lead to a sweep or a backlash. The sweep was tipped off before the telecast began when Jackson won in three of four secondary categories. His only losses were for best pop song and for best group vocal. Jackson had been nominated in the latter for his duet with Paul McCartney on "The Girl Is Mine."

Police lead singer and bassist Sting's "Every Breath You Take" was judged best pop song. Sting was also honored for best rock instrumental performance, and his band scored in pop group vocal and rock group vocal fields.

Other multiple winners were singer Chaka Khan, who won three Grammys, and the rock group Duran Duran and composer-producer Giorgio Moroder, with two each.

Ella Fitzgerald moved into seventh place on the all-time Grammy list when she was awarded her 12th, this one for female jazz vocal, "The Best Is Yet to Come" album.

'Being With You'

Guitarist George Benson earned his eighth Grammy with a pop instrumental award for "Being With You."

Jackson, dressed in his usual spangled uniform with epaulets and with a sequined glove on his right hand, was accompanied by actress Brooke Shields. He was clearly the Shrine crowd's favorite as he sat in the front row. Every time his face flashed on studio monitors or his name was mentioned, cheers rose

from industry colleagues who filled the orchestra seats and from fans in the balcony.

The young singer and writer was also the choice of pop critics, who often dismiss the Grammy voting as too conservative. Jackson's "Thriller" was named last week the top album of 1983 in a Village Voice poll of more than 200 critics around the country. It was one of the rare times critics have agreed with the 6,000 Grammy voters.

Jackson was generous with his thanks and praise for others. In one acceptance he called CBS Records head Walter Yetnikoff to the stage with him. Later he invited his three sisters to the podium.

'For Everyone'

The young star seemed especially moved by the award for the best children's album, "E.T.—the Extraterrestrial."

"Of all the awards I've won, I'm most proud of this one," he said. "... It wasn't an album just for children. It was for everyone."

The dominance of Jackson was underscored twice during the program.

First, comedian Joan Rivers joined singer Boy George (of Culture Club, a Grammy-winning group for best new artist) by satellite from London in reading the Grammy voting rules and quipped, "The reason we're reading the rules is so that all the losers will know why they lost to Michael Jackson."

And songwriter Michael Boddicker thanked Michael Jackson "for not writing a song for the movies." Boddicker was one of the writers for the "Flashdance" album, which was declared best sound track.