

= Thriller (song) =

" Thriller " is a song recorded by American singer Michael Jackson , composed by Rod Temperton , and produced by Quincy Jones . It is the seventh and final single released by Epic Records from his 1982 studio album Thriller . A 14 @-@ minute video showing Jackson in a Halloween @-@ themed performance premiered on November 14 , 1983 , in Los Angeles , California . It was first shown on MTV on December 2 , 1983 . The song was not released as a single until January 23 , 1984 .

" Thriller " has appeared on multiple greatest hits compilation albums from Jackson , including HIStory (1995) , Number Ones (2003) , The Essential Michael Jackson (2005) and Michael Jackson 's This Is It (2009) and was remixed for the Immortal album in 2011 . The song has a voice @-@ over from actor Vincent Price .

In the song , sound effects such as a creaking door , thunder , feet walking on wooden planks , winds and howling dogs can be heard , and the lyrics contain frightening themes and elements . " Thriller " received positive reviews from critics and became Jackson 's seventh top @-@ ten single on the Billboard Hot 100 Chart from the album , while reaching the top of the charts in France and Belgium and the top ten in many other countries .

" Thriller " was adapted by " American Werewolf In London " director John Landis into a highly successful music video , known independently as " Michael Jackson 's Thriller " . At fourteen minutes the video is substantially longer than the song , which ties together a narrative featuring Jackson and actress Ola Ray in a setting heavily inspired by horror films of the 1950s . In the video 's most iconic scene , Jackson leads other actors costumed as zombies in a choreographed dance routine . Though it garnered some criticism for its occult theme and violent imagery , the video was immediately popular and received high critical acclaim , being nominated for six MTV Video Music Awards in 1984 and winning three . In 2009 it was added to the National Film Registry by the Library of Congress , the first music video ever selected .

= = Background and composition = =

" Thriller " was written by Rod Temperton , and produced by Quincy Jones . Written by Rod Temperton ; an inspiration was the Jacksons hit , " This Place Hotel " . Early titles include " Starlight " , " Starlight Sun " and " Give Me Some Starlight " . The title was changed to ' Thriller ' after Michael told Temperton he wanted something that would appeal to kids . While still titled " Starlight " , the song 's hook lyrics were " Give me some starlight ! Starlight sun ... " , but after the song was changed to " Thriller " the hook was rewritten to " ' Cause this is thriller ! Thriller night ... " . Temperton commented ,

Originally , when I did my Thriller demo , I called it Starlight . Quincy said to me , ' You managed to come up with a title for the last album , see what you can do for this album . ' I said , ' Oh great , ' so I went back to the hotel , wrote two or three hundred titles , and came up with the title ' Midnight Man ' . The next morning , I woke up , and I just said this word ... Something in my head just said , this is the title . You could visualize it on the top of the Billboard charts . You could see the merchandising for this one word , how it jumped off the page as ' Thriller ' .

While Temperton was writing " Thriller " he stated that he 'd " always envisioned " a " talking section at the end " on the song , but did not really know what " to do with it " , until deciding " to have somebody , a famous voice , in the horror genre , to do this vocal . " Jones ' then @-@ wife , Peggy Lipton , who knew Vincent Price , suggested Price for the vocal part , which Price agreed to do .

" Thriller " is considered a disco @-@ funk song . Set in the key of C ? Modern Dorian , its instrumentation consists of synthesizer , guitar , trumpet , flugelhorn , saxophone , flute and trombone . The song has a moderate tempo of 118 @-@ 31 beats per minute . The lyrics and sound effects on " Thriller " pertain to frightful elements and themes .

= = Recording and production = =

" Thriller " , along with other songs from Thriller , was recorded by Jackson over the course of eight

weeks , in 1982 . Jackson recorded the song at Westlake Recording Studios on Santa Monica Boulevard in Los Angeles , California . Bruce Swedien , the song 's engineer , said of the song being recorded ,

When we started ' Thriller ' , the first day at Westlake , we were all there and Quincy [Jones , the producer] walked in followed by me and Michael and Rod Temperton and some of the other people . Quincy turned to us and he said , ' OK guys , we 're here to save the recording industry . ' Now that 's a pretty big responsibility ? but he meant it . And that 's why those albums , and especially ' Thriller ' , sound so incredible . The basic thing is , everybody who was involved gave 150 percent ? Quincy 's like a director of a movie and I 'm like a director of photography , and it 's Quincy 's job to cast [it] . Quincy can find the people and he gives us the inspiration to do what we do .

Swedien and Jones stated that Vincent Price recorded his introduction and voice @-@ over rap for the song in two takes ; Jones , acknowledging that doing a voice @-@ over for a song is " difficult " , praised Price and described his recording takes as being " fabulous " . Swedien said of Jackson recording the song , that , " I tried all sorts of things with Michael ? for instance , he would sing the main vocal part and we 'd double it one time and then I 'd ask him to step away from the mic and do it a third time and that really changed the acoustics in the room so it gave Michael 's vocals a unique character ? We recorded some of those background vocals in the shower stall at Westlake . "

Throughout the song , sound effects such as a creaking door , thunder , feet walking on wooden planks , winds and howling dogs can be heard . Bruce Cannon , a sound effects editor for " Thriller " , said that , " Things like the lightning may have come from old Hollywood movies ? we 'll never know which movies ? but the best sound @-@ effects editors do go out in the desert and find a coyote , so I have a feeling that was a real howl . "

The backing track , especially the bassline , has certain similarities to the 1981 number @-@ one R & B hit " Give It to Me Baby " by Rick James . The bass part was made from two modified Minimoogs playing in unison .

= = Critical reception = =

" Thriller " is a contemporary critical favourite . Ashley Lasimone , of AOL 's Spinner.com , noted that it " became a signature for Jackson " and described " the groove of its bassline , paired with Michael 's killer vocals and sleek moves " as having " produced a frighteningly great single . " Jon Pareles of The New York Times noted that ' Billie Jean ' , ' Beat It ' , ' Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' ' and " the movie in the song ' Thriller ' " , were the songs , unlike the " fluff " " P.Y.T. " , that were " the hits that made Thriller a world @-@ beater ; along with Mr. Jackson 's stage and video presence , listeners must have identified with his willingness to admit terror . " Ann Powers of the Los Angeles Times described " Thriller " as " adequately groovy " with a " funky @-@ out beat " and lyrics " seemingly lifted from some little kid 's ' scary storybook ' " .

50 Cent told NME that the song is the one he wished he 'd written : " I had his poster on my wall . He had me moonwalkin ' around my bedroom . I 'd love to have written any Michael Jackson song , so maybe start with one of the greatest . "

= = Chart performance = =

Prior to " Thriller " ' s official release as a single , six other songs from the album had charted . " Thriller " became Jackson 's seventh and final Billboard Hot 100 top @-@ ten single from his Thriller album . In Billboard issue date February 11 , 1984 , the song entered the charts at number 20 on the Hot 100 . The song entered the top ten the following week at number eight . One week later , it reached number five , then the next week it rose to number four ; its peak position which it held for a second week . The song was certified platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) on December 4 , 1989 , for sales of over one million physical units in the U.S. (the requirement for gold and platinum singles was lowered after 1989) . It has sold a further 3 @.@ 6 million copies in digital downloads as of October 2014 in the US .

For the issue date February 25 , 1984 , " Thriller " charted at number 19 on the Hot R & B / Hip

@-@ Hop Songs Chart . The following week , the song placed at number five . On March 10 , 1984 , it charted at number 3 , where it peaked . " Thriller " peaked at number 24 on Billboard 's Adult Contemporary Chart . " Thriller " debuted on the UK Singles Chart on November 19 , 1983 , at number 24 , and the following week charted at number ten , where it peaked ; the song appeared on the chart for 25 weeks . Beginning on February 5 , 1984 , " Thriller " peaked on the French Singles Chart at number one and topped the chart for four consecutive weeks . " Thriller " also topped the Belgian VRT Top 30 Chart for two weeks in January 1984 .

Following Jackson 's death , his music experienced a surge in popularity . In the week of Jackson 's death , " Thriller " was Jackson 's best @-@ selling track in the US , with sales of 167 @,@ 000 copies on the Billboard Hot Digital Singles Chart . On July 11 , 2009 , " Thriller " charted on the Billboard Hot Digital Singles Chart at number two (its peak) , and the song remained in the charts ' top ten for three consecutive weeks . In the United Kingdom , the song charted at number 23 the week of Jackson 's death . The following week , the song reached its peak at number 12 on the UK Single Chart . On July 12 , 2009 , " Thriller " peaked at number two on the Italian Singles Chart and was later certified gold by the Federation of the Italian Music Industry . " Thriller " reached at number three on the Australian ARIA Chart and Swiss Singles Chart and topped the Spanish Singles Charts for one week . The song also placed within the top ten on the German Singles Chart , Norwegian Singles Chart and Irish Singles Chart , at number nine , number seven and number eight respectively . " Thriller " also landed at number 25 on the Danish Singles Chart . In the third week of July " Thriller " peaked at number 11 in Finland . The song finished at # 78 for the year on Billboard Hot 100 of 1982 .

In 2013 , the song re @-@ entered the Billboard Hot 100 at number 42 .

= = Music video = =

In his 1988 book *Moonwalk* , Jackson expressed interest in having director John Landis direct the music video for " Thriller " . Having seen Landis ' previous work on the horror film *An American Werewolf in London* , Jackson envisioned the main character of his short film to undergo similar transitions parallel to those of the characters in Landis ' horror film . Hence , Landis was asked to direct the video seeing as Michael felt he would make the best fit towards properly conveying his personal concepts for the short feature film . Landis accepted Jackson 's invitation and production began soon thereafter , filming in various locations in New York and Los Angeles .

Contrary to reports of \$ 800 @,@ 000 to \$ 1 million production budgets , Landis stated that the music video was made for \$ 500 @,@ 000 . Within the same excerpt of *Moonwalk* , Jackson noted how he personally financed much of the short film for " Thriller " out of his own pocket . Due to all the technical details of production and the nature of the video , the budget nearly doubled in costs . John Branca ? Jackson 's attorney and advisor ? suggested creating a documentary outlining the process of creating the short film . The behind @-@ the @-@ scenes documentary was aimed towards seeking a third @-@ party sponsor to finance the project and thus alleviate some of the costs of the doubled budget . The documentary was entitled , " The Making of Thriller " , and achieved significant sales among audiences .

Jackson also said of making the music video , in an interview that aired on December 11 , 1999 , for MTV 's 100 Greatest Videos Ever Made :

My idea was to make this short film with conversation ... I like having a beginning and a middle and an ending , which would follow a story . I 'm very much involved in complete making and creating of the piece . It has to be , you know , my soul . Usually , you know , it 's an interpretation of the music . [...] It was a delicate thing to work on because I remember my original approach was , ' How do you make zombies and monsters dance without it being comical ? ' So I said , ' We have to do just the right kind of movement so it doesn 't become something that you laugh at . ' But it just has to take it to another level . So I got in a room with [choreographer] Michael Peters , and he and I together kind of imagined how these zombies move by making faces in the mirror . I used to come to rehearsal sometimes with monster makeup on , and I loved doing that . So he and I collaborated and we both choreographed the piece and I thought it should start like that kind of thing and go into

this jazzy kind of step , you know . Kind of gruesome things like that , not too much ballet or whatever .

The music video of the song also included on the video albums : Video Greatest Hits - HIStory , HIStory on Film , Volume II , Number Ones , on the bonus DVD of Thriller 25 and Michael Jackson 's Vision .

Following the release of the music video , a 45 @-@ minute documentary was released that provided candid glimpses behind the scenes of the music video 's production . Entitled Making Michael Jackson 's Thriller , it , like the music video , was shown heavily on MTV for a time and was the top @-@ selling home @-@ video release of all time at one point , with over nine million copies sold . MTV paid \$ 250 @,@ 000 for the exclusive rights to show the documentary ; Showtime paid \$ 300 @,@ 000 for pay @-@ cable rights ; and Vestron Video reportedly paid \$ 500 @,@ 000 to market the cassette , in a profit participation agreement .

= = = Concept = = =

Set in the 1950s , Michael and his unnamed date (Ola Ray) run out of gas near a dark wooded area . They walk off into the forest , and Michael asks her if she would be his " girl " ; she accepts and he gives her a ring . He warns her , however , that he is " different " . A full moon appears , and Michael begins convulsing in agony , transforming into a werewolf . His date runs away in terror , but the werewolf catches up to her , knocking her down and begins lunging at her with his claws . The scene then cuts to a modern @-@ day movie theater where Michael and his date , along with a repulsed audience , are actually watching the scene unfold in a movie called Thriller .

Michael 's date leaves the theater as Michael hands his popcorn to a stranger , catches up to her , and assures her that " It 's only a movie " . Some debate follows as to whether or not she was scared by the movie . They then walk down a foggy road as Michael teases her by singing the verses of " Thriller " . They pass a nearby graveyard , in which zombies begin to rise out of their caskets as Vincent Price performs his soliloquy . The zombies corner Michael and his date threateningly , and suddenly , Michael becomes a zombie himself . The zombies then break into an elaborate song and dance number , followed by the main chorus of " Thriller " (during which Michael was reverted to human form) , frightening his date to the point where she runs for cover .

Michael (turned back into a zombie) and his fellow corpses then back the frightened girl into the corner of a nearby abandoned house . Michael then reaches for his date 's throat as she lets out a bloodcurdling scream , only to awake and realize it was all a dream . Michael then offers to take her home , and she happily obliges . As they walk out of the house , Michael turns around and looks at the camera , thus revealing his yellow werewolf eyes and fangs from the beginning of the video , as we hear Vincent Price 's haunting laugh .

= = = Reception = = =

Leah Greenblatt of Entertainment Weekly commented on the music video , " Every aspect of the 14 @-@ minute horror musical , directed with creepy @-@ comical zest by John Landis , is beyond iconic , from Michael 's red leather ensemble to the immortal (no pun) herky @-@ jerky zombie dance and bwah @-@ ha @-@ ha Vincent Price narration . " Though the video was met with widespread praise , it was also criticized for its content . In 1982 , the National Coalition on Television Violence (NCTV) classified more than half of 200 MTV music videos surveyed as " too violent " . Both " Thriller " and Jackson 's duet with Paul McCartney , " Say , Say , Say " made the list . The Los Angeles Times quoted Dr. Thomas Radecki , chairman of the NCTV , as saying , " It 's not hard to imagine young viewers after seeing ' Thriller ' saying , ' Gee , if Michael Jackson can terrorize his girlfriend , why can 't I do it too ? ' "

The music video was nominated for six awards at the 1984 MTV Video Music Awards , winning three out of six of the nominations . " Thriller " won Viewers Choice , Best Overall Performance and Best Choreography ? but lost Best Concept Video , Best Male Video and Video of the Year .

The music video was listed as the " Greatest Video " on VH1 's " VH1 : 100 Greatest Videos " in

2001 . MTV listed the music video as being the " Greatest Music Video Ever Made " on their list , " MTV : 100 Greatest Music Videos Ever Made " in 1999 . In July 2011 , the music video was named one of " The 30 All @-@ TIME Best Music Videos " by TIME magazine .

= = Live performances = =

Jackson performed " Thriller " on all three of his solo world concert tours . From the Dangerous Tour onwards , half the song was always performed by a masked backup dancer as Jackson prepared for his next song as part of a stage illusion . Despite Jackson performing multiple songs from his Thriller album , " Thriller " was not included on The Jacksons set list during their Victory Tour in 1984 , as Michael Jackson was not satisfied with the way the song sounded live .

Jackson performed " Thriller " during his first world tour as a solo artist , the Bad world tour , lasting sixteen months , from 1987 to 1989 , for a total of 123 shows . During the Bad tour , in both legs , the jacket had flashing lights in the middle of the song and at the end . An impersonator was only used for the introduction of the song ; a masked dancer emerges from the costume tent at the side of the stage , and goes back in hiding while Jackson himself , also masked at first , swings down from a rope on the other side of the stage before taking off his mask .

" Thriller " was also performed during Jackson 's second world tour , the Dangerous Tour , where stage illusions were used to transition between " Thriller " and " Billie Jean " . In the middle of " Thriller " , Jackson secretly switched places with a masked backup dancer who finishes the song appearing as Jackson prepares for Billie Jean . When the song ends , Jackson appears fully dressed on the upper floor as " Billie Jean " begins . In the third leg of the Dangerous Tour , there was no upper floor but the masked dancer still performed the latter half of the song .

Jackson performed " Thriller " for all of his 82 shows during his third , and final , world tour , the HIStory World Tour . Once again , a masked dancer posing as Jackson was used as a stage illusion , this time to the transition between " Thriller " and " Beat It " . As with the Dangerous tour , Jackson switches with the background dancer in the middle of the song . At the end of Thriller , the masked dancer is taken by the zombie dancers into a coffin where it appears he is impaled with spikes and burned . Jackson would appear at the side of the stage in a cherry @-@ picker , starting off " Beat It " .

Jackson had planned to perform " Thriller " during his 50 @-@ show concert series , which would have been his fourth concert tour , entitled This Is It from 2009 to 2010 . For Jackson 's performance of the song , he had planned for the stage that he was to perform on to be set up with a background that looked like a " graveyard " (which was a brief setting in the music video) with 3 @-@ D effects . Jackson would emerge from a giant black widow spider . According to a setlist that was released in March 2009 , " Thriller " was to close out the 16 @-@ song show , although the film Michael Jackson 's This Is It , which documents the concert series , lists 18 songs and " Man in the Mirror " as the closing song for the planned shows .

Live versions of the song are available on the DVDs Live at Wembley July 16 , 1988 and Live in Bucharest : The Dangerous Tour .

= = Cover versions = =

1980s

In 1984 , English comedian Lenny Henry recorded a spoof video of Thriller , entitled " Thinner " .

In 1989 , American composer Henry Mancini and The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra recorded an orchestral version of the song .

2000s

In 2000 , British death metal band Ten Masked Men covered the song on their album Return of the Ten Masked Men .

In 2001 , American @-@ born Australian singer Joe Dolce covered the song on a compilation album , Andrew Denton 's Musical Challenge .

In 2003 , Scottish rock band Aereogramme recorded " Thriller " for their Livers & Lungs EP .

In 2003 , German a cappella group Maybebop covered the song for their album Heiße Luft .

In 2004 , English electronic music group The Prodigy sampled " Thriller " on their The Way It Is .

In 2007 , Ian Brown covered " Thriller " . Amos Barshad and Nick Catucci , of NYMag.com , commented that " before you dismiss " the song , if you " give it a listen " , Brown ? s " louche , drugged @-@ out reinvention is actually pretty great . "

In 2008 , German group Wise Guys recorded an a cappella version of the song as " Schiller " for their tenth album Frei ! . The stage choreography based on Michael Jackson 's music video and member Ferenc also recites a part of Friedrich Schiller 's Die Bürgschaft .

In 2008 , " Thriller " was also covered by Ben Gibbard , lead singer of Death Cab for Cutie and The Postal Service .

In 2008 , industrial metal band Gothminister covered Jackson 's song for their album Happiness in Darkness .

In October 2009 , Imogen Heap covered " Thriller " for BBC Radio 1 Live Lounge .

2010s

In 2010 , Italian gothic metal band The LoveCrave released a cover of " Thriller " on their album Soul Saliva .

In 2011 , Patrick Stump covered the song in an a cappella mash @-@ up tribute along with several other Michael Jackson songs over pre @-@ recorded backing vocals .

In 2012 , Italian jazz trumpeter Enrico Rava released a version on his tribute album Rava on the Dance Floor .

In 2013 , Jiordan Tolli covered an stripped @-@ down slower version of song for fifth season of The X Factor Australia during week two . The cover was released as an single on September 3 , 2013 . Tolli 's performance of " Thriller " debuted at number 63 on the ARIA Singles Chart .

In 2014 and 2015 , Demi Lovato covered the song on her Demi World Tour . This version included a remixed dancing at the end , which Lovato would dance to with fellow background dancers .

= = Appearances in other media = =

Michael Jackson 's Thriller music video , particularly the songs dance routine in the video , have been referenced in television series and films including Donga (1985) , Coming to America (1988) , The Malibu Beach Vampires (1991) , South Park (1997) , Dead & Breakfast (2004) , 13 Going on 30 (2004) , Bo ! in the USA (2006) .

The Chemical Brothers said in a January 2002 interview that if their song " My Elastic Eye " is played on large speakers , the bass would resemble " Thriller " .

In 2011 , the cast of American musical TV series Glee (Naya Rivera , Kevin McHale and Cory Monteith with New Directions) performed " Thriller " as a mash up with " Heads Will Roll " by Yeah Yeah Yeahs in episode " The Sue Sylvester Shuffle " .

Pop singer Britney Spears made a reference to " Thriller " in her music video for " I Wanna Go " (2011) . In the ending of her video actor Guillermo Díaz leads Spears out of the room . He then turns to the camera with glowing red eyes and his laugh is heard , similar to Vincent Price .

= = Personnel = =

= = Charts and certifications = =

= = Sales and certifications = = =

= = Track listing = =