

= Off the Wall ( album ) =

Off the Wall is the fifth studio album by American singer Michael Jackson . It is his debut studio album released through Epic Records . It was released on August 10 , 1979 , following Jackson 's critically well @-@ received film performance in The Wiz . While working on that project , Jackson and Quincy Jones had become friends , and Jones agreed to work with Jackson on his next studio album . Recording sessions took place between December 1978 and June 1979 at Allen Zentz Recording , Westlake Recording Studios , and Cherokee Studios in Los Angeles , California . Jackson collaborated with a number of other writers and performers such as Paul McCartney , Stevie Wonder and Rod Temperton . Five singles were released from the album . Three of the singles had music videos released . Jackson wrote three of the songs himself , including the number @-@ one Grammy @-@ winning single " Don 't Stop ' Til You Get Enough " . It was his first solo release under Epic Records , the label he would record on until his death roughly 30 years later .

The record was a departure from Jackson 's previous work for Motown . The lyrical themes on the record relate to escapism , liberation , loneliness , hedonism and romance . Several critics observed that Off the Wall was crafted from funk , disco , soft rock , jazz , Broadway and pop ballads . Jackson received positive reviews for his vocal performance on the record . The record gained critical acclaim and recognition and won the singer his first Grammy Award . With Off the Wall , Jackson became the first solo artist to have four singles from the same album peak inside the top 10 of the Billboard Hot 100 . The album was an enormous commercial success ; as of 2014 it is certified eight times platinum in the United States and has reportedly sold more than 20 million copies worldwide , making it one of the best selling albums of all time .

On October 16 , 2001 , a special edition reissue of Off the Wall was released by Sony Records . It was re @-@ released on February 26 , 2016 . Recent reviews by AllMusic and Blender have continued to praise Off the Wall for its appeal in the 21st century . In 2003 , the album was ranked number 68 on Rolling Stone magazine 's list of the 500 greatest albums of all time . The National Association of Recording Merchandisers listed it at number 80 of the Definitive 200 Albums of All Time . In 2008 , Off the Wall was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame .

= = Background = =

Starting in 1972 , Michael Jackson released a total of four solo studio albums with Motown , among them Got to Be There and Ben . These were released as part of The Jackson 5 franchise , and produced successful singles such as " Got to Be There " , " Ben " and a remake of Bobby Day 's " Rockin ' Robin " . The Jackson 5 's sales , however , began declining in 1973 , and the band members chafed under Motown 's strict refusal to allow them creative control or input . Although the group scored several top 40 hits , including the top five disco single " Dancing Machine " and the top 20 hit " I Am Love " , The Jackson 5 ( minus Jermaine Jackson ) left Motown in 1975 . The Jackson 5 signed a new contract with CBS Records in June 1975 , first joining the Philadelphia International Records division and then Epic Records . As a result of legal proceedings , the group was renamed The Jacksons . After the name change , the band continued to tour internationally , releasing six more albums between 1976 and 1984 . From 1976 to 1984 , Michael Jackson was the lead songwriter of the group , writing or co @-@ writing such hits as " Shake Your Body ( Down to the Ground ) " , " This Place Hotel " and " Can You Feel It " .

In 1978 , Jackson starred as Scarecrow in the film musical The Wiz . The musical scores were arranged by Quincy Jones , who formed a partnership with Jackson during the film 's production and agreed to produce the singer 's solo album Off the Wall . Jackson was dedicated to the role , and watched videotapes of gazelles , cheetahs and panthers in order to learn graceful movements for his part . Jones recalled working with Jackson as one of his favorite experiences from The Wiz , and spoke of Jackson 's dedication to his role , comparing his acting style to Sammy Davis , Jr . Critics panned The Wiz upon its October 1978 release . Jackson 's performance as the Scarecrow was one of the only positively reviewed elements of the film , with critics noting that Jackson possessed " genuine acting talent " and " provided the only genuinely memorable moments . " Of the results of

the film , Jackson stated : " I don 't think it could have been any better , I really don 't " . In 1980 , Jackson stated that his time working on The Wiz was " my greatest experience so far ... I 'll never forget that " .

= = Production = =

When Jackson began the Off the Wall project he was not sure what he wanted as the final result ; however , he did not want another record that sounded like The Jacksons , but rather he wanted more creative freedom , something he had not been allowed on prior albums . Jones produced " Off the Wall " , with co @-@ production credit given to Jackson on the songs he wrote for the album . Songwriters included Jackson , Heatwave 's Rod Temperton , Stevie Wonder and Paul McCartney . All sessions took place at Los Angeles County @-@ based recording studios . Rhythm tracks and vocals were recorded at Allen Zentz Recording , the horn section 's contributions took place at Westlake Audio , and string instrumentation was recorded at Cherokee Studios in West Hollywood . Following the initial sessions , audio mixing was handled by Grammy @-@ winning engineer Bruce Swedien at Westlake Audio , after which the original tapes went to the A & M Recording Studio , also located in L.A. , for mastering . Swedien would later mix the recording sessions for Jackson 's next album and his most well @-@ known work , 1982 's Thriller . Jones recalled that , at first , he found Jackson to be very introverted , shy and non @-@ assertive .

" She 's Out of My Life " was written for Jones by Tom Bahler three years prior . Jackson heard and enjoyed it , and Jones allowed him to use it on the record . Jones called in Heatwave 's keyboardist Rod Temperton to write three songs . The intention was for Jackson and Jones to select one of his songs , but Jackson , liking them all , included all of them in the final cut . Jackson stayed up all night to learn the lyrics to these songs instead of singing from a sheet . He finished the vocals to these three Temperton songs in two recording sessions . Temperton took a different approach to his song writing after spending some time researching the background to Jackson 's music style . Temperton mixed his traditional harmony segments with the idea of adding shorter note melodies to suit Jackson 's aggressive style . Jackson wrote " Don 't Stop ' Til You Get Enough " after humming a melody in his kitchen . After listening to hundreds of songs , Jackson and Jones decided upon a batch to record . In hindsight , Jones believed they took a lot of risks in the production of Off the Wall and the final choice of album tracks . Attention was also paid to the album cover , which shows Jackson smiling , wearing a tuxedo and trademark socks . His manager stated , " The tuxedo was the overall plan for the Off the Wall project and package . The tuxedo was our idea , the socks were Michael ' " .

= = Music and vocals = =

Music critics Stephen Thomas Erlewine and Stephen Holden of AllMusic observed that Off the Wall was crafted from funk , disco @-@ pop , soul , soft rock , jazz and pop ballads . Prominent examples include the ballad " She 's Out of My Life " , the funk tune " Workin ' Day and Night " , and the disco song " Get on the Floor " . " I Can 't Help It " is a jazz piece . In Quincy Jones ' autobiography , he compares Jackson to other jazz singers noting that Jackson " has some of the same qualities as the great jazz singers I 'd worked with : Ella , Sinatra , Sassy , Aretha , Ray Charles , Dinah . Each of them had that purity , that strong signature sound and that open wound that pushed them to greatness . " " She 's Out of My Life " is a melodic pop ballad . The end of the former song showed an " emotional " Jackson crying as the track concluded . Of the song R & B writer Nelson George proclaimed , " [ It ] became a Jackson signature similar to the way " My Way " served Frank Sinatra . The vulnerability , verging on fragility that would become embedded in Michael 's persona found , perhaps , its richest expression in this wistful ballad " . " Rock with You " is a romantic , mid @-@ tempo song . The album 's songs have a tempo ranging from 66 beats per minute on " She 's Out of My Life " , to 128 on " Workin ' Day and Night " .

With the arrival of Off the Wall in the late 1970s , Jackson 's abilities as a vocalist were well regarded ; AllMusic writer Stephen Thomas Erlewine described him as a " blindingly gifted vocalist "

. At the time , Rolling Stone compared his vocals to the " breathless , dreamy stutter " of Stevie Wonder . Their analysis was also that " Jackson 's feathery @-@ timbered tenor is extraordinary beautiful . It slides smoothly into a startling falsetto that 's used very daringly " . Writer , journalist and biographer J. Randy Taraborrelli expressed the opinion that Jackson sings with " sexy falsetto " vocals in " Don 't Stop ' Til You Get Enough " .

= = Release = =

Taraborrelli stated , " Fans and industry peers alike were left with their mouths agape when Off the Wall was issued to the public . Fans proclaimed that they hadn 't heard him sing with such joy and abandon since the early Jackson 5 days " . On July 28 , 1979 , Off the Wall 's first single , " Don 't Stop ' Til You Get Enough " , was released . It peaked atop the Billboard Hot 100 and reached number three in the UK . On November 3 , 1979 the second single from the album , " Rock with You " was released , again it peaked atop the Billboard Hot 100 .

In February , the album 's title track was released as a single and went to number 10 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart and became a top 10 hit in four countries . " She 's Out of My Life " , also reaching number 10 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart in June . Thus Off the Wall became the first album by a solo artist to generate four US top 10 hits . Today , Off the Wall is certified 8 × Multi @-@ Platinum in the US for shipments of eight million units and sold over 20 million copies worldwide . The album 's success lead to the start of a 9 @-@ year partnership between Jackson and Jones ; their next collaboration would be Thriller , which is the world 's best selling album of all time .

= = Reception = =

Off the Wall was hailed as a major breakthrough for Jackson , while receiving critical recognition , along with praises , from major music publications . In a 1979 review of the album , Rolling Stone magazine contributor Stephen Holden praised Jackson 's maturity and transition from his early Motown material , while calling the album a " slick , sophisticated R & B @-@ pop showcase with a definite disco slant " . Holden went on to compare Jackson to Stevie Wonder , another Motown performer who began recording at a young age and gained critical acclaim for his transition .

In The Village Voice , Robert Christgau hailed Off the Wall as " the dance groove of the year " and that Jackson 's vocal stylings were a reminder that he had grown up . In a review for Melody Maker Phil McNeill expressed the opinion that in Off the Wall Jackson sounded comfortable , confident and in control . He believed " Don 't Stop ' Til You Get Enough " had a " classy " introduction and that it was the best song on the album . He also praised " Rock with You " , describing it as " masterful " . The reviewer concurred with a colleague that Jackson was " probably the best singer in the world right now in terms of style and technique " . Giving the album a favorable review in Smash Hits , David Hepworth said that Jackson " sings like an angel " . Sounds shared the same point of view , qualifying Jackson 's voice as " astoninshingly agile " . The first side of Off the Wall is praised for its " clutch of dancers that must have even Nile Rodgers and Bernard Edwards watching their backs " .

In 1980 , Jackson won three awards at the American Music Awards for his solo efforts : Favorite Soul / R & B Album , Favorite Male Soul / R & B Artist and Favorite Soul / R & B Single ( for " Don 't Stop ' Til You Get Enough " ) . That year , he also won Billboard Music Awards for Top Black Artist and Top Black Album and a Grammy Award for Best Male R & B Vocal Performance ( for " Don 't Stop ' Til You Get Enough " ) . Despite its commercial success , Jackson felt Off the Wall should have made a much bigger impact , and was determined to exceed expectations with his next release . In particular , Jackson was disappointed that he had won only a single Grammy Award at the 1980 Grammys , a Grammy Award for Best Male R & B Vocal Performance for " Don 't Stop ' Til You Get Enough " . Jackson stated that " It was totally unfair that it didn 't get Record of the Year and it can never happen again " .

= = Legacy = =

On October 16 , 2001 , a special edition reissue of Off the Wall was released by Sony Records . The material found strong praise from critics more than 20 years after the original release . AllMusic gave the record a five star review , praising the record 's disco @-@ tinged funk and mainstream pop blend , along with Jackson 's songwriting and Jones ' crafty production . The publication believed , " [ Off the Wall ] is an enormously fresh record , one that remains vibrant and giddily exciting years after its release " .

In recent years Blender gave the record a full five star review stating that it was , " A blockbuster party LP that looked beyond funk to the future of dance music , and beyond soul ballads to the future of heart @-@ tuggers ? in fact , beyond R & B to color @-@ blind pop . Hence , the forgivable Wings cover " .

In 2003 , the album was ranked number 68 on Rolling Stone magazine 's list of the 500 greatest albums of all time . The National Association of Recording Merchandisers listed it at number 80 of the Definitive 200 Albums of All Time . In 2004 , Nelson George wrote of Jackson and his music , " the argument for his greatness in the recording studio begins with his arrangements of " Don 't Stop ' Til You Get Enough " . The layers of percussion and the stacks of backing vocals , both artfully choreographed to create drama and ecstasy on the dance floor , still rock parties in the 21st century " . In 2008 , Off the Wall was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame .

On January 7 , 2016 , Sony Music and The Estate of Michael Jackson announced that Off the Wall will be reissued and packaged with a new documentary directed by Spike Lee entitled Michael Jackson 's Journey from Motown to Off the Wall . The reissue and documentary was released on February 26 , 2016 .

Grammy Awards

Grammy Hall of Fame

= = Track listing = =

Notes

The original LP , cassette pressings and first CD issue of this album contain the original mixes of " Rock with You " and " Get on the Floor " .

= = Personnel = =

= = Sales = =