Thriller is the sixth studio album by American singer Michael Jackson . It was released by Epic Records on November 30 , 1982 , as the follow @-@ up to Jackson 's critically and commercially successful 1979 album Off the Wall . Thriller explores similar genres to those of Off the Wall , including pop , post @-@ disco , rock and funk . Recording sessions took place on April to November 1982 at Westlake Recording Studios in Los Angeles with a production budget of \$ 750 @,@ 000 , assisted by producer Quincy Jones .

Of the album 's nine tracks , four were written by Jackson . Seven singles were released from the album , all of which reached the top 10 on the Billboard Hot 100 . Three of the singles had music videos released . " Baby Be Mine " and " The Lady in My Life " were the only tracks that were not released as singles . In just over a year , Thriller became ? and currently remains ? the best @-@ selling album of all time , with estimated sales of 65 million copies worldwide according to various sources . In the United States , it is the best @-@ selling album and has become the first album ever to be certified 32 times multi @-@ platinum for 32 million album @-@ equivalent units . The album won a record @-@ breaking eight Grammy Awards in 1984 , including for Album of the Year .

Thriller enabled Jackson to break down racial barriers in pop music via his appearances on MTV and meeting with President of the United States Ronald Reagan at the White House . The album was one of the first to use music videos as successful promotional tools ? the videos for " Thriller " , " Billie Jean " and " Beat It " all received regular rotation on MTV . In 2001 , a special edition issue of the album was released , which contains additional audio interviews , demo recordings and the song " Someone in the Dark " , which was a Grammy @-@ winning track from the E.T. the Extra @-@ Terrestrial storybook . In 2008 , the album was reissued again as Thriller 25 , containing re @-@ mixes that feature contemporary artists , a previously unreleased song and a DVD , which features the short films from the album and the Motown 25 performance of " Billie Jean " . That same year the album was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame along with Jackson 's Off The Wall LP .

In 2012 , Slant Magazine listed Thriller at number one on its list of "Best Albums of the 1980s". The album was ranked number 20 on Rolling Stone magazine 's 500 Greatest Albums of All Time list in 2003 , and was listed by the National Association of Recording Merchandisers at number three in its "Definitive 200" albums of all time . The Thriller album was included in the Library of Congress 'National Recording Registry of culturally significant recordings and the Thriller video was included in the National Film Preservation Board 's National Film Registry of "culturally , historically , or aesthetically significant films".

= = Background = =

Jackson 's previous album Off the Wall (1979) received strong critical acclaim and was also a commercial success , eventually selling over 20 million copies worldwide . The years between Off the Wall and Thriller were a transitional period for the singer , a time of increasing independence . The period saw the singer become deeply unhappy ; Jackson explained , " Even at home , I 'm lonely . I sit in my room sometimes and cry . It 's so hard to make friends ... I sometimes walk around the neighborhood at night , just hoping to find someone to talk to . But I just end up coming home . " When Jackson turned 21 in August 1979 , he hired John Branca as his manager .

Jackson confided in Branca that he wanted to be the biggest star in show business and " the wealthiest " . The singer was upset about what he perceived to be the under @-@ performance of Off the Wall , stating , " It was totally unfair that it didn 't get Record of the Year and it can never happen again . " He also felt undervalued by the music industry ; in 1980 when Jackson asked the publicist of Rolling Stone if they would be interested in doing a cover story on him , the publicist declined , to which Jackson responded , " I 've been told over and over that black people on the cover of magazines doesn 't sell copies ... Just wait . Someday those magazines are going to be begging me for an interview . Maybe I 'll give them one , and maybe I won 't . "

Jackson reunited with Off the Wall producer Quincy Jones to record his sixth studio album (his second under the Epic label) . The pair worked together on 30 songs , nine of which were eventually included . Thriller was recorded at Westlake Recording Studios in Los Angeles , California , with a production budget of \$ 750 @,@ 000 . The recording for Thriller commenced on April 14 , 1982 at 12 : 00 noon with Jackson and Paul McCartney recording " The Girl Is Mine " and the album was completed with the final day of mixing on November 8 , 1982 . Several members of the band Toto were also involved in the album 's recording and production . Jackson wrote four songs for the record : " Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " , " The Girl Is Mine " , " Beat It " and " Billie Jean " . Unlike many artists , Jackson did not write these songs on paper . Instead , he would dictate into a sound recorder ; when recording he would sing from memory .

The relationship between Jackson and Jones became strained during the album 's recording . Jackson spent much of his time rehearsing dance steps alone . When the album 's nine songs were completed , both Jones and Jackson were unhappy with the result and remixed every song , spending a week on each .

Jackson was inspired to create an album where "every song was a killer "and developed Thriller with that in mind. Jones and songwriter Rod Temperton gave detailed accounts of what occurred for the 2001 reissue of the album. Jones discussed "Billie Jean "and why it was so personal to Jackson, who struggled to deal with a number of obsessed fans. Jones wanted the long introduction on the song to be shortened; however, Jackson insisted that it remain because it made him want to dance. The ongoing backlash against disco made it necessary to move in a different musical direction from the disco @-@ heavy Off the Wall. Jones and Jackson were determined to make a rock song that would appeal to all tastes and spent weeks looking for a suitable guitarist for the song "Beat It". Eventually, they found Steve Lukather of Toto to play the rhythm @-@ guitar parts and Eddie Van Halen of the rock band Van Halen to play the solo.

When Rod Temperton wrote the song "Thriller ", he originally wanted to call it "Starlight " or "Midnight Man ", but settled on "Thriller "because he felt the name had merchandising potential. Always wanting a notable person to recite the closing lyrics, Jones brought in actor Vincent Price who was an acquaintance of Jones 'wife, who completed his part in just two takes. Temperton wrote the spoken portion in a taxi on the way to the recording studio. Jones and Temperton said that some recordings were left off the final cut because they did not have the "edginess" of other album tracks.

Songs recorded by Jackson for consideration included " Carousel " (written by Michael Sembello) , " Got the Hots " (written by Michael Jackson and Quincy Jones) , " Nite Line " (written by Glen Ballard) , " Trouble " (aka " She 's Trouble " , written by Terry Britten , Bill Livsey and Sue Shifrin) and " Hot Street " (written by Rod Temperton and aka " Slapstick ") . Jackson also cut a version of " Starlight " . Demos of all these songs exist and have leaked onto the internet . " Carousel " , " Got the Hots " and " Hot Street " were completed , but left off the final version of the album . A short clip of " Carousel " appeared as a bonus track on the 2001 reissue of the album ; the full version was later released on iTunes in 2013 as part of The Ultimate Fan Extras Collection .

= = Composition = =

Thriller explores different music genres , including pop , post @-@ disco , rock and funk . According to Steve Huey of AllMusic , it refined the strengths of Jackson 's previous album Off the Wall ; the dance and rock tracks were more aggressive , while the pop tunes and ballads were softer and more soulful . The album includes the ballads " The Lady in My Life " , " Human Nature " and " The Girl Is Mine " ; the funk pieces " Billie Jean " and " Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " ; and the disco set " Baby Be Mine " and " P.Y.T. (Pretty Young Thing) " and has a similar sound to the material on Off the Wall . " Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " is accompanied by a bass and percussion background and the song 's centerpiece , a climaxing African @-@ inspired chant (often misidentified as Swahili , but actually syllables based on Duala) , gave the song an international

flavor . " The Girl Is Mine " tells of two friends ' fight over a woman , arguing over who loves her more and concludes with a spoken rap . The album 's songs have a tempo ranging from 80 beats per minute on " The Girl is Mine " , to 138 on " Beat It " .

Despite the light pop flavor of these two records , Thriller , more so than Off the Wall , displayed foreshadowings of the contradictory thematic elements that would come to characterize Jackson 's subsequent works . With Thriller , Jackson would begin his association with the subliminal motif of paranoia and darker themes , including supernatural imagery in the album 's title track . This is evident on the songs "Billie Jean " , " Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " and " Thriller " . In " Billie Jean " , Jackson sings about an obsessive fan who alleges he has fathered a child of hers ; in " Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " he argues against gossips and the media . In the former song , Jones had Jackson sing vocal overdubs through a six @-@ foot @-@ long cardboard tube and brought in jazz saxophonist Tom Scott to play a rare instrument , the lyricon , a wind @-@ controlled analog synthesizer . Bassist Louis Johnson ran through his part on a Yamaha bass guitar . The song opens with a long bass @-@ and @-@ drums introduction . In the song " Thriller " , sound effects such as creaking door , thunder , feet walking on wooden planks , winds and howling dogs can be heard .

The anti @-@ gang @-@ violence "Beat It "became a homage to West Side Story and was Jackson 's first successful rock cross @-@ over piece . Jackson later said of "Beat It ", " the point is no one has to be the tough guy , you can walk away from a fight and still be a man . You don 't have to die to prove you 're a man " . " Human Nature " , co @-@ written by Steve Porcaro of the band Toto , is moody and introspective , as conveyed in lyrics such as , " Looking out , across the morning , the City 's heart begins to beat , reaching out , I touch her shoulder , I 'm dreaming of the street " .

By the late 1970s , Jackson 's abilities as a vocalist were well regarded ; AllMusic described him as a "blindingly gifted vocalist" . Rolling Stone compared his vocals to the "breathless , dreamy stutter "of Stevie Wonder . Their analysis was also that "Jackson 's feathery @-@ timbred tenor is extraordinarily beautiful . It slides smoothly into a startling falsetto that 's used very daringly ". With the release of Thriller , Jackson could sing low ? down to a basso low C ? but he preferred to sing higher because pop tenors have more range to create style . Rolling Stone was of the opinion that Jackson was now singing in a "fully adult voice "that was "tinged by sadness ". "P.Y.T. (Pretty Young Thing)", credited to James Ingram and Quincy Jones and "The Lady in My Life" by Rod Temperton , both gave the album a stronger R & B direction ; the latter song was described as "the closest Jackson has come to crooning a sexy , soulful ballad after his Motown years "by Taraborrelli . The singer had already adopted a "vocal hiccup" which he continued to implement in Thriller . The purpose of the hiccup ? somewhat like a gulping for air or gasping ? is to help promote a certain emotion , be it excitement , sadness or fear .

= = Release and reception = =

Thriller was released on November 30 , 1982 , and sold one million copies worldwide per week at its peak . Seven singles were released from the album , including " The Girl Is Mine " ? which was seen as a poor choice for the lead release and led some to believe that the album would be a disappointment and to suggestions that Jackson was bowing to a white audience . " The Girl Is Mine " was followed by the hit single " Billie Jean " , which made Thriller a chart @-@ topper . Success continued with the single " Beat It " , which featured guitarists Eddie Van Halen and Steve Lukather . The album 's title track was released as a single and also became a hit internationally .

Thriller was well received by most critics . Christopher Connelly in a January 1983 review in Rolling Stone gave it four out of five stars and described it as " a zesty LP " with a " harrowing , dark message " . Comparing the songs on the album with the life challenges that the 24 @-@ year @-@ old Jackson had faced since Off the Wall , Connelly remarks that he has " dropped the boyish falsetto " and is facing his " challenges head @-@ on " with " a feisty determination " and " a full , adult voice " . John Rockwell in a December 1982 review in The New York Times also commented on Jackson 's age , comparing his youth with his experience as an entertainer , feeling that perhaps he is a " sometimes too practiced ... performer " , that at times Quincy Jones may " depersonalize

his individuality " with his " slightly anonymous production " and that Jackson may be hiding his true emotions behind " layers of impenetrable , gauzy veils " . The bulk of Rockwell 's review concentrated on how he felt that the album was helping breach " the destructive barriers that spring up regularly between white and black music " , especially as " white publications and radio stations that normally avoid black music seem willing to pretend he isn 't black after all " . He feels that Thriller is " a wonderful pop record , the latest statement by one of the great singers in popular music today " and that there are " hits here , too , lots of them " .

In his consumer guide for The Village Voice , Robert Christgau gave the album an A ? rating and commented that " this is virtually a hits @-@ plus @-@ filler job , but at such a high level it 's almost classic anyway " . He later revised it to an A , and commented in retrospect , " what we couldn 't know is how brilliantly every hit but ' P.Y.T. ' would thrive on mass exposure and public pleasure . " A year after the album 's release , Time summed up the three main singles from the album , saying , " The pulse of America and much of the rest of the world moves irregularly , beating in time to the tough strut of " Billie Jean " , the asphalt aria of " Beat It " , the supremely cool chills of " Thriller " . In 1989 , the Toronto Star music critics took to look over the albums they had reviewed in the past ten years to include in a list based on " commercial impact to social import , to strictly musical merit . " Thriller was placed at number 1 on the list , where it was referred to as his " master work " and that " commercial success has since overshadowed Jackson 's artistic accomplishments on Thriller , and that 's a pity . It was a record for the times , brimming with breathless anticipation and a dread fear of the adult world , a brilliant fantasy that pumped with sexual heat , yet made room for serious reflection "

The album won a record @-@ breaking eight Grammy Awards in 1984, including Album of the Year. Jackson won seven of the Grammys for the album while the eighth Grammy went to Bruce Swedien. That same year, Jackson won eight American Music Awards, the Special Award of Merit and three MTV Video Music Awards. Thriller was recognized as the world 's best @-@ selling album on February 7, 1984, when it was inducted into the Guinness Book of World Records. It is one of four albums to be the best @-@ seller of two years (1983?1984) in the US.

On December 16 , 2015 , Thriller was certified 30 \times platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America , for shipments of at least 30 million units in the US . After the inclusion of streaming and tracks sales into the RIAA album awards in 2016 , Thriller was re @-@ certified 32 \times platinum for a total of 32 million album @-@ equivalent units . The album topped the charts in many countries , sold 4 @.@ 2 million copies in the UK , 2 @.@ 5 million in Japan , and was certified 15 \times Platinum in Australia . Still popular today , Thriller sells an estimated 130 @,@ 000 copies in the US per year ; it reached number two in the US Catalog charts in February 2003 and number 39 in the UK in March 2007 .

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= = Influence and legacy = =
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= = = Music industry = = =

Blender described Jackson as the "late 20th century 's preeminent pop icon ", while The New York Times gave the opinion that he was a "musical phenomenon " and that " in the world of pop music, there is Michael Jackson and there is everybody else ". Jackson changed the way the industry functioned: both as an artistic persona and as a financial, profitable entity. His attorney John Branca observed that Jackson achieved the highest royalty rate in the music industry to that point: approximately \$ 2 for each album sold. As a result, Jackson earned record @-@ breaking profits from compact disc sales and from the sale of copies of the documentary, The Making of Michael Jackson 's Thriller, produced by Jackson and John Landis. Funded by MTV, the film sold over 350 @,@ 000 copies in its first few months. In a market then driven by singles, Thriller raised the significance of albums, yet its multiple hit singles changed perceived notions as to the number of successful singles that could be taken from an individual album. The era saw the arrival of novelties like the Michael Jackson doll, that appeared in stores in May 1984 at a price of \$ 12. Thriller retains

a position in American culture; biographer J. Randy Taraborrelli explains, " At some point, Thriller stopped selling like a leisure item? like a magazine, a toy, tickets to a hit movie? and started selling like a household staple ".

At the time of the album 's release, a press statement from Gil Friesen, the then President of A & M Records, read that, "The whole industry has a stake in this success." Time magazine speculated that "the fallout from Thriller has given the [music] business its best years since the heady days of 1978, when it had an estimated total domestic revenue of \$4 @.@ 1 billion." Time summed up Thriller 's impact as a "restoration of confidence." for an industry bordering on "the ruins of punk and the chic regions of synthesizer pop. "The publication described Jackson 's influence at that point as, "Star of records, radio, rock video. A one @-@ man rescue team for the music business. A songwriter who sets the beat for a decade. A dancer with the fanciest feet on the street. A singer who cuts across all boundaries of taste and style and color too."

When Thriller and "Billie Jean " were searching to reach their market demographic , MTV and cable TV had a smaller market share than the much larger reach of broadcast television stations in the United States . A national broadcast TV audience on ABC , NBC and CBS affiliate stations , as well as major independent TV stations , was desired by CBS / Epic Records to promote Thriller . The national broadcast TV premiere of the Thriller album 's first video , "Billie Jean " , was during the week of Halloween in October 1984 and was the idea of Video Concert Hall executive producers Charles Henderson and Jerry Crowe . Video Concert Hall , the first nationwide music video TV network , taped the one @-@ hour special in Hollywood and Atlanta , where the TV studios of Video Concert Hall were located . The Thriller TV special was hosted by Thriller video co @-@ star Vincent Price , distributed by Henderson @-@ Crowe Syndications , Inc. and aired in the top 20 TV markets and much of the United States , including TV stations WNEW (New York) , WFLD (Chicago) , KTTV (Los Angeles) , WPLG (Miami) , WQTV (Boston) and WXIA (Atlanta) , for a total of 150 TV stations .

From the moment Thriller was released , it set the standard for the music industry : artists , record labels , producers , marketers and even choreographers . The music video was ahead of its time and it is considered a monumental one ? not only in Jackson 's career , but also in the history of pop music . Epic Records ' approach to creating a song and video that would appeal to the mass market ended up influencing the way that professionals now market and release their songs . John Landis 's production of a mini @-@ movie , rather than the usual short music video , would raise the bar for other directors and producers .

= = = Music videos and racial equality = = =

Before the success of Thriller , many felt Jackson had struggled to get MTV airing because he was black . In an effort to attain air time for Jackson , CBS Records President Walter Yetnikoff pressured MTV and declared , " I 'm not going to give you any more videos and I 'm going to go public and fucking tell them about the fact you don 't want to play music by a black guy . "

His position persuaded MTV to begin airing "Billie Jean " and later "Beat It ", (along with Prince 's "Little Red Corvette ") which led to a long partnership and later helped other black music artists to gain mainstream recognition. MTV denies claims of racism in their broadcasting. The popularity of his videos, such as "Beat It " and "Billie Jean ", helped to place the young channel " on the map " and MTV 's focus shifted in favor of pop and R & B. Jackson transformed the medium of music video into an art form and promotional tool through the use of complex story lines, dance routines, special effects and cameo appearances by well known personalities. When the 14 @-@ minute @-@ long Thriller video aired, MTV ran it twice an hour to meet demand. The short film marked an increase in scale for music videos and has been routinely named the best music video ever. The popularity of the video sent the album back to number one in the album chart, but Jackson 's label did not support the release of the third music video from the album. They were already pleased with its success, so Jackson convinced MTV to fund the project. Author, music critic and journalist Nelson George wrote in 2004, " It 's difficult to hear the songs from Thriller and disengage them from the videos. For most of us the images define the songs. In fact it could be argued that Michael

is the first artist of the MTV age to have an entire album so intimately connected in the public imagination with its imagery " . Short films like Thriller largely remained unique to Jackson , while the group dance sequence in " Beat It " has been frequently imitated . The choreography in Thriller has become a part of global pop culture , replicated everywhere from Bollywood to prisons in the Philippines .

For a black artist in the 1980s to that point , Jackson 's success was unprecedented . According to The Washington Post , Thriller paved the way for other African @-@ American artists to achieve mainstream recognition , such as Prince . " The Girl Is Mine " was credited for getting interracial love on the radio . Time noted , " Jackson is the biggest thing since the Beatles . He is the hottest single phenomenon since Elvis Presley . He just may be the most popular black singer ever " .

= = = Contemporary appeal = = =

Today, Thriller is still viewed in a positive light by critics some three decades later. Stephen Thomas Erlewine of AllMusic gave the album the maximum five stars and wrote that the record had something to interest everyone. He believed it showcased harder funk and hard rock while remaining " undeniably fun " . He went on to compliment " Billie Jean " and " Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " and said , " The record 's two best songs : ' Billie Jean , ... and the delirious ' Wanna Be Startin 'Somethin'', the freshest funk on the album [but] the most claustrophobic, scariest track Jackson ever recorded . " Erlewine gave the opinion that it was an improvement on the artist 's previous album, although he was critical of the title track, describing it as "ridiculous" and as having the effect of " arriving in the middle of the record and sucking out its momentum " . Slant Magazine gave the album five stars and , like the AllMusic review and the original Rolling Stone review, paid compliment to the lyrics of "Wanna Be Startin' Somethin'". Giving it five stars in The New Rolling Stone Album Guide (2004), Rolling Stone journalist Jon Pareles commented that Jackson " doubled his ambitions and multiplied his audience " with the album and wrote of its legacy , "Thriller had extramusical help in becoming the best @-@ selling noncompilation album of all time : Jackson 's dancing feet and dazzling stage presence, amplified by the newfound promotional reach of music video and the Reagan era 's embrace of glossy celebrity. But especially in the album 's seven hit singles (out of nine songs) , the music stands on its own . "

Culture critic Nelson George wrote that Jackson " has educated R. Kelly , Usher , Justin Timberlake and countless others with Thriller as a textbook " . As a sign of the album 's longevity , in 2003 Thriller was ranked at number 20 on the Rolling Stone 500 Greatest Albums of All Time list and was listed by the National Association of Recording Merchandisers at number three of the " Definitive 200 " albums of all time . In 2008 , 25 years after its release , the record was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame and , a few weeks later , was among 25 recordings preserved by the Library of Congress to the National Recording Registry as " culturally significant " . In 2009 , music critics for MTV Base and VH1 both listed Thriller as the best album released since 1981 . Thriller , along with other critic favorites , were then polled by the public . 40 @,@ 000 people found Thriller to be the Best Album of all time by MTV Generation , gaining a third of all votes .

= = Reissues and catalog sales = =

Thriller was reissued on October 16, 2001, in an expanded set titled Thriller: Special Edition. The original tracks were remastered and the album included a new booklet and bonus material, including the songs "Someone in the Dark ", "Carousel " and Jackson 's original "Billie Jean "demo, as well as audio interviews with Jones and Temperton discussing the recording of the album. Sony also hired sound engineer and mixer Mick Guzauski to work with Jackson on creating 5 @.@ 1 @-@ channel surround sound mixes of Thriller, as well as all his other albums, for release on the then @-@ new Super Audio CD format. Despite numerous retries, the artist never approved any of the mixes. Consequently, Thriller was issued on SACD only in a stereo version.

In February 2008, Epic Records released Thriller 25; Jackson served as executive producer. Thriller 25 appeared on CD, USB and vinyl with seven bonus tracks, a new song called "For All

Time ", a snippet of Vincent Price 's voice @-@ over and five remixes featuring American artists Fergie, will.i.am, Kanye West and Akon. It also included a DVD featuring three music videos, the Motown 25 "Billie Jean " performance and a booklet with a message from Jackson. The ballad " For All Time " supposedly dates from 1982, but is often credited as being from Dangerous sessions. Two singles were released from the reissue: " The Girl Is Mine 2008 " and " Wanna Be Startin' Somethin' 2008 ".

Thriller 25 was a commercial success and did particularly well as a reissue . It peaked at number one in eight countries and Europe . It peaked at number two in the US , number three in the UK and reached the top 10 in over 30 national charts . It was certified Gold in 11 countries including the UK , received a 2 \times Gold certification in France and received platinum certification in Poland . In the United States , Thriller 25 was the second best @-@ selling album of its release week , selling one hundred and sixty six thousand copies , just fourteen thousand short of reaching the number one position . It was ineligible for the Billboard 200 chart as a re @-@ release but entered the Pop Catalog Charts at number one (where it stayed for ten non @-@ consecutive weeks) , with the best sales on that chart since December 1996 . With the arrival of Halloween that November , Thriller 25 spent an eleventh non @-@ consecutive week atop the US catalog chart . This brought US sales of the album to 688 @,@ 000 copies , making it the best @-@ selling catalog album of 2008 . This was Jackson 's best launch since Invincible in 2001 , selling three million copies worldwide in 12 weeks .

After Jackson 's death in June 2009, Thriller set additional records. It sold more than 100 @,@ 000 copies, placing it at number two on the Top Pop Catalog Albums chart. Songs from Thriller also helped Jackson become the first artist to sell more than one million song downloads in a week. According to Nielsen SoundScan, Thriller was the 14th best @-@ selling album of 2009 in the United States, with 1 @.@ 27 million copies sold.

For one week beginning November 20, 2015, Google Play Music offered a free copy of the album to its users in the U.S. It is called Thriller (Google Play Exclusive Version). It adds a tenth track to the original, Billie Jean (Home Demo from 1981). To date, Thriller remains the best @-@ selling album of all time, selling over 65 million copies worldwide.

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= = Track listing = =

= = Personnel = =

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= = Certifications = =
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