

= Earth Song =

" Earth Song " is the third single from Michael Jackson 's album HIStory : Past , Present and Future , Book I. It is the fifth song on the second disc of the album . It is a ballad that incorporates elements of blues , gospel and opera . Jackson had a long @-@ standing history of releasing socially conscious material such as " We Are the World " , " Man in the Mirror " and " Heal the World " . However , " Earth Song " was the first that overtly dealt with the environment and animal welfare . " Earth Song " was made for the Dangerous album but it failed to make the final cut . The song was written and composed by Jackson ; the task of production was split between Jackson , David Foster and Bill Bottrell .

" Earth Song " was accompanied by a lavish music video shot in four geographical regions . It centered on the destruction and rebirth of Earth and went on to receive a Grammy nomination in 1997 . The song was a top five hit in most European countries . It remains Jackson 's best @-@ selling single in the United Kingdom , and was the country 's number @-@ one Christmas single in 1995 . " Earth Song " was not released as a single in the United States . Jackson went on to receive recognition from various animal and environmental organizations .

In 2011 the song was paired @-@ up with the poem " Planet Earth " (previously released on Michael Jackson 's This Is It , in 2009) and released as a song in the remix album Immortal . The song was the last song to be rehearsed by Jackson , shortly after midnight on June 25 , 2009 , making it the final song ever performed by Michael Jackson .

= = Background = =

Jackson already had a long @-@ standing history of writing charitable or socially conscious material . As a child , he had recorded the song " In Our Small Way " for his first album Got to Be There . As an adult , Jackson used his fame and wealth to promote various causes . In 1985 , he co @-@ wrote the charity single " We Are the World " with Lionel Richie , which was released worldwide to aid the poor in Africa and the US . The single became one of the best @-@ selling singles of all time , with nearly 20 million copies sold and millions of dollars donated to famine relief . It was also the first time Jackson was seen as a humanitarian . All of the profits from his single " Man in the Mirror " went to charity . Jackson founded the " Heal the World Foundation " in 1992 , inspired by his charity single of the same name .

Following the illness and death of Ryan White , Jackson helped draw public attention to HIV / AIDS , something that was still controversial at the time . He publicly pleaded with the Clinton Administration at Bill Clinton 's Inaugural Gala to give more money to HIV / AIDS charities and research . He would go on to perform the song " Gone Too Soon " for White and other victims of the illness .

= = Production = =

" Earth Song " was originally written and composed by Jackson in the Hotel Imperial in Vienna , Austria under the title " What About Us " . A demo , which featured Jackson singing the ending in falsetto , was to be released as part of a bonus disc for the remastered Dangerous album in 2001 but the release was cancelled ; the song along with other tracks were leaked on the internet .

Production of the song was a collaborative effort between Jackson , David Foster and Bill Bottrell . Andrae Crouch 's Choir and Jackson engage in a back and forth chant as the song reaches its climactic finale . Jackson 's intent was to create a song that was lyrically deep yet melodically simple , so the whole world , particularly non @-@ English @-@ speaking fans , could sing along . He conceptualized a song that had an emotional message .

= = = Composition = = =

" Earth Song " is a ballad that incorporates elements of blues , gospel and opera . In the socially

conscious track , Jackson issues a wakeup @-@ call about the dire situations that mankind has caused and is facing , ranging from war to devastation to animals and earth itself . The song reveals itself to be highly spiritual at the end where Jackson calls on people to remember the earth is their inheritance from God via their ancestor Abraham . " What about death again " reminds all to think about eternal death , asking people to check their heart for repentance , or to see if they really cared at all . Having disfellowshipped himself from Jehovah 's Witnesses , Jackson simplified his faith to focus on the Biblical Jesus Christ until his death . The song is written in the key of Ab melodic minor .

= = Reception = =

= = = Critical response = = =

" Earth Song " received mixed reviews from music critics . James Hunter of Rolling Stone stated , " The slow blues @-@ operatic ' Earth Song ' for all its noble sentiments , sounds primarily like a showpiece " . A San Jose Mercury News review called it " flat " and " whiny " , believing Jackson had already experimented with these concepts earlier in his career .

The Philadelphia Inquirer described the track as " a healing , rhythmic ballad that evokes religious imagery " . A review in The Sacramento Bee was favorable , describing Jackson 's vocal performance as " cool " . Michael Mehle of Rocky Mountain News described the finale as " anthemic " and a " powerful gospel opus " . A Ledger @-@ Enquirer review observed of " Earth Song " , " [it] enjoys the same kind of subtlety , building to a dramatic call @-@ and @-@ response finish with the Andrae Crouch Choir " . Contra Costa Times 's review called it " a bit sappy and overblown " but also acknowledged that it was " epic " and destined to be a " massive smash hit " .

= = = Commercial performance = = =

" Earth Song " remains Jackson 's best @-@ selling single in the United Kingdom , where it sold 1 @.@ 16 million copies as of November 2012 . It debuted at number one on the UK Singles Chart , where it remained for six weeks throughout December 1995 ? beating the U2 / Brian Eno project Passengers in competition to win the Christmas number one spot ? and into early @-@ 1996 . During its stay at number one , " Earth Song " kept the first single released by The Beatles in 25 years , " Free as a Bird " , off the number one position . In early December , bookmakers correctly predicted that Jackson would keep The Beatles off the top position and go on to attain the Christmas number @-@ one single .

The song also took the number one position in Spain , Italy , Sweden and Switzerland , peaking within the top five in almost every European state . In Germany , it was Jackson 's first single to reach No. 1 on the German Singles Chart and by staying on the pole position for 5 consecutive weeks , it 's also his most successful single there .

The song was only released to radio in the U.S. , appearing on the Hot Dance Music / Club Play chart . In 2006 , " Earth Song " reached number 55 on the European Hot 100 Singles chart , following the Visionary : The Video Singles campaign , whereby 20 of Jackson 's hit singles from the 1980s to the 1990s were reissued in several European countries .

= = = Environmental recognition = = =

Jackson received the Genesis Award : 1995 Doris Day Music Award , given each year for animal sensitivity . In 2008 , a writer for the Nigeria Exchange noted , " ' Earth Song ' drew the world 's attention to the degradation and bastardization of the earth as a fall out of various human activities " .

= = Music video = =

The music video for "Earth Song", directed by fine art photographer Nick Brandt, was expensive and well @-@ received; it gained a Le Film Fantastique : Best Video Award in 1996, the 1995 Doris Day Music Award at the Genesis Awards and a Grammy nomination for Best Music Video, Short Form in 1997. The production had an environmental theme, showing images of animal cruelty, deforestation, pollution, poverty and war. Jackson and the world's people unite in a spiritual chant? "Earth Song"? which summons a force that heals the world. Using special effects, time is reversed so that life returns, war ends and the forests regrow. The video closes with a request for donations to Jackson's Heal the World Foundation. The clip was shown infrequently in the United States.

The video was filmed in four geographic regions (Americas, Europe and Africa). The first location was the Amazon Rainforest, where a large part was destroyed a week after the video's completion. Natives of the region appeared in the video and were not actors. The second scene was a war zone in Karlovac, Croatia, with famous Croatian actor Slobodan Dimitrijevi? and the residents of the area. The third location was Tanzania, which incorporated scenes of illegal poaching and hunting into the video. No animals were harmed in the making of the "Earth Song", as the footage came from documentary archives. The final location was in Warwick, New York, where a safe forest fire was simulated in a corn field.

The video was also included on the video albums: HIStory on Film, Volume II, Number Ones and Michael Jackson's Vision.

= = Brit Awards = =

In 1996, Jackson performed "Earth Song" at the Brit Awards in the United Kingdom; he was there to collect a special "Artist of a Generation" award. Jackson sang while dangling off the edge of a high rise crane lift, which he had used the year before while performing it on the German TV show Wetten Dass. Below, a chorus of backing performers joined in and many of them began to physically embrace Jackson upon his descent. In response to the performance, Jarvis Cocker ran onto the stage without permission, lifted his shirt and pretended to break wind, before giving Jackson the insulting V @-@ sign. The Pulp frontman had been there with his band, who had been nominated for three Brit awards. Cocker was subsequently questioned by police over claims he had assaulted some of the child performers, but he was later released without charge. The singer explained that he found the performance offensive, claiming that Jackson had portrayed himself as Christ @-@ like and could do as he pleased because of his immense wealth and power. Jackson condemned Cocker's behavior as "disgusting and cowardly". The incident is referred to in the book Politics and Popular Culture by John Street, Professor of Politics at the University of East Anglia. He says:

"But to read popular culture as a straight @-@ forward? or at least typical? political text is to take a very narrow view of its meaning, and hence of its political message (s). As we have noted, the text's meaning will depend on how it is heard and read. Michael Jackson may have intended his 'Earth Song' as an exercise in compassion; others? like Jarvis Cocker? saw it quite differently. One reason these alternative readings emerge is because of the way the performance of popular culture engages more than a literal text, it employs gestures and symbols, tones of voice, looks and glances, all of which might tell a different story".

= = 2010 Grammy Awards performance = =

The song, along with a 3 @-@ D short film that was to be featured in Jackson's series of comeback concerts This Is It, was performed as a tribute to Jackson. Jennifer Hudson, Carrie Underwood, Smokey Robinson, Celine Dion and Usher all sang the song together, while the video played in the background. The film was shown in its original 3 @-@ D format during the broadcast.

Target provided free 3 @-@ D glasses to customers a week before the Grammy Awards. Paris

and Prince Jackson , Jackson 's oldest children , appeared shortly after the performance to accept Jackson 's Lifetime Achievement Award , where they both gave a short speech . This was the first time the children had spoken publicly since the memorial service that was held for Jackson on July 7 , 2009 .

= = Charts and certifications = =

= = Track listing = =

= = Personnel = =

Written , composed and lead and background vocals by Michael Jackson

Produced by Michael Jackson and David Foster

Co @-@ Produced by Bill Bottrell

Choir performance by the Andrae Crouch Choir

Keyboards : David Paich

Bass guitar : Guy Pratt

Drums : Steve Ferrone

Synthesizer programming : Steve Porcaro

Co @-@ performance by London Philharmonic Orchestra (Orchestral Mix only)

Orchestral arrangement by James Horner (Orchestral Mix only)