

= This Is It (Michael Jackson song) =

" This Is It " is a song co @-@ written by American pop star and musician Michael Jackson and Canadian singer @-@ songwriter Paul Anka . The song was recorded by the former and featured as a track on the album , This Is It (2009) , which accompanies the 2009 concert documentary Michael Jackson 's This Is It . It was premiered worldwide on Jackson 's official website on October 12 , 2009 four months after his death on June 25 , 2009 . Sony Music Entertainment misleadingly referred to the song as a " new single " during its promotion , but it was later confirmed that the song would only be sent for airplay , and not be available to buy as a single release . According to Anka , the song was recorded in 1983 and intended to be a duet between him and Jackson on Anka 's Walk a Fine Line album under the title " I Never Heard " , but these plans fell through . Thereafter , Sa @-@ Fire recorded the track for her album , I Wasn 't Born Yesterday (1991) . The duet version of the song was featured in Anka 's 2013 Duets album . While putting together the This Is It album , Jackson 's demo version of the song was found . His brothers ' vocals and additional instrumentation were then added to the recording . Immediately after its release , Anka threatened legal action against Jackson 's estate . The estate then agreed to give Anka 50 % of the song 's publishing rights .

A pop ballad , the song 's lyrics describe falling and being in love . The instrumentation includes piano , guitar , percussion , and strings . Jackson 's version , styled as a pop ballad , was his first song to chart on Billboard 's Hot Adult Contemporary Chart in over seventeen years . The song was generally well received by critics and enjoyed good chart performances globally . It became a top twenty hit on charts in Japan and Spain , and peaked at number 18 on both Billboard 's US Adult Contemporary and R & B / Hip @-@ Hop song charts . In 2011 , it received a Grammy Award nomination . The song was also accompanied by a music video , directed by Spike Lee , which consisted of footage of Jackson as a child , clips of him throughout his career , and footage of tributes from Jackson 's fans around the world .

= = Background = =

Although it shared its name , the song was not intentionally made for the 2009 concert documentary Michael Jackson 's This Is It . " This Is It " was written by recording artists Paul Anka and Michael Jackson , and a demo version of the song was recorded by Anka and Jackson in 1983 at Anka 's California recording studio . The song was intended to be added as an album track on Anka 's 1983 duets album Walk a Fine Line that he was in the process of recording at the time . Anka claimed in 2009 that following the release of Jackson 's 1982 album Thriller , Jackson " stole the [master] tapes " from Anka 's recording studio .

Soon after the alleged theft in the ' 80s , Anka threatened to take legal action if the recordings were not returned . Jackson 's version of " This Is It " was reportedly found in a box of tapes with only Jackson 's voice and a piano accompaniment , the song was described as having been a " bare @-@ bone " recording . Jackson subsequently returned the tapes , although Anka insisted that Jackson had made a copy of the recordings of " I Never Heard , " and retitled the track with his voice to " This Is It . " In 1990 , Anka allowed the Puerto Rican R & B recording artist Sa @-@ Fire to record " This Is It , " , which she did under the original title " I Never Heard " on her second studio album I Wasn 't Born Yesterday in 1991 .

= = Release = =

On September 13 , 2009 , it was reported that a " secret Michael Jackson single " was being produced to promote the film Michael Jackson 's This Is It , so that the song 's release would coincide with the release of the film . It was reported that Jackson had planned to release the song for his planned concerts but after his death it was shelved until producers in Los Angeles , California decided to remix the vocals with an orchestral accompaniment . On September 23 , Sony Music Entertainment announced they were planning on releasing a song entitled , " This Is It " as a single .

The song was to feature backing vocals by several of Jackson 's brothers and would be included in a two @-@ disc album , This Is It . It was also confirmed that the song would be featured during the end credits of the movie production . Sony said , in response to the reports , that it was a coincidence that his upcoming concert series was also titled " This Is It , " explaining they had no evidence that he had planned to release the song . However , John McClain and John Branca , two representatives of Jackson 's estate said , in a prepared statement , that " This Is It " was " picked because the lyrics were appropriate because of the name Michael [Jackson] gave his tour " and that they were " thrilled to present " the song .

Although Sony did not release the track as a single , it was confirmed that " This Is It " would be released to radio stations for airplay , but that it would not be downloadable . Sony chose to release the song as an album @-@ only track as part of a strategy to encourage fans to buy the entire album . McClain , also a co @-@ producer of the This Is It album said , " This song only defines , once again , what the world already knows -- that Michael [Jackson] is one of God 's greatest gifts . " " This Is It " premiered , as scheduled , on Jackson 's official website MichaelJackson.com on October 12 at midnight .

Within the day of the song 's release , via World Wide Web , listeners , unaware of the song 's background , drew comparisons of the song to Sa @-@ Fire 's " I Never Heard . " Soon after , media outlets The New York Times and TMZ.com informed Anka of the similarities between the songs . In response , Anka told the New York Times , that " This Is It " was " exactly the same song " as " I Never Heard " and only the titles were different . He also stated that he was planning on taking legal action against Jackson 's estate . Soon afterwards , Jackson 's estate acknowledged that Anka was a co @-@ writer on the song and agreed that Anka would receive 50 percent of the publishing rights from it . Anka said the estate " did the right thing , " and that he felt that he did not think " that anybody tried to do the wrong thing " and it was " an honest mistake . " Anka further stated " They realize it 's a mistake , they realize it 's my song , they realize it 's my production of his vocal in my studio and I am getting 50 percent of the whole project , actually , which is fair . "

Rob Stringer , the chairman of the Epic Label Group , stated that at the time of the song 's release he did not know when Jackson ? s original tape had been recorded or of its similarity to Sa @-@ Fire 's version until it was discussed online over the weekend by Jackson 's fans . Prior to the estate and Anka reaching an agreement , Sa @-@ Fire ? s manager , Sal Abbatiello , stated that he was contemplating filing a lawsuit on behalf of his client , commenting " This is a terrible mistake [...] I ? m pretty sure Paul Anka has a big case . I don ? t know if Sa @-@ Fire has any legal right as the artist . I ? ll have to contact my lawyers . But , hopefully . They ? re advertising this movie everywhere . " Abbatiello also criticized Sony for not researching the possibility that the song might have had been previously released before releasing it .

= = Composition = =

" This Is It " is a pop ballad with a simple mid @-@ tempo keyboard that lasts three minutes and thirty @-@ six seconds . The song begins with Jackson singing , ? This is it , here I stand / I ? m the light of the world , I feel grand / Got this love I can feel / And I know yes for sure it is real ? and then he tenderly hits his signature high notes about a new lover he feels he ? s known " since 1 @,@ 000 years . " Jackson 's brothers Jackie , Tito , Jermaine and Marlon (credited as The Jacksons) are featured as background vocals throughout the song . Background music includes fingersnaps , a " soaring chorus , " big @-@ build strings and " bubbly guitars . " The song is played in the key of Bb major . Throughout the song , Jackson 's vocal range spans from F4 to C6 . The song 's tempo is moderate , and its metronome speed is 96 beats per minute . According to the music published on Musicnotes.com by Alfred Music Publishing and the Winnipeg Sun , the song is written in common time . The lyrics " toggle between grandiosity " (" This is it , here I stand / I 'm the light of the world , I feel grand ") and " shy , romantic yearning " (" I never heard a single word about you / Falling in love wasn 't my plan ") . Darryl Sterdan of the Winnipeg Sun felt that Jackson 's voice and the background music sounded " like a demo that 's been fleshed out with overdubs and doowoppy backup vocals from his brothers . " Anthony McCartney , of the Associated Press felt that the finger

@-@ snap percussion " echoes " that present in Jackson 's 1982 song " The Girl Is Mine " with Paul McCartney .

= = Critical reception = =

The track gained average @-@ to @-@ positive reviews and a nomination for Best Male Pop Vocal Performance at the 2011 53rd Grammy Awards . Gary Trust of Billboard reported that " response among radio programmers to the song has been almost universally positive . " Among these were Jay Lustig of The Star @-@ Ledger , who felt it was a " sweet , mid @-@ tempo love song " that , with " orchestral strings " and " creamy backing vocals " by Jackson 's brothers , gave it a " crisp beat . " In contrast , Darryl Sterdan of The Winnipeg Sun gave it a 3 out of 5 rating , saying , " This may be something , but it 's not ' It ' ... On the whole , it 's a sweet little number -- but it doesn 't live up to its authoritative title . " Todd Martens , of the Los Angeles Times 's Pop & Hiss music blog , called " This Is It " a " trifle " and while the track " certainly won 't embarrass Jackson 's legacy or break the hearts of fans eager to hear Jackson 's voice again " it does " bring the fallen pop icon a little back down to earth . " Jessica Robertson , an AOL music editor , said , " It 's a safe , mid @-@ tempo pop ballad that features what his fans love : his trademark breathy vocals and confident delivery . I don 't think it will set the world on fire , because it 's missing what fans and critics love most about his songs , which is a strong and powerful groove to carry it . "

Many reviewers noted similarities in the song to earlier Jackson songs . Caryn Ganz of Rolling Stone felt musically , " This Is It " sounded similar to Jackson 's 1987 song " I Just Can 't Stop Loving You , " and Leah Greenbatt , of Entertainment Weekly thought " some listeners may pick up shades " of Jackson 's 1993 single " Will You Be There . " Cori Murray , an entertainment director at Essence magazine , described the track as " not bad , " and felt that it sounded " like something " Jackson " could have put on an album . " Dan Aquilante , of the New York Post , who described the song as " an optimistic , R & B ballad with an upbeat , percolating rhythm that has all the bombast and power of the New Jack Swing period of the early ' 90s . " James Montgomery , of MTV News , felt that the song was the " perfect MJ tune " and that Jackson " was a hell of a singer . " He also stated that he felt that Jackson had a " wonderous voice , " and the song " a prime showcase for Jackson 's prodigious pipes . " Montgomery went on to say that when he ignored the negative elements surrounding the song and focused , that he felt it was " wonderful " :

Ignore the trilling strings , and the soft @-@ jazz / light @-@ funk backing track (which sort of make [s] the song sound like Off the Wall 's " I Can 't Help It . ") Block out the hype surrounding the song 's release and the drama surrounding Jackson 's death . Focus on those vocals ? the way Jackson counts it in with a boyish " one , two , three , four , " the way he glides from verse to verse with breathless , effortless phrasing , the lean @-@ yet @-@ heavy falsetto , the hint of gravel (and gravitas) is the verses , the soaring choruses ? it 's all there , untarnished by time or tabloids . And it 's all wonderful .

= = Chart performance = =

Despite being a non @-@ downloadable album track , the song appeared on many charts due to radio play alone . Gary Trust of Billboard acknowledged that without " This Is It " having a digital (distribution) component its chances on making an impact on the Billboard Hot 100 would not be likely . During the week ending October 21 , 2009 , " This Is It " debuted at number 19 on Billboard 's Hot Adult Contemporary Tracks . " This Is It " returned Jackson and his brothers to the chart for the first time since 1970 , when , billed as The Jackson 5 , the group marked its sole previous entry , " I 'll Be There , " which went on to peak on the chart at number 24 . Its charting ended a 13 @-@ year , seven @-@ month absence Jackson had from the chart ; his prior entry was " You Are Not Alone , " which wrapped a 26 @-@ week run on the list dated March 16 , 1996 . This song is also Jackson 's 26th charted Adult Contemporary title , making him the seventh male artist to score a top 20 Adult Contemporary single in each decade since the 1970s . Eventually , the track peaked at number 18 on the Adult Contemporary chart . Also in " This Is It " 's first week of release , the song debuted on

Billboard 's Hot R & B / Hip @-@ Hop Songs Chart at number 43 . " This Is It " went on to peak at number eighteen on the R & B / Hip @-@ Hop Song @-@ genre chart . " This Is It " also charted on the Adult R & B Songs chart , peaking at number 9 .

" This Is It " ' s most successful charting country was Japan , where the song placed within the top ten , peaking at number five on Japan 's Hot 100 chart . Also , it peaked at number 30 on the Slovakian airplay chart , at number 22 on the Dutch singles chart , and at number 27 on the Czech airplay chart . The song peaked on the Canadian Hot 100 chart at number 56 but was quite successful in Spain : The track peaked at number 18 on the Spanish singles chart . According to Billboard , within the first 24 hours of release the song had over 800 radio plays in Europe . Another commercially successful territory for " This Is It " was China . It debuted at number one in Hit FM , China Radio International 's western music radio 's airplay charts , " Top 20 Countdown " on October 24 , 2009 . It held the top position for four consecutive weeks until Beyoncé Knowles 's " Broken @-@ Hearted Girl " superseded it on November 21 . However , the track bounced back to the top position of the chart on November 28 .

= = Music video = =

On December 27 , 2009 , the song 's official music video was released . It was directed by Academy Award @-@ nominee Spike Lee , who had previously worked with Jackson directing the video for the musician 's song entitled " They Don 't Care About Us " for his HIStory : Past , Present and Future , Book I (1995) album . The video for " This Is It " premiered on the webpage of Lee 's production company 40 Acres & A Mule Filmworks . The video , almost five @-@ minutes long , features various scenes of Jackson 's hometown and former residence in Gary , Indiana , along with photos and videos of him and tributes from his fans around the world .

The video opens with a clip of a poster in Gary pointing fans toward Jackson 's childhood home , at the corner of 2300 Jackson Street and Jackson Family Boulevard and the sound of a vintage recording of one of Jackson 's siblings yelling " Michael " repeatedly . An image , that is shown several times during the video , shows a one @-@ way traffic sign near Jackson 's old house that is covered in graffiti honoring Jackson , including " we luv yuh Michael . " Images , shown as a slide @-@ show , of Jackson performing as a child are mixed in with shots of play sets , baseball bats and Gary 's gritty industrial skyline . A central image captured by Lee is a ' plea ' for tolerance etched onto a stop sign in Gary , where someone had written the message " This Is It " above the word " Stop " under which they 've added " hatin ' . " Interspersed is archival footage of Jackson throughout his career and of him greeting his fans in various parts of the world . There are also shots of the musician 's fans paying tribute in their own Jackson memorabilia to him following his death . At one point in the video , one of the lyrics from the song , " I never heard a single word about you , " floats up out of the concrete , fading into two more shots of fan tributes from around the world and multiple flowers and messages laid at the gates of Jackson 's Neverland Ranch . The video , several times , shows a single red balloon floating in the air and empty swings swaying in the breeze . Towards the end of the video , there is footage of Jackson doing one of his signature dance moves , the moonwalk . It ends with footage of a black stool with Jackson 's trademark black fedora and silver glove on top of it under a spotlight in front of his family 's Gary residence at night .

George Merchan of JoBlo.com felt that the video was " clearly " a " loving patchwork of documentary footage , graphics , and original location shoots . " Simon Vozick @-@ Levinson of Entertainment Weekly described the video as being a " heart felt tribute " and said that , due to the circumstances of Lee having no footage of Jackson performing the song to work with , felt the director did a " very nice job " with it . A negative review came from Jim Farber , the music critic for the New York Daily News . He felt the video was a " mini retrospective " of Jackson 's life and criticized the " Stop Hatin ' " stop sign , feeling that it was promoting press censorship and discussion about the darker aspects of Jackson 's life .

= = Track listing = =

Promo - CD single

" This Is It " (album version) ? 3 : 37

" This Is It " (orchestra single version) ? 3 : 43

" This Is It " (edited orchestra version) ? 4 : 40

CD promo single

" This Is It " (album version) ? 3 : 37

" This Is It " (orchestra single version) ? 3 : 43

= = Personnel = =

Written by Michael Jackson and Paul Anka

Produced by Michael Jackson , John McClain and Mervyn Warren

Lead vocals by Michael Jackson

Vocal & track arrangements by Mervyn Warren

String arrangement by Clare Fischer

Background vocals by The Jacksons

Bass vocals by Alvin Chea

Piano by Greg Phillinganes

Guitar by Paul Jackson , Jr .

Percussion by Raphael Padilla

Recording Engineer : Jon Nettlesbey

Recorded at Marvin 's Room in Hollywood , CA

Mixed by Allen Sides

Assistant Engineer : Wesley Seidman

Mixed at Oceanway Coordination Studios

Mastered by Alan Yoshida

Mastered at Oceanway Mastering

A & R Direction : John Doelp

Production Coordination : JoAnn Tominaga

Accounting Services : Martha Rindels

= = Charts = =