

= Beat It =

" Beat It " is a song written and performed by American singer Michael Jackson and produced by Quincy Jones ( with co @-@ production by Jackson ) . It is the third single from the singer 's sixth solo album , Thriller ( 1982 ) . Eddie Van Halen played the song 's distinctive overdriven guitar solo . While Van Halen was prevented by his record label from appearing in the music video , he did appear on stage with Jackson in Dallas during the Jackson brothers Victory Tour . Following the successful chart performances of the Thriller singles " The Girl Is Mine " and " Billie Jean " , " Beat It " was released on February 3 , 1983 as the album 's third single . The song was promoted with a short film that featured Jackson bringing two gangs together through the power of music and dance .

" Beat It " received the Grammy Awards for Record of the Year and Best Male Rock Vocal Performance , as well as two American Music Awards . It was inducted into the Music Video Producers Hall of Fame . The single , along with its music video , propelled Thriller into becoming the best @-@ selling album of all time . The single was certified platinum in the United States in 1989 . Rolling Stone placed " Beat It " on the 344th spot of its list of " The 500 Greatest Songs of All Time " . The song was also ranked number 81 on Rolling Stone 's " 100 Greatest Guitar Songs of All Time " .

In the decades since its release , " Beat It " has been covered , parodied , and sampled by numerous artists including Pierce the Veil , Fall Out Boy , Pomplamoose , Justin Bieber , Alvin and the Chipmunks , Fergie , John 5 , " Weird Al " Yankovic and Eminem . The song was also featured in the National Highway Safety Commission 's anti @-@ drunk driving campaign .

= = Production and composition = =

" Beat It " was composed by Michael Jackson for his Thriller album . Producer Quincy Jones had wanted to include a rock and roll song in the vein of the Knack 's " My Sharona " , though Jackson reportedly had never previously shown an interest in the genre . Jackson later said of " Beat It " , " I wanted to write a song , the type of song that I would buy if I were to buy a rock song ... That is how I approached it and I wanted the children to really enjoy it ? the school children as well as the college students . " Jermaine Jackson has suggested the inspiration of " Beat It " and its video came from the Jackson family experiencing gang activity in Gary , Indiana . " From our front window , we witnessed , about three bad rumbles between rival gangs . "

Upon hearing the first recorded vocals , Jones stated that it was exactly what he was looking for . The song begins with seven distinct synthesizer notes played on the Synclavier digital synthesizer , while Tom Bahler is credited with Synclavier performance on the song . The intro is taken note for note from a demo LP released the year before , called " The Incredible Sounds of Synclavier II " first published in 1981 by Denny Jaeger Creative Services , Inc and sold by New England Digital , makers of the Synclavier .

Eddie Van Halen , lead guitarist of hard rock band Van Halen , was asked to add a guitar solo . When initially contacted by Jones , Van Halen thought he was receiving a prank call . Having established that the call was genuine , Van Halen recorded his guitar solo free of any charge . " I did it as a favor " , the musician later said . " I was a complete fool , according to the rest of the band , our manager and everyone else . I was not used . I knew what I was doing ? I don 't do something unless I want to do it . " Van Halen recorded his contribution following Jones and Jackson arriving at the guitarist 's house with a " skeleton version " of the song . Fellow guitarist Steve Lukather recalled , " Initially , we rocked it out as Eddie had played a good solo ? but Quincy thought it was too tough . So I had to reduce the distorted guitar sound and that is what was released . " The song was among the last four completed for Thriller ; the others were " Human Nature " , " P.Y.T. ( Pretty Young Thing ) " and " The Lady in My Life " .

On the record , right before Van Halen 's guitar solo begins , a noise is heard that sounds like somebody knocking at a door . It is reported that the knock was a person walking into Eddie 's recording studio . Another story has claimed that the sound was simply the musician knocking on his

own guitar . The sound , however , is that of Jackson knocking on a drum case , as he is credited in the album 's liner notes .

The engineers were shocked during the recording of Van Halen 's solo to discover that the sound of his guitar had caused the monitor speaker in the control room to catch fire , causing one to exclaim , " This must be REALLY good ! "

The lyrics of " Beat It " are about defeat and courage , and have been described as a " sad commentary on human nature " . The line " don 't be a macho man " is said to express Jackson 's dislike of violence , whilst also referring to the childhood abuse he faced at the hands of his father Joseph . The song is played in the key of D ? minor at a moderately fast tempo of 132 beats per minute . In the song , Jackson 's vocal range is B3 to D5 .

Drums on the song were played by Toto co @-@ founder Jeff Porcaro .

A remix of " 2 Bad " , is featured on Blood on the Dance Floor : HIStory in the Mix containing a sample of " Beat It " as well as a rap by John Forté and guitar solo by Wyclef Jean .

= = Release and reception = =

" Beat It " was released on February 14 , 1983 , following the successful chart performances of " The Girl Is Mine " and " Billie Jean " . Frank DiLeo , the vice president of Epic Records , convinced Jackson to release " Beat It " whilst " Billie Jean " was heading towards No. 1 . Dileo , who would later become the singer 's manager , predicted that both singles would remain in the Top 10 at the same time . " Billie Jean " remained atop the Billboard Hot 100 for seven weeks , before being toppled by " Come On Eileen " . The Dexys Midnight Runners ' song stayed at No. 1 for a single week , before Jackson reclaimed the position with " Beat It " .

" Billie Jean " and " Beat It " occupied Top 5 positions at the same time , a feat matched by very few artists . The single remained at the top of the Hot 100 for a total of three weeks . The song also charted at No. 1 on the US R & B singles chart and No. 14 on the Billboard Top Tracks chart in the US . Billboard ranked it at the No. 5 song for 1983 . " Beat It " also claimed the top spot in Spain and The Netherlands , reached No. 3 in the UK and the Top 20 in Austria , Norway , Italy , Sweden and Switzerland .

In a Rolling Stone review , Christopher Connelly describes " Beat It " as the best song on Thriller , adding that it " ain 't no disco AOR track " . He notes of the " nifty dance song " , " Jackson 's voice soars all over the melody , Eddie Van Halen checks in with a blistering guitar solo , you could build a convention center on the backbeat " . AllMusic 's Stephen Thomas Erlewine states that the song is both " tough " and " scared " . Robert Christgau claimed that the song has Eddie Van Halen " wielding his might in the service of antimacho " . Slant Magazine observed that the song was an " uncharacteristic dalliance with the rock idiom " . The track also won praise from Jackson biographer J. Randy Taraborrelli , who stated that the song was " rambunctious " .

" Beat It " has been recognized with several awards . At the 1984 Grammy Awards , the song earned Jackson two of a record @-@ eight awards : Record of the Year and Best Male Rock Vocal Performance . The track won the Billboard Music Award for favorite dance / disco 12 " LP in 1983 . The single was certified gold by the Recording Industry Association of America ( RIAA ) , a few months after its release , for shipments of at least one million units . In 1989 , the standard format single was re @-@ certified platinum by the RIAA , based on the revised sales level of one million units for platinum singles . The total number of digital sales in the US , as of September 2010 , stands at 1 @,@ 649 @,@ 000 .

= = Music video = =

The music video for " Beat It " helped establish Jackson as an international pop icon . The video was Jackson 's first treatment of black youth and the streets . Both " Beat It " and " Thriller " are notable for their " mass choreography " of synchronized dancers , a Jackson trademark .

The video , which cost Jackson \$ 150 @,@ 000 to create after CBS refused to finance it , was filmed on Los Angeles ' Skid Row ? mainly on locations on East 5th Street ? around March 9 , 1983

. To add authenticity to the production but also to foster peace between them , Jackson had the idea to cast members of rival Los Angeles street gangs Crips and Bloods . In addition to around 80 genuine gang members , the video , which is noted for opening up many job opportunities for dancers in the US , also featured 18 professional dancers and four breakdancers . Besides Jackson , Peters and Vincent Paterson , the cast included Michael DeLorenzo , Stoney Jackson , Tracii Guns , Tony Fields , Peter Tramm , Rick Stone and Cheryl Song .

The video was written and directed by Bob Giraldi , produced by Antony Payne and Mary M. Ensign through production company GASP . The second video released for the Thriller album , it was choreographed by Michael Peters who also performed , alongside Vincent Paterson , as one of the two lead dancers . Despite some sources claiming otherwise , Jackson was involved in creating some parts of the choreography . Jackson asked Giraldi , at the time already an established commercial director but who had never directed a music video , to come up with a concept for the " Beat It " video because he really liked a commercial Giraldi had directed for WLS @-@ TV in Chicago about a married couple of two elderly blind people who instead of running from a run @-@ down neighborhood all the other white people had fled from , chose to stay and throw a block party for all the young children in the area . Contrary to popular belief , the concept of the video was not based on the Broadway musical West Side Story ; in reality Giraldi drew inspiration from his growing up in Paterson , New Jersey .

The video had its world premiere on MTV during prime time on March 31 , 1983 though it should be noted that neither Beat It nor Billie Jean was , as is often claimed , the first music video by an African @-@ American artist to be played on MTV . Soon after its premiere the video was also running on other video programs including BET 's Video Soul , SuperStation WTBS 's Night Tracks , and NBC 's Friday Night Videos . In fact , Beat It was the first video shown on the latter 's first ever telecast on July 29 , 1983 .

The video opens with the news of a fight circulating at a diner . This scene repeats itself at a pool hall , where gang members arrive via foot , forklift , and out of sewers , while the video 's titular song begins to play . The camera cuts to a scene of Jackson lying on a bed , revealing he 's the one singing contemplating the senseless violence . The singer notices rival gangs and leaves . Michael Jackson dons a red leather J. Parks brand jacket , and dances his way towards the fight through the diner and pool hall . A knife fight is taking place between the two gang leaders in a warehouse . They dance battle for an interlude of music until MJ arrives ; the singer breaks up the fight and launches into a dance routine . The video ends with the gang members joining him in the dance , agreeing that violence is not the solution to their problems .

The video received recognition through numerous awards . The American Music Awards named the short film their Favorite Pop / Rock Video and their Favorite Soul Video . The Black Gold Awards honored Jackson with the Best Video Performance award . The Billboard Video Awards recognised the video with 7 awards ; Best Overall Video Clip , Best Performance by a Male Artist , Best Use of Video to Enhance a Song , Best Use of Video to Enhance an Artist 's Image , Best Choreography , Best Overall Video and Best Dance / Disco 12 " . The short film was ranked by Rolling Stone as the No. 1 video , in both their critic 's and reader 's poll . The video was later inducted into the Music Video Producer 's Hall of Fame .

The music video of the song appears 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 .

= = Live performances = =

On July 14 , 1984 , Jackson performed " Beat It " live with his brothers during The Jacksons ' Victory Tour . The brothers were joined on stage by Eddie Van Halen , who played the guitar in his solo spot . The song became a signature song of Jackson ; the singer performed it on all of his world tours : Bad , Dangerous and HIStory . The October 1 , 1992 Dangerous Tour performance of " Beat It " was included on the DVD of the singer 's Michael Jackson : The Ultimate Collection box set . The DVD was later repackaged as Live in Bucharest : The Dangerous Tour . Jackson also

performed the song on the Michael Jackson : 30th Anniversary Special , a concert celebrating the musician 's thirtieth year as a solo performer . The performance featured Slash as the song 's guest guitarist .

A highlight of Jackson 's solo concert tour performances of the song is that would he would begin the song on a cherry picker ( which he would also later use with " Earth Song " during the HIStory World Tour ) after performing Thriller . Another live version of the song is available on the DVD Live at Wembley July 16 , 1988 . The song would have also been performed as part of the This Is It concerts which were cancelled due to Jackson 's death .

= = Legacy = =

Michael Jackson 's " Beat It " has been cited as one of the most successful , recognized , awarded and celebrated songs in the history of pop music ; both the song and video had a large impact on pop culture . The song is said to be a " pioneer " in black rock music , and is considered one of the cornerstones of the Thriller album . Eddie Van Halen has been praised for adding " the greatest guitar solo " , aiding " Beat It " into becoming one of the biggest selling singles of all time .

Shortly after its release , " Beat It " was included in the National Highway Safety Commission 's anti @-@ drunk driving campaign , " Drinking and Driving Can Kill a Friendship " . The song was also included on the accompanying album . Jackson collected an award from President Ronald Reagan at the White House , in recognition for his support of the campaign . Reagan stated that Jackson was " proof of what a person can accomplish through a lifestyle free of alcohol or drug abuse . People young and old respect that . And if Americans follow his example , then we can face up to the problem of drinking and driving , and we can , in Michael 's words , ' Beat It ' . "

Frequently listed in greatest song polling lists , " Beat It " was ranked as the world 's fourth favorite song in a 2005 poll conducted by Sony Ericsson . Over 700 @,@ 000 people in 60 different countries cast their votes . Voters from the UK placed " Billie Jean " at No. 1 , ahead of " Thriller " , with a further five of the top ten being solo recordings by Jackson . In 2004 , Rolling Stone magazine placed " Beat It " in the 337th spot on its list of the 500 Greatest Songs of All Time . The song was featured in the films Back to the Future Part II , Zoolander and Undercover Brother . When re @-@ released , as part of the Visionary campaign in 2006 , " Beat It " charted at No. 15 in the UK . The song has been used in TV commercials for companies like Budweiser , eBay , Burger King , Delta Air Lines , Game Boy , Coldwell Banker and the NFL . On the City Guys episode of season 3 's " Face the Music " , Jamal says to Slick Billy West , played by Sherman Hemsley , " Well Gone Michael Jackson and Beat It " which was in the final scene . The song also appeared in the 2008 music game , Guitar Hero World Tour , as the last song in the vocal career . Notably , in this game , the vocalist will perform the same dance routine performed by Jackson on the video and live performances when singing the final verse . The song is featured on the dancing game Michael Jackson : The Experience .

= = Track listing = =

12 " Maxi ( Epic TA 3258 )

" Beat It " ? 4 : 18

" Burn This Disco Out " ? 3 : 38

" The Jacksons ? Don 't Stop ' til You Get Enough ( Live Version ) " ? 4 : 22

12 " Single

" Beat It " ? 4 : 18

" Working Day And Night " ? 5 : 14

12 " Mexican Promo of Bille Jean

" Billie Jean " ? 6 : 22

" Largetate ( Beat It ) " ? 5 : 41

7 " Single ( Epic A 318402 )

" Beat It " ? 4 : 18

" Get on the Floor " ? 4 : 44

Visionary Single

CD

" Beat It "

" Beat It " ( Moby 's Sub Remix )

DVD

" Beat It " ( Video )

= = Personnel = =

Performance

Michael Jackson ? lead vocals , background vocals , drum case beater

Paul Jackson , Jr . ? rhythm guitar

Steve Lukather ? lead guitar , bass guitar

Eddie Van Halen ? guitar solo

Steve Porcaro ? synthesizer , synthesizer programming

Greg Phillinganes ? Rhodes , synthesizer

Bill Wolfer ? keyboards

Tom Bahler ? Synclavier

Jeff Porcaro ? drums

Production

Michael Jackson ? writing , composition , co @-@ production , rhythm and vocal arrangement

Quincy Jones ? production , rhythm arrangement

Greg Smith ? synergy

= = Charts and certifications = =

= = = Weekly charts = = =

= = Beat It 2008 = =

For Thriller 25 , The Black Eyed Peas singer will.i.am remixed " Beat It " . The song , titled " Beat It 2008 " , featured additional vocals by fellow Black Eyed Peas member Fergie . Upon its release in 2008 , the song reached No. 26 in Switzerland , the Top 50 in Sweden and No. 65 in Austria . This was the second remixed version of " Beat It " to get an official release , following Moby 's Sub Mix which was released on the " Jam " and " Who Is It " singles in 1992 , as well as the " They Don 't Care About Us " single in 1996 ( and re @-@ released as part of the Visionary campaign . )

= = = Reception = = =

" Beat It 2008 " received generally unfavorable reviews from music critics . Rob Sheffield of Rolling Stone claimed that the song was a " contender for the year 's most pointless musical moment " . AllMusic criticized Fergie for " parroting the lyrics of " Beat It " back to a recorded Jackson " . Blender 's Kelefa Sanneh also noted that the Black Eyed Peas singer traded lines with Jackson . " Why ? " , she queried . Todd Gilchrist was thankful that the remix retained Eddie Van Halen 's " incendiary guitar solo " , but added that the song " holds the dubious honor of making Jackson seem masculine for once , and only in the context of Fergie 's tough @-@ by @-@ way @-@ of @-@ Kids Incorporated interpretation of the tune " . Tom Ewing of Pitchfork Media observed that Fergie 's " nervous reverence is a waste of time " .

= = = Charts = = =

= = = Remix credits = = =

Written and composed by Michael Jackson

Remix drums : will.i.am

Remix keyboards and synths : will.i.am

Remix engineered by will.i.am and Kerin

Remix produced and mixed by Michael Jackson and will.i.am

Remix recorded in November 2007

= = Fall Out Boy version = =

American rock band Fall Out Boy covered " Beat It " . The studio version was digitally released on March 25 , 2008 by Island Records as the only single from the band 's first live album , Live in Phoenix ( 2008 ) . The song features a guitar solo by John Mayer , which was performed by Eddie Van Halen in the original song . In the United States , the song peaked at No. 19 on the Billboard Hot 100 and reached No. 21 on the defunct @-@ Billboard Pop 100 chart , also charting internationally . The band has since regularly incorporated it in their set list at their shows .

= = = Background , recording and release = = =

In early 2008 it was announced that Fall Out Boy were to cover " Beat It " for their Live in Phoenix album . The band had previously performed the song at venues such as Coors Amphitheatre and festivals such as the Carling Weekend in Leeds . Bassist Pete Wentz , who has claimed to have an obsession with Jackson , stated that prior to recording the song , he would only watch Moonwalker . It was also announced that John Mayer was to add the guitar solo previously played by Eddie Van Halen .

The band 's lead singer / guitarist Patrick Stump stated that the band had not planned to cover the song . " Basically , I just started playing the riff in sound @-@ check one day , and then we all started playing it , and then we started playing it live , and then we figured we 'd record it and put it out with our live DVD . " Bassist Pete Wentz added that the band had not originally intended for the song to be released as a single either . " ' Beat It ' seemed like a song that would be cool and that we could do our own take on " , he said . Having spent time deciding on a guitarist for the song , Wentz eventually called John Mayer to add the guitar solo . " We were trying to think about who is a contemporary guitar guy who 's going to go down as a legend " , Wentz later noted .

Upon its digital release as a single in April 2008 , Fall Out Boy 's cover of " Beat It " became a mainstay on iTunes ' Top 10 chart . The song peaked at No. 8 in Canada , becoming another top 10 hit in the region . It also charted at No. 13 in Australia , No. 14 in New Zealand , No. 75 in Austria and No. 98 in the Netherlands .

= = = Music video = = =

The music video for Fall Out Boy 's " Beat It " was directed by Shane Drake and was made in homage to Jackson . " I think when you 're doing a Michael Jackson cover , there 's this expectation that you 're going to do one of his videos verbatim , " Stump said . " What we decided to do was kind of inspired by Michael Jackson and the mythology of him . There are specific images that are reference points for us , but at any given point , it 's not any of his videos . It 's kind of all of his videos , all at once , but on a Fall Out Boy budget , so it 's not quite as fancy . " The costumes for the video were similar to the originals . " My costume is this take on one of the guys from Michael Jackson 's original ' Beat It ' video , like , the guy who plays the rival dancer , " Wentz said during the filming of the video . The music video featured numerous cameos , including a karate class / dance session being taught by Tony Hale , Donald Faison and Joel David Moore dressed up like Michael

Jackson . The short film later received a MTV Video Music Award nomination for Best Rock Video .

= = = Charts = = =

= = Other cover versions = =

In 1984 , parodist " Weird Al " Yankovic released his parody song " Eat It " . Yankovic recorded the song with Jackson 's permission . The song 's music video mocked the " Beat It " short film scene @-@ for @-@ scene , with Yankovic mimicking Jackson 's dance moves in a clumsy fashion . Jackson received royalties from Yankovic due to the strong similarities .