

= Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' =

" Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " is a song by American recording artist Michael Jackson . Released on May 8 , 1983 , by Epic Records , " Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " was the fourth single from Jackson 's sixth studio album Thriller ( 1982 ) . The opening track of the album , it was written , composed and co -@-@ produced by Jackson , and was produced by Quincy Jones .

The song 's lyrics pertain to strangers spreading rumors to start an argument for no good reason . Musically , " Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " evokes the disco sound of Jackson 's previous studio album , Off the Wall , released in 1979 . The song is characterized by a complex rhythm arrangement and a distinctive horn arrangement . " Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " has been covered and sampled by multiple recording artists since its release . Aside from Thriller , the song appears on multiple compilation and greatest hits albums by Jackson .

" Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " was generally well received by contemporary music critics . The song was also commercially successful , charting within the top 20 and top 30 in several countries . It became Jackson 's fifth consecutive top 10 single in the United States on the Billboard Hot 100 , peaking at number five , and later re -@-@ entered charts in 2008 after the release of Thriller 25 . Following Jackson 's death in June 2009 , the song re -@-@ entered music charts worldwide , mainly due to digital download sales . Unlike previous singles from Thriller , " Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " did not have a music video to accompany it , but was performed by Jackson on world concert tours , as both a member of The Jacksons and as a solo artist .

As part of the release of Thriller 25 , a remix of " Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " , entitled " Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' 2008 with Akon " , was recorded with Akon , and released as the second single from the album . The song was commercially successful , mainly charting within the top 10 in six countries , as well as the top 20 in several territories worldwide and top 40 in Canada . The song was more successful internationally than in the United States , having peaked on the Billboard Hot 100 at number 81 , which was the song 's lowest charting position .

= = Background = =

" Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " was written , composed and co -@-@ produced by Michael Jackson , and produced by Quincy Jones . It was originally written for his sister La Toya Jackson about her troubled relationship with her sisters @-@ in @-@ law , but Michael ended up recording the song , and La Toya sometimes performs the song at her concerts . The song was originally recorded in 1978 for the inclusion on the Off the Wall album , but was later re -@-@ recorded in fall 1982 , in Los Angeles , California . " Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " was one of the four songs that Jackson received writing credits on for his sixth studio album Thriller in 1982 . The song was released by Epic Records as the fourth single from the album . Unlike Thriller 's previous singles , " Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " did not have a film or a music video released to promote it .

Aside from Thriller , " Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " has been featured on multiple compilation and greatest hits albums by Jackson since the song 's release . " Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " appeared on the first disc of Jackson 's two @-@ disc compilation album HIStory : Past , Present and Future , Book I in 1995 as well as the 25th anniversary edition of Thriller , entitled Thriller 25 , and the greatest hits album King of Pop ; both albums were released in 2008 . The song is also featured on the box set collection released in 2004 , The Ultimate Collection , the greatest hits album The Essential Michael Jackson , the compilation album This Is It , and the special box set The Collection released days after Jackson 's death . Some versions of the 1995 Earth Song CD single included the Brothers in Rhythm Mix and Tommy D 's Main Mix as B @-@ sides . The song was also remixed to the Immortal album in 2011 . The demo version of the song was also released in This Is It ( 2009 ) .

= = Composition = =

A post @-@ disco and funk song , " Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " was viewed as a nod to the

disco sound of Jackson 's material on his previous studio album , Off the Wall , released in 1979 . Arranged by Jackson himself and played by percussionist Paulinho da Costa , the song 's rhythm was regarded as a " complex interweaving of drum @-@ machine patterns and work " , while the horn section , arranged by Jerry Hey , was described as both " brassy and precise " . Slant Magazine commented that the song was a " complicated tapestry of colliding hooks and pop references . " The song 's lyrics , " Too high to get over , too low to get under " , has strong similarities to Funkadelic 's opening salvo for " One Nation Under a Groove " .

The lyrics pertain to the media and press , as well as gossip and people trying to start arguments or problems for no reason , which he states in the lyrics , " Someone 's always tryin ' to start my baby crying , " and then goes to a more " quasi paranoia " yield in the " near @-@ bitterness " chorus , ' You 're a vegetable , you 're a vegetable / You 're just a buffet , you 're a vegetable / They 'll eat off you , you 're a vegetable . ' " In " Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " , Jackson 's vocal range spans from G # 3 to E5 . Played in the key of E Major , the song is moderately bright and its metronome is 122 beats per minute . It has a basic sequence of D / E ? E ? D / E ? E as its chord progression . The coda at the end of the song , which comes directly from Cameroonian saxophonist Manu Dibango 's 1972 disco song " Soul Makossa " , is " Mama @-@ say mama @-@ sah ma @-@ ma @-@ coo @-@ sah " . Makossa is a Cameroonian music genre and dance . Dibango sued Jackson and settled out of court for one million French francs , agreeing thereby to waive future rights to this recording but not future use of the material .

= = Critical reception = =

" Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " has received generally positive reviews from contemporary music critics . Christopher Connelly , a writer for Rolling Stone , described " Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " as being Thriller 's " most combative track " . Connelly noted that in the " hyperactive " song , Jackson 's " emotions are so raw that the song nearly goes out of control " . He further commented that the song has a " tune that 's almost as exciting as seeing Jackson motivate himself across a concert stage ? and a lot more unpredictable " . Remarking that while the song 's lyrics " won 't keep Elvis Costello awake nights " , they " do show that Jackson has progressed past the hey @-@ let 's @-@ hustle sentiments that dominated Off the Wall " . He added that Jackson 's " raw ability and conviction make material like " , citing " Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " , as well as other of Thriller 's songs , " into first @-@ class cuts " .

Stephen Thomas Erlewine , a writer for AllMusic , listed " Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " , along with " Beat It " , " Billie Jean " , and " Human Nature " , as being the best songs from Thriller . He also described the song as the " freshest funk on the album " . Eric Herderson , a writer for Slant Magazine , commented that with " three quick rimshots " , he felt that " Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " was like a " court fanfare " . Robert Christgau , a music critic , commented that he 'd " expect to bear more " of Thriller 's " Wanna Be Startin ' Something " and " Thriller " on the " dancefloor " rather than in his " living room " . " Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " received one Grammy Award nomination ; it was nominated for " Best R & B Song " at the 1984 Grammy Awards , but lost to " Billie Jean " , another of Jackson 's singles from Thriller .

= = Chart performance = =

In 1983 , " Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " had a good chart performance worldwide . The song entered the Billboard Hot 100 chart top ten positions on July 2 , 1983 , at number nine , having moved up six places from the song 's previous week . On July 16 , " Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " charted at number five , which was the song 's peak position on the chart . The song 's peak position made " Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " Thriller 's fourth consecutive single to peak within the top ten on the Billboard Hot 100 . It was more commercially successful than Thriller 's follow @-@ up single " Human Nature " on the Billboard Hot 100 , with the song peaking on the chart at number seven . The song also peaked within the top ten , at number five , on the Black Singles Chart .

Internationally , the song was commercially successful , mainly charting within the top 20 and top 30

on music charts . In the United Kingdom , on June 11 , 1983 , the song entered the chart 's top 40 positions at number 38 . The following week , the song moved up 24 positions to number 14 , and on June 25 , the song peaked within the top ten at number eight . The song remained on the charts for a total of nine weeks in 1983 . In New Zealand , on July 24 , 1983 , " Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " entered the charts at number 47 . The following week , the song peaked at number 35 , which was its peak position , and remained in the top 50 of the chart for three weeks . " Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " entered the Dutch charts on July 9 , 1983 , charting within the top five at number four . The following week , the song charted at number three , which was its peak position , for three consecutive weeks . The song charted within the top ten for several weeks , and remained in the top 20 for ten weeks in 1983 .

In 2008 , after the release of Thriller 25 the song re @-@ entered music charts worldwide . " Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " entered the Italian music charts on February 21 , 2008 , charting at number 14 ; it remained on the chart for only one week . The song entered the Danish music charts on February 28 , charting within the top 30 at number 29 . The following week , it peaked at number 22 . In Switzerland , the song entered the top 50 at number 47 on February 24 , 2008 . The following week , the song peaked at number 30 . After a total of six weeks on the chart the song , fell out of the top 100 , and after four weeks re @-@ entered the chart at number 83 , before falling off the chart again .

Following Jackson 's death in June 2009 , his music experienced a surge in popularity . " Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " re @-@ entered the United Kingdom charts on July 4 , 2009 and peaked at number 57 the following week . On July 12 , " Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " re @-@ entered Switzerland music charts for the second time . The song charted at number 37 , which was its peak position , and remained on the charts for three weeks , before charting out of the top 100 positions .

= = Live performances = =

" Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " was one of the songs released as a single without an accompanying video . It nonetheless has attained a popularity rivaling its sister compositions on the album , and became Jackson 's song of choice for opening live concerts , although not being as strictly associated with a specific dance routine as those others has arguably allowed for more flexibility in performances and staging .

Three notable occurrences during live performances are the physically complicated " stop / start " dance technique that brings Jackson and his dancers to a frozen stop several times , the sing @-@ along between performer and audience during the bridge , and him singing " Hard To Get Over , Hard To Get Under " instead of " Too High To Get Over , Too Low To Get Under " in the studio version .

" Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " , along with " Thriller " , " Beat It " and " Billie Jean " , was also used on every set list of Jackson 's tours , from the Victory Tour in 1984 , right the way through to the HIStory Tour in 1997 . Unlike most of the other songs performed live , " Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " has never been lip @-@ synched during any of Jackson 's tours .

The song was first performed by Jackson as both a member of The Jacksons as well as a solo artist during world concert tours . It was performed by Jackson during the Jacksons final world concert series , including the Victory Tour in 1984 , for which it was the tour 's opening song . Similar to the Victory Tour , " Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " was the Bad World Tour opening song on both tour legs . The concert series lasted from 1987 to 1989 . A version was released on the 2012 DVD Live at Wembley July 16 , 1988 .

" Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " was also performed during Jackson 's Dangerous World Tour from June 1992 to November 1993 . The Dangerous World Tour was supposed to last longer , but was cancelled due to Jackson 's health concerns , as well as the stress from the false child sexual abuse accusations made against him . A version was released on the 2004 DVD Live in Bucharest : The Dangerous Tour .

The next , and what would be the last performance of the song , was during Jackson 's world concert tour , HIStory World Tour , from 1996 to 1997 .

Since March 2009 , Jackson was preparing to perform " Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " during his This Is It concert series from 2009 to 2010 . During rehearsals for the This Is It concerts , Jackson 's performance of " Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " contained an a cappella snippet of " Speechless " , from Jackson 's studio album Invincible ( 2001 ) . Following Jackson 's death in June of the same year , video footage of Jackson rehearsing the song was featured as the opening song in the 2009 concert documentary , Michael Jackson 's This Is It .

= = Manu Dibango controversy = =

After Barbadian pop singer Rihanna sampled the song in her 2007 hit single " Don 't Stop the Music " , she and Jackson were both sued in February 2009 by Cameroonian musician Manu Dibango , who claimed that both songs stole the " mama @-@ say mama @-@ sa mama @-@ ko @-@ sa " hook from his 1972 single " Soul Makossa " without permission . According to Agence France @-@ Presse , Jackson admitted that he borrowed the line for " Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " and settled out of court . When Rihanna asked Jackson in 2007 for permission to sample the line , he allegedly approved the request without contacting Dibango beforehand . Dibango 's attorneys brought the case before a court in Paris , demanding ? 500 @,@ 000 in damages and for Sony BMG , EMI and Warner Music to be " barred from receiving ' mama @-@ say mama @-@ sa ' -related income until the matter is resolved " .

= = Charts = =

= = = Weekly charts = = =

= = = Year @-@ end charts = = =

= = = Charts successions = = =

= = Personnel = =

= = Track listing = =

= = Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' 2008 = =

" Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " , was re @-@ recorded for the 2008 re @-@ issue of Thriller , entitled Thriller 25 . Similar to " Beat It 2008 " , the song was titled on the CD sleeve as " Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' 2008 with Akon " . Recorded in 2007 , the 2008 version features remix elements and additional vocals from Akon . The 2008 version was written and produced by Akon . The single of that song was the last one released during Jackson 's lifetime .

" Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " received mixed reviews from contemporary music critics , with critics having felt that while the 2008 version was good , it was not better than the original , but was better than other re @-@ issues on Thriller 25 . Stephen Thomas Erlewine from AllMusic commented that " Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " was turned into a " moody piano murk " . He further commented that while the song is not great , " it is better than Fergie parroting the lyrics of " Beat It " back to a recorded Jackson , and it 's better than will.i.am turning " The Girl Is Mine " into a hapless dance number . " Rob Sheffield , a writer for Rolling Stone , commented that " Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' " is " actually kind of great " and praised the song 's composition .

The song was released by Epic Records and Legacy Recordings in January 2008 , as the second single from the re @-@ issue album . It was commercially a modest success internationally , charting within the top 20 in several countries , as well charting within the top ten in four territories . The song charted at number three in Sweden , number four in New Zealand , number eight in Australia and number ten in France . " Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' 2008 " charted at number 15 in Belgium 's Flanders and Wallonia charts. and also charted at number 20 in Italy . In the US , " Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' 2008 " peaked at number 81 on the Billboard ' Hot 100 , giving the song its lowest charting position . The song also charted on the Pop charts at number 48 , as well as number 47 on the Pop Hot 100 Airplay .

Other charting positions include number 47 on the Billboard Hot Digital Songs and the Hot Canadian Digital Singles Chart at number 33 . It also peaked at number 2 on the Dance Club Songs chart . " Wanna Be Startin ' Somethin ' 2008 " also reached number 19 on the year @-@ end chart of Dance Club Play Song . A music video was also shown on some channels to help promote the single and album ; it featured a montage of previous Michael Jackson music videos and concert footage , and also clips of Akon singing his parts .

= = = Chart performance = = =