

The MJCast – Episode 052: Michael Prince Special

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The MJCast: Can you talk to us about how important that show would have been for Michael had he been well enough to perform it?

Michael Prince: To a certain extent, I can. Remember, this was my first foray into working with Michael and in the beginning, much more working with Brad and the band, and making sure all the sounds were right, all the drum sounds that we wanted, sampled for certain songs, so that when the drummer hit a snare, you would hear the snare from Bad on the song "Bad". If we were gonna do "Jam", if he hit the snare, it was gonna trigger the snare sound of "Jam". Same thing with the kicks and stuff, and sometimes on the toms. And so we were using the best technology available at that time. Michael really wanted the live band to sound as much like the record as possible. And most of that's really easy. The guitar player's dialing the same guitar tone, background singers work on singing the exact same harmonies that Michael sang. So for the first several weeks, I was fairly insulated and isolated in, I think we were at SIR, I'm not sure, and it was just the band in a room rehearsing at first. No background singers, no nothing. Just the band, then they brought in the background singers. You'd go out in the hallway every once in a while on a break or something, and you'd run into people that I had never known before. That's when I first met Lavelle and Travis, and I think Jamie was there. To me, it was just like, I really didn't know that much about what they did, but I knew we were all there for the same reason. And everybody was really looking forward to the show, because that's what you work for. I mean, you're programming twelve, fourteen, sixteen hour days, and you can't wait to really get to the Beacon Theater, which is where that show was going to be, and get on the real stage, and get out of the rehearsal room, and have the dancers in the same room at the same time, and start really running the show down, and having Michael come in. 'Cause he would come into the rehearsals at some point and sing, but nobody was in costume, there was no light. If you've ever been into a rehearsal room, it's a fairly bland thing. Everybody's just standing around, no stages, and stuff like that. So how it would have helped Michael's career? That's an interesting question, because Michael was already gigantic then. I think it would have helped the career of the producer of the show, who was a wonderful man. I was really sad for him that the show didn't happen because--I think his name was Jeff Margolis... He really had the whole show in his head, he'd gone over with Michael. I was excited because one of my mother[s]--and she is from Austria, one of her heroes, Marcel Marceau, was going to be part of the show. I remember calling her and telling her that, she thought that was unbelievable. And so, for me, it was just gonna be this amazing opportunity to actually be involved in a Michael Jackson show. And that was the icing on the cake. Unfortunately, as everyone knows, Michael had--I don't know if it was the flu, or if he was just worn out, but, I mean, I was right in the room when he just really, literally passed out and fell forward. His hands stayed by his side, his face crashed right down onto the stage. It was a horrifying thing to see, and you knew, right then and there, that was not a good fall. And, to add something that I learned in later years from Brad Buxer, the MD (Musical Director). This was all related to--and the reason he thinks that his happened is this was already to [promote] for HIStory, which had just been finished. And, he said, and I didn't know this until he told me, that this was actually either the third or fourth one-off that they had done in about a 3-month period. And one-offs are actually harder than a tour. When you do a tour, you've got much longer to rehearse, and once you learn it, you're just doing that same

thing for the next six months or the next year. And a one-off, they all have to be a little bit different to make them unique. This was going to have all-new dance routines, and different versions of songs, and edited differently, and that's what Brad thinks is what really led to Michael's collapsing was that this wasn't the first one and Michael hadn't been sitting at home at the Ranch relaxing for two or three months. He had been doing other one-offs... and Michael never had enough downtime in between these, it was just one to another to another, and then, at that point, he would've had some downtime over the holidays, and then there were already some rumors at that point about a tour for the HIStory album.

MJCast: Your next project was the HIStory Tour?

Prince: That's correct. That's correct, and I say this with sadness that my career with Michael is bookended by two tragedies, where he passed out in one, and the second one, he passed away, and I wish neither of those things had happened. But I did notice, from all the videos I'd seen of Michael Jackson over the years, watching TV--I had never been to his concerts, but I remember the first day he walked into the Beacon Theater, and I was just on Cloud Nine going, "Wow, Michael's gonna knock us dead." And the very first song he sang, I forget what it was, he seemed like 50% of the Michael Jackson I expected in his energy, and I went like, "What's going on?", but I just figured, "Alright, well, I don't know, I've never seen him before. Maybe they just make him look better on the videos or something like that.", but I had no idea he wasn't feeling well at all.

MJCast: What happened in those nine months [after the "One Night Only" special and before the HIStory Tour began], as far as your role goes?

Prince: Well, basically, when Michael first went to the hospital... Jeff Margolis was very hopeful that, after one day or two days of rest and fluids, that MJ would come back. So he goes, "Ok everybody, business as usual, we'll keep running the show." And we ran it a few times with the dancers, updated and edited the music, they were working on lighting and camera angles. And so the second day came, and they were still hoping Michael would come, so he goes, "Ok, we'll see everybody tomorrow", and I don't remember if we rehearsed for two more days or for three more days, but at some point, he came out on stage and made the announcement that they had just spoken to Michael, he still was feeling really terrible, and that they were going to have to postpone the show. At that point, they really didn't think or hope that it was going to be cancelled, but obviously Michael needed more than a day or two, or a week or two, so probably the next day, or the day after that, we all flew home. And I didn't know if I'd ever see anybody again, but the next spring, the drummer who was gonna be on that special was Ricky Lawson. He was a good friend of mine, and he started calling me and asking me if I would like to do the Steely Dan Tour with him. And I'm going, "Well that sounds good, Steely Dan's one of my favorite bands"... I actually went down and ran monitors for Steely Dan for a couple days, and Ricky got the gig as the drummer, 'cause they were looking for a drummer just for that tour, and I called up a name you may know, Benny Collins. And Benny Collins was Michael's tour/production manager, and had been for several tours, and I called Benny, and I go, "Hey, Benny, I have this opportunity to go out on a Steely Dan tour, but I don't want to miss a Michael Jackson tour. And he goes, "Well, there's nothing official that I can tell you right now, but MJ has talked about touring this year. And so I basically had to make a decision on my own with no information. I had a for-sure gig with Steely Dan and I had, well, maybe in two or three or more weeks, we're gonna know about Michael's touring situation, and I just called up Ricky and I said, "I can't do Steely Dan." And he was mad at me ever since--for the next 15 years.

MJCast: If I may ask, why'd you make that risky call?

Prince: That's a good question, because to be quite honest with you, the pay would have probably been the same. I can only think that I had started developing, other than a good relationship with Ricky Lawson, a good relationship with Brad Buxer. And Brad said, "Michael, if

there's a tour, we'd definitely want to use you", and I went, "Ok". And I think Michael just had a history of touring more often than Steely Dan. Steely Dan, they would go for ten years without touring. And do several albums without touring, so when they toured, it was sort of a unique thing, and you didn't know if the tour was gonna be two months or four, but you knew it wasn't gonna be a year-long or anything like that. So, let's put it this way, I made the right call for once, and about two weeks later, Benny called me and Brad called me and said, "Yep, MJ just said he's gonna tour."... Pretty much, we were rehearsing the entire summer, 'cause I remember how hot it was, especially rehearsing for the HIStory Tour. The final production rehearsals, before we went to Europe and did more production rehearsals, we're in a big, big airplane hangar at San Bernardino Airport, and this place was not air conditioned, and it was about 110 degrees [Fahrenheit]... I just remember, I would just sit there and I would count the drops of water falling off my face, well for fun, every once in a while, and it was just ridiculously hot. You could barely move. And a little interesting story... Brad is an airplane pilot, and he was working on the pre-production of the music in the studio, and here in L.A., he would drive his car to the Van Nuys Airport, and he would fly a little single-engine plane to the San Bernardino Airport and so everybody else is driving there, right? And then right around rehearsal time, you see this plane pull up [laughs] right up to where the door is and he'd turn the engine off, and he would pop out of the plane, and he'd [flown] home every night. I thought that was really cool. How many people get to fly to rehearsal and fly back? He may be the only person in history that's ever done that, that I know of... But I just remember how hot that was, and it was pretty good for all of us, because if you could live through that, you pretty much knew you were good for a really long, arduous tour. And they finally brought an air conditioner in. I remember watching them bring in this--one of those big auxiliary units, and they're running these hoses and I'm just going, "Wow, this is amazing." This was like the last week. "We're finally gonna get air conditioning", and, guess what, it was all pointing right where Michael stood. So we're still back there just like sweating and sweating and sweating. But at least where Michael was there was some nice cold air, so whenever he wasn't there, we would just take turns running out and just standing there for about two minutes. The only bad thing about it is, you felt awful as soon as you walked away again. So you started to learn after one or two times, it's better just to stay in the heat.

MJCast: What was the tour like What's a Michael Jackson tour like?

Prince: Beyond anything I had ever imagined, because we toured in the 70's and 80's, and 90's with some fairly big main acts, like when we played with Kiss, there were 20-30,000 people there, but still you're looking at 4 to 6 trucks, and 3 or 4 buses, and we had one truck and one bus. And, to my mind, there was no catering or anything like that, so you start to find out more about the vastness of these tours as they began to get assembled, because obviously you don't have catering when you're in rehearsal. Somebody just brings food in every day. By the time you get to Europe, you realize you've got the band, the dancers and MJ, and then you've got a whole lighting crew, you've got a whole sound crew, you've got a whole bunch of back-line and band crew technicians, and then you've got the whole video crew, and half of those guys are under the stage, and they're running all the videos you see on the side walls and what came on the jumbotron up above the band, and then you've got cameramen. There's like four or five people running cameras, one guy on stage, a boom camera, and there was one out at front at house, and there was another one, and you realize that all these things are happening at the same time, so it's almost like a TV production that's live. Of course, they taped it every night, just so they could have a record of it, but you've got a TV production going on, you've got--back then, lighting wasn't as evolved as it is now. We had to have two lighting consoles and two guys running the lights, and then one of those two guys would be calling spots, which, if you really think about it, imagine moving all these lights with your hands, and at the same time, talking to six spotlight operators and telling each one what color they need to be on, and who they need to

focus on and you have to count 'em in, just like, "Ok, in three-two-one" [snaps fingers], and they would be purple on the guitar player. I mean, that's a --I've never tried that, but when I hear about it, I go like, "That's impossible, 'cause that's multitasking at its best, I think. And then you meet the carpenters, and you meet the seamstresses, and you meet the wardrobe crew, and you meet, finally, the people that are doing all the cooking, and they're the hardest working people on the tour, because they have to get up at 4, 4:30 in the morning, find a local translator, depending on what country you're in, and rent a truck, and go to all these fresh food markets and buy vegetables, meats, eggs, stuff to make bread with. One lady was--her sole job was making pastries and desserts. And I'm going like, "Wow, this is like a whole traveling city". And it was. I think we had at least 120 employees, and we had three of those gigantic Soviet Antonov cargo planes, where the fronts open up, and we had, I wanna say--Brad thinks we had three planes. Michael had a big plane, the band had a big plane, and the crew had a big plane. Like a four-engine jet kind of a big plane, and I think he's right. I think he would remember that more than I do. And that was my introduction to touring. Once we got to Europe, I'm going like, "Holy cow". Really, it's a whole lot of individuals each doing their job to perfection every day, or every show, and that's what makes it work. And, oh, I forgot, you have a steel crew, and there were two steel crews, it took me a few weeks to figure that out, 'cause I kept seeing different people and I'm going like, "Who's that?" and we had two stages, and it takes more than two days to build a stage, so they were leap-frogging. So if we played in Prague, that was crew number one and stage number one, and they would build that. And then, let's say the next place we're playing was Stockholm. Well, the second stage was already on its way to Stockholm from the previous gig and there was another set of steel workers that were putting that stage up, so we would see the same group of steelworkers every other day. And it was a two-day load-in. And what that means is the first day you would bring in the PA, the jumbotron, all the lights, hang them up off the stage, and do all that stuff. And then the day of the show, we would come in with all the band gear and all the stuff we needed to actually make music. The good thing about that was it gave people like me extra days off, which were wonderful. I really got a chance to do some sightseeing.

MJCast: How would you describe, in layman's terms, what your job on the tour was?

Prince: In the very beginning, I started out as the drum technician, mainly because I knew how to do all of the sampling and convert a drum trigger to a MIDI note, which then went to a sampler, which told the sampler what sound to play, and that was mixed in with like a real snare sound. And the funny thing is, before I did that, I had never changed a drum head in my life, which told me--and I knew this going in--that the job was more of an engineering/electronic gig than it was like a drum tech gig because, what I later found out is it's not that hard to change a drum head, and, in fact, the first two drummers I worked with were Ricky Lawson and John Moffett, and it kind of shocked me when they both told me I was the best drum technician they ever had, and I'm going like, "How is that possible?". But I think if you really, really care about what you're doing, and do it to the best of your ability, maybe you can rise to the top.

MJCast: You mentioned earlier that Michael wants the music to sound just like the albums. Is that perhaps the reason why some of the songs sound like they're not using live vocals on that tour?

Prince: Two things that I--and it's not a secret that I would mention--one, and it goes way beyond Michael, it goes to almost anybody that is dancing a highly choreographed up-tempo song. You can't do that and sing live without getting completely out of breath. And once you get out of breath, you can't suck in enough air to sing a whole vocal line, so Michael, I think, learned that from other artists. And I won't mention any names at all, but there's definitely some other huge, huge artists that sang even less of their show than Michael did. And HIStory was not, it was the first tour I was involved in, as far as Michael goes, but there was lip-syncing on previous

tours as well. And I think it started with the big production numbers where you had to do a lot of dancing and really focus on the dancing. Although I never really talked to him about it, like, "Michael, why do you do this?". but we did have a lot of discussion before This Is It about, in his words to me that he wanted to sing much more than on the previous tours. I went, "Ok, great". And, in fact, we were gonna have a meeting, he and I, about exactly what parts of what songs he thought he might need some help on vocally, on the day he passed away. And so, we never had that final meeting and he never told me what songs, but you can probably guess, some of the--maybe the chorus of a certain song, we might use a pre-recorded vocal and then he would sing the verse. But I'll tell you something that he said to me, and it's something that I fundamentally disagree with, but I would never disagree with Michael Jackson, is he said to me, he goes, "If the audience isn't hearing the song exactly the way it sounds on the record, I feel they are being sonically cheated" and I remember almost feeling surprised when he said that because the reason I like going to a concert is I'm expecting it to sound different, you know? I'm expecting solos to be longer, I'm expecting dance breaks to be longer, I'm expecting different intros and different endings and things like that, so I don't--but I didn't say that to him, I mean part of me wishes I would have, but I didn't want to disagree with him. I mean, it's his show, he's been touring since he was five or six... I'm sure for many, many years, sang everything live, and then, at some point, maybe they had it as a safety valve for a night if he had a sore throat, and he went, "Wow, that went really well", and then it sticks in his head, and I just think by the time we got to the HIStory Tour and--you have to pardon me for not being on the Dangerous or the Bad Tour, because I don't really know what, if anything was lip-synced, but I don't think that the HIStory Tour was his first foray into lip-syncing.

MJCast: There could be a number of reasons for [having to perform with pre-recorded vocals], but I am so, so glad to hear that Michael, by the end, was really excited to start singing a lot more live again, 'cause, boy, was he a great live singer.

Prince: He really was. And I know that was his plan. Like I said, that night, our last night together, I went to his dressing room, it was just he and I, and one of the things he said is, he goes, "Tomorrow, we're gonna discuss my vocals for the tour"... he already had it planned, believe me. When Michael had something in his head, he could think it all the way through, didn't have to take notes, but he definitely was planning on a lot more live singing.

MJCast: Why do you think he had that change of heart, given that he had that ethos about the audience needing to hear the song the way it sounds on the record. Why do you think he revised that for the This Is It shows?

Prince: Well, I think he was aware that many of his fans and most of the critics--when I say critics, I mean people that write articles about the shows--were aware that there was quite a bit of lip-syncing going on, and that he really wasn't--not that he was trying to fool anybody, but I think for a while he felt comfortable in it, you know what I mean? And he just thought, "Well, I know the vocals are going to be great tonight, I have to dance my ass off" and just so you know, we have some recordings that we made, multitrack recordings, and he actually does sing the entire show, we just don't use that vocal. It has to be said, I've listened to them both, that--hey, the one on the album is perfect. I mean, how much better can you get than perfect? And I think it probably shortened up his warmup times and things like that, but I think the thing is is over the years, Michael just got more and more comfortable with using a pre-recorded vocal... The other thing he would worry about, and you can say the old adage, "You're only as good as your last show", "You're only as good as your last album", and then you can take that one step further, and you can go, "You're only as good singing-wise as the worst note you hit that night", so he may sing 15 songs perfectly and have a bad note, and that's what somebody's gonna write about the next day in the paper. And I really think he thought all that stuff through.

...

MJCast: So what was your first in-the-studio experience with Michael Jackson for an album project?

Prince: It was the Invincible album. Basically, as soon as the tour ended... Brad took me aside and said, "Look, Michael wants us to start working on new material right away. Would you be interested in that?" And of course I was. Basically, we set up--well, Brad already had a nice recording studio at his house, we set up a second one up in the living room, much like we would set up at Michael's ranch, where you have a bunch of keyboards and samplers, and drum machines, and sequencers, and Pro Tools, and things like that. And so, Michael could get an idea, or Brad could go to the ranch and take some notes and come back, and then we'd start working on music, and we were working on stuff that, actually, has never come out like-- and we still laugh about these titles, they're all working titles, but one was called, "Bio", and one was called "Monster", and, oh gosh, there were a couple others that I can't remember off the top of my head, 'cause I haven't thought of them in years. But, literally, within a week, we were set up at Brad's house, working on new songs already.

MJCast: Sounds like you guys were working on some pretty phenomenal stuff.

Prince: Yeah, I mean, we started on a lot of those songs, like I said, at Brad's house, and it was at least six months or eight months before we went to our first official recording studio, which was--I want to say we went to Record One first, but we might have gone to the Record Plant first, I'm not really sure which place we went to first, because we bumped around. You know, we'd go to the studio for a while, and then we'd go back to either the ranch or Brad's house, and then we'd go to the studio for a little while and then once it hit second or third gear, then we were pretty much in the studio for the whole rest of the project, but we worked on that for the better part of four years.

MJCast: So the group of [Invincible] songs that you worked on, were they sort of the ones that were Michael's own--the songs he wrote, like "Speechless" and "The Lost Children"?

Prince: Yeah, I worked primarily on those songs and also on the songs with Dr. Freeze, Elliot Straite, and--

MJCast: So "Break of Dawn", and then what eventually came out as "Blue Gangsta" and "A Place With No Name".

Prince: Yeah, I worked on that, "A Place With No Name", even though somebody in the Estate or Sony forgot to put my name on there, that's ok. Actually, Freeze had quite a few songs that I think were probably destined to be on the album and then Rodney came in with a whole team--it's not just Rodney, it's like four other guys, five other people--and they went nonstop. I think Rodney realized what a huge opportunity that would be, and so they basically worked 24 hours a day. They had cots set up in the studio, and they would take turns sleeping. It was amazing. And the funny thing was, they had these two engineers working with them, and they were twin brothers. So one would work 12 hours and go home, the other one would show up, work 12 hours, and go home. Finally, I think they pulled Brad aside, or they pulled somebody aside and they go, "Look, we need a break" And they go, "What do you mean?"

"Well, we've been doing this for three weeks now. Literally 7 days a week, 12 hours a day"... I think, at some point, they brought in a third engineer, so they could all get a little bit more downtime, you know? But that was a really crazy time. We had--that was at Record One. We had the entire place, there's two beautiful rooms there, and we were in one room with basically Michael's songs Freeze's songs with Bruce Swedien and Mike Ging. And then the other room had--and I went back and forth between both rooms--but the other room was primarily those two twin brothers... And then the project, one day, they make a little announcement, "Hey, we're going to the Hit Factory in New York."

"Oh great! When?"

"Tomorrow", so it's like, you had to get all the tapes and label them so that, when they got shipped--we had to copy them first, so there would be backups-- but all the tapes, and I'm talking hundreds of tapes by then, like the big 2-inch tapes and the Sony 1-inch or half-inch tapes that went on the new Sony digital machine, that was an amazing machine. It had 48 tracks on it. And we were still using Pro Tools as well. And once we were happy with stuff in Pro Tools, it would usually get transferred to a tape machine, because Bruce Swedien still felt more comfortable dealing with tape and knowing there's a rewind button, and a play button, and a fast forward button, and a [unintelligible] button, makes sense. And some songs had so many tracks, we'd have 240 tracks hooked up to each other, which gives you 96 tracks and a Pro Tools system all slaved to timecode. And that again was a big experience for me, just going from a) my studio, b) all the rock projects I had done up to then, which were pretty much either 24-track or sometimes they'd do 32-track or something, but never had I seen 248-track machines hooked up to each other. Going like, "How could you possibly fill up that many tracks?" Well, you can. Because Michael loved nice, big intros, and some of them were orchestral. Well, you needed a whole bunch of tracks for that, and that may only be the first 45 seconds of the song. But you still had to have the tracks available for that. Sometimes there were so many tracks that you would take the intro and make a stereo mix of that, which is called a comp, and then you'd always save the master tape of that, but from then on, now that Michael was happy with the mix, and Bruce was happy with the mix, now you just had to deal with that as just a stereo part, which would happen a lot, with other things like background vocals, because Michael would do, like, thirty tracks of background vocals. And same thing with the choir. You'd have, on certain songs, like Andrae Crouch's choir and you'd have mics all over the room. but at some point, you would make a stereo comp of the choir. Once everybody's happy with it, why not leave it as a stereo track and free up more tracks to do even more things on? It was amazing.

MJCast: Was the final track list decided by Michael? What were the politics around getting that final track list together?

Prince: I can tell you with 99.99% assurity that Michael picked all the songs. He was the boss, and it was the songs that he wanted on that album. And I'm sure he took input, like if Bruce said, "Oh, Michael, this song's amazing" or if Rodney said, "Mike, I think this is one of the best ones we've done", I'm sure Michael took that to heart. But, in the end, Michael was the one who would go home with CD's of all the songs and listen to them, and want changes on them, and then come back and have the changes made. I'm sure he made the final song selection.

MJCast: 'Cause there's some beautiful songs that didn't make it, like "Xscape" and "We've Had Enough", which is in my top ten MJ songs.

Prince: "We've Had Enough" is amazing. I remember listening to that about a year after the album came out and going like--and I also felt "Xscape" should've been on the album, personally. I remember talking to one of the guys who was much deeper in Rodney's camp than I, and one of the first things he said is he goes, "I can't believe they didn't put 'Xscape' on there". I go--and I hadn't even heard it, I go, "Can I hear it?" and he played it, and I go--because I was a big fan of the band from the UK in the 80's called "Scritti Politti"... but that song reminded me of that great percussion and the kind of vocals, and the interesting thing was--well, I guess Michael didn't think it was the top 15 but, years later, when I was working with Michael, just he and I in 2008--and it was because of the song Xscape--I always wanted to ask him if he was a fan of "Scritti Politti", and he lit up when I said that, he said he loved them. He was a huge fan of "Scritti Politti", that I was thinking--I didn't say this to him, I'm going, "Well then why didn't he put Xscape on there?" [laughs] Because it just had that kind of great vibe.

MJCast: Did [the fallout with Sony] seem to be bubbling up during the recording process, or did it come as a surprise to the people that were involved in the recording?

Prince: Well, there's two separate tiers or plateaus as far as your question goes. The first one was slowly bubbling to the surface during the making of the album, because it was so over-budget. Sony wasn't very happy with the budget, and, believe me, I won't mention any numbers, it was me coming from doing rock records for like \$100,000, you could've done about 20 or 30 of them. But you have to remember, if Michael wants to go to the Hit Factory, and rent out three rooms, and have all of us stay at the Four Seasons for six months, that costs a lot of money, a lot of money. I can only imagine. So there was initially a little, "When is this gonna be done? When is this gonna be done? When is this gonna be done? This should've been done by now", and I think Michael felt a little pressure at the end, but, honestly, I think they got all that stuff sorted out in early 2001. And we went down to Criterion, Florida, and sort of finished the album down there, sort of got a nice, new floor to vibe, and that's when Teddy came down there with his bus--he has a recording studio in his bus. And Bruce was in a room, and Rodney was in another room, and everything kind of finally felt like, "Ok, this is gonna be done in a couple months" and it was. And so, obviously, no company--record company or other company wants to spend too much money on something, but, long story short, it finally got done, everybody was happy with the record. And then comes the second thing, which was the 30th Anniversary Show that you referenced in 2001. That show--and I was there working on that show--that show was a great show. And I got to mix it along with my friend Keith Cowen. That show was on CBS. CBS is owned or--is part of Sony, and I was really shocked when that show came on two or three weeks after we actually recorded... that Sony didn't take out one single ad for Michael's new album. That just seemed wrong to me. So I figured something's going on. And then, another thing that a lot of people don't realize is that Michael told us after the second show, on 9/10, he said to expect a phone call in two to three weeks, because we were gonna tour. So everybody's in great spirits, and so that means, in the year 2002, there's gonna be another Michael Jackson world tour. And then we all know what happened the next morning, on 9/11. And I think Sony--and Sony may have known, now that I think about it--by the time we mixed the show, and edited it and delivered it to CBS, that all major/minor artists had cancelled any and all tours that took place outside the United States. We just felt the whole world was unsafe, and Michael was one of those people. So now Sony has an artist that they thought was gonna tour, and he's not gonna tour, and for a good reason he's not touring. I mean, a lot of the countries we went to, other than the ones in the main part of Europe were probably not safe to go to anymore, at least for a while until things settled down, and we knew what the heck was going on. So, I think once Sony found out--probably they knew this now that I think about it before the show actually came on CBS, they probably knew there wasn't gonna be a tour, and I think that's when the stuff with Tommy Mottola really hit the fan. But that's only my opinion, I don't really know.

MJCast: How engaged would you say Michael was with the 30th Anniversary shows, in terms of rehearsal process?

Prince: He was much more like the Michael Jackson from the HIStory Tour. Once again, I think you have choreographers always trying to re-choreograph things, and in the beginning, Michael always wants to give them poetic license and say, "Sure, do your thing, let's check it out" and so, you have like Dangerous getting re-choreographed for the third time, and, in the end, I don't really know what was changed. I'd have to watch the show again. And I'm not a choreographer, so I probably wouldn't notice it anyway. But, in the end, we ended up doing those songs much the same way we did on the HIStory Tour, some of them were shorter. And we did fewer songs. But it wasn't all that different. I think what made the show really different is Michael performing with his brothers one last time.

MJCast: What changes did you notice in Michael the father?

Prince: I think he always was a very, very kind and loving human being. One of the most incredible people you could ever meet. And the most wonderful thing that happened, I think, and it's trivial in a lot of ways, and it's almost meant to be funny, is that the hours that he would work became much more predictable, which were wonderful. Like I didn't have to sleep with a cell phone on my chest every night. I'd wait for a phone call at 4 o'clock in the morning, because Michael, once he had the kids, he went to bed earlier, he got a good night's sleep, he got up early, and there was a lot more schedule and routine in his life than when there weren't kids. I mean, you could think you were gonna have this wonderful three-day holiday weekend off, and you'd get a call from Michael on Friday morning, going, "Ok, let's work this weekend", and you'd go, "What?"-- you wouldn't go, "What?", you'd say, "Yes, of course". And you'd go up to the ranch and tell your family, "Well, cancel the plans that we had, 'cause I'm gonna be gone for three or four days". And Brad would have to do the same thing, but, yeah, there was a lot more rhythm in his life, structure, as far as bedtime, and he was a great, doting dad. I mean, he put those kids to bed most of the time. Spent a lot more time, if I'm not mistaken, at the Ranch and we were set up at the Ranch for quite a long while. We were still working on new songs all the time... That was one thing, he had this artistic streak in him that didn't stop. So just because an album was done, he still had ideas coming into his head all the time. And he needed to get those recorded somehow, even if they were just gonna be bookmarked and saved for later. I used to call those songs "whips", works-in-progress. So sometimes you would get something up to a certain level, and we'd just move on to another song. But that's why at Brad's place we have this giant case full of things we call "song packets" so every song we've ever started, has a "song packet", it has usually like a lyric sheet, and early cassettes or DATs... CDs, rough mixes, and very, very early versions of songs, and titles that were just working titles that were not the final titles and things like that. Like, he had a song called "Hanson", and I really think he was writing it for Hanson, 'cause he was friends with them, and he ended up using it..."The Way You Love Me"...that was a song that--and of course Brad never gets the credit he's due, but he wrote that with Brad, and a lot of other songs. But that was originally called "Hanson".

MJCast: Talk to us about the history of [What More Can I Give].

Prince:...Of course it always brings a smile to my face, because... that song, to me, is an amazing song. And you take an amazing song and you look at all the amazing singers that are on there--it's like Luther Vandross's final performance on anything... I actually have a version with Beyonce singing the entire song, and she kills it. And it wasn't meant to happen that way, and it's funny because Beyonce was the first vocalist to come in, because Michael had a scratch vocal on there, and we only had a lyric sheet, and so now the idea was we're gonna get all these people to sing on it--not we, they are, I'm just the engineer. So the first that comes to the studio we're gonna work at is Beyonce, and I think she was either still in Destiny's Child or had just broken away from Destiny's Child, I'm not really sure, but here's this incredibly gorgeous woman who can sing like an angel and, at the same time, I'm so used to Michael's singing, and his singing is perfect. I mean, we didn't use autotune, we didn't have to move things around rhythmically, everything was perfect that came out of his mouth. So I just remember with dread the first day, like Michael's there and then Brad Buxer and I are there, and we're gonna record Beyonce, and I'm kind of like going, "Oh boy, here we go", 'cause I'm just not expecting it to be anywhere near an MJ-caliber vocal. And so she listens to the song a few times, and basically--if you've heard the song, the idea is everybody's supposed to do one or two lines. So we weren't really sure yet, because she was the first person, so we go, "Well, if you want to, maybe do most of the first verse, and let's get you singing on one of the choruses, and maybe some overdubs when you're ready", and she went out there, literally, and did the whole song, top to bottom. And my jaw is just dropping, like going like, "This sounds amazing!" You know what I mean? And all the ad-libs she did at the end are all keepers. Ad libs are hard

to do, some people can't do 'em at all, and she just did ad lib after ad lib, and I'm going like, "Well that was better than that one", and so that's when I realized how amazingly talented and gifted that woman is. I want to say "girl", but she's grown up now, she has some kids, so I'll say woman. What a wonderful experience that was, and it really opened up my eyes to how many other amazing vocalists there are in this wonderful world. But let me drop back to 1996 real quick. When I first started working on the tour, I had two jobs. One was working on the tour, and the second one was working as Brad Buxer's assistant. In his hotel room, we had a studio set up. It was called an HRS, which stands for "hotel room system", and he had the biggest one. He had nice, big Tannoy speakers and amplifiers, and samplers, drum machines, Pro Tools, keyboards, everything you would need to literally do an album if you needed to do an album. And so one of the first things I hear is this song, it's called "Heal L.A.". And I never asked why it was called "Heal L.A.", at least for a year or so, but that was something that Brad was always adding a new string part to, and Michael wanted a more complex intro, and pretty much is the intro that you hear, like that orchestral thing with the horns. And so I found out later, the reason it was called "Heal L.A.", it was done after the L.A. riots after the Rodney King trial--it wasn't his trial, it was the police officers that beat him up--when they all got off scot-free, which they shouldn't have. Michael wrote a song because he wanted everybody to listen to it, and it was all gonna be about "L.A. needs to come together" and so "Heal L.A." was this perfect title. Well, by the time the song came out, 5 years later, we couldn't call it "Heal L.A." anymore, Michael had to sort of come up with a new lyric and a new name for it, and that's when it changed. I think it was either 2000, probably 2000 or 2001, it became "What More Can I Give". And I can't remember if we had vocals, if Michael actually sang like a chorus that said "Heal L.A." or maybe it was just called "Heal L.A." and Michael always had the melody in his head. I'd have to go back to some of my old, old, old hard drives and listen to it.

MJCast: Do you recall or remember any of the sort of conversations Michael had with you around the song in his vision for the song?

Prince: Michael really felt that this was going to be bigger than "We Are the World", and I thought it was going to be too. And I think Brad did too, and I think Bruce Swedien who mixed it masterfully did too. And by then, this whole thing with Tommy Mottola and Sony was sort of in full swing. They gave the song their blessing... 'cause they got a list of all the artists that Michael wanted to put on there, and I think they thought it couldn't be done. And they said, "If you can get all these artists on here, we'll absolutely get behind this and put it out". Well, they did get all those artists on there. And then Michael even did Tommy Mottola a favor, and put his new wife Thalía on the Spanish version called "Todo para Ti". We did a version in Spanish that we worked on with a guy named Casey Porter, who re-wrote the lyrics in Spanish. It's beautiful. That one has Shakira and a whole other [bunch of] people that I don't really know. I recorded 'em all, but I don't speak Spanish very well. So we had an English version and a Spanish version, the Spanish-speaking market is huge, all of central and south America. That song should've gone through the roof, but in the very last minute, I remember being at the studio, and it was actually Tommy Mottola came down there and co-produced Thalía when I was recording her... Very nice lady, good voice. And at some point in time, I guess Tommy Mottola decided Sony was not gonna release that song, and the only thing that they could think of, with very little time and wanting to get this thing out, is some sort of an Internet release. And I've since talked to the guy that bank-rolled most of that song, Mark Schaffel, and he goes, "Well Michael, you probably don't remember this, but we put it online for sale". And it was like \$1.00 or something like that. And he said the next morning was when they raided the ranch, and I went, "What?", and I didn't realize all the things how they were mapped out on a calendar, but he says so what they ended up doing was, after less than 24 hours, the song was pulled out, and it never went back up for sale.

MJCast: Being on "Team MJ", what's going through your mind [during the 2002 Sony protests]?

Prince: Well, we were always working on something, so when Michael would--like we might go to the ranch and work on stuff for two--when I say "we", it's always Brad Buxer and myself, it was only me without Brad Buxer starting in 2008. Brad was as integral as I may have been, multiply that times about I think 10 is reasonable, and that's how integral Brad was in Michael's sounds and getting his ideas onto a recorded media so that we could--I wanna say onto tape, but we didn't use tape anymore. In the old days, you'd go onto tape. It was onto a hard drive, and then onto a CD. But Brad was really Michael's collaborator from the probably mid-nineties on, and very happy to be. So normally what would happen is, we didn't hear about most of these things until you did, and we saw them on the news. So Michael would start on maybe two or three new songs, and we'd be up at the ranch, and he'd go, "Alright, I'll see you guys in a couple weeks". We wouldn't know where he was going, it wasn't any of our business. And we would go back to Brad's house, and I had a studio at my house, and we would work on things, like different drum sounds, three different types of string arrangements for a certain part of a song, those kind of things that Michael would just say, "This is what I want on these songs. I want to hear some different ideas, and some different percussion ideas", and so we would go back and keep working on these tracks that Michael had started, and then you'd see on the news, Michael's with Al Sharpton in New York, and saying, "Tommy Mottola is devilish" or something like that. And I didn't really ever--and it's probably my own fault, but I also had a wife and was raising two kids, and was working almost every day--so I wouldn't like, try to reach out to Michael and go, "What are you doing?" or--and Brad and I wouldn't really even talk about it. I mean, we had work to do, and we knew in a week or two, or a month or so, Michael was gonna be back or call on the phone and go "Let me hear what you got". And sometimes we were actually up at the ranch for a week or a month while Michael was out of town. And we wouldn't know where he was, but he would call like every day, and we'd plan the things that got changed from the night before, and he'd say either "yay or nay" and give you some more changes and you'd just keep working. So I never really looked at the big picture, nor did I really formulate any sort of personal opinion on what was going on--I was very aware of why we were not touring in 2002, which was 9/11.

MJCast: I'm curious to know whether a solo version of [What More Can I Give] exists? Did Michael record the vocals top to bottom of that song himself?

Prince: Yeah, except they were done up at the ranch, and not Michael in full bloom. He knew that was going to be a scratch vocal track, right? So it was never his intention for that to be heard. In fact, once Beyonce sang the entire track, Michael pulled Brad and I aside, and he said, "From now on, when you fly around and recording other vocalists, play them Beyonce's version" And I went, "Ok". Because she nailed it. And her vocal performance was a lot more robust than Michael's 'cause Michael never intended for that to be the final vocal.

MJCast: Were you involved in the recording of "One More Chance"?

Prince: Most of the time, R. Kelly would send the raw tracks to Brad, and then Brad and I would get them ready for MJ, and add stuff that MJ may have wanted. Now, I could be wrong, I mean, I know that song so well that I'm just thinking--I don't want to not tell you the truth, so I'm trying to think. I have all my notes right here now, because this main Pro Tools computer I have in my office has almost--copies of most of the stuff I worked on. Yeah, and I've got--oh yeah, I worked on this song for a long time. I can see, going to the earliest version, was June 27, 2003... So yeah, it says "One More Chance" at Marvin's, that's Marvin's Place, that's the place that we did a little bit of work on the Invincible album as well. That's owned by John McClain, who's now one of the main guys at the Estate. And then we go into our numbering system, which starts with 1.1, and it goes incrementally up, so we could always go back to an older version. And we were using Pro Tools 5.1, which is a pretty old version of Pro Tools by today's standards. We're

up to 12. And looks like we actually started working on the song in earnest--by July 9, we had version 1.1, and then it goes up to version "13.6 MJA", which stands for "Michael Jackson Approved", and I think it goes up further than that... Now we're up to July 13, of 2003, so that's actually pretty quick, and then... "14.4 MJA", now we're up to July 15, that's only a couple more days, so we were going pretty fast, let's see. Let me scroll waaay down, now we're on "One More Chance Vocals 2". Now we've kinda finished the music, Michael's happy with the music, we're working on vocals. And now we're going up to--oh, it's only July 23. When you see this many things, you know we were working on this thing like 20 hours a day. July 25, July 27--I'm trying to see if there is a last one. "One More Chance Vocal", July 30, of 2003, and then, let's see--I'll go scroll to the bottom real quick and just see. "One More Chance Vocal 33.5", July 30. Looks like we finished end of July, early [August]. Here's a "One More Chance 1.5" that says "November 17, 2003". So when did the song come out? And yes, I worked on it [laughs]

MJCast: November 20.

Prince: Ok.

MJCast: What were Michael's plans post-Sony-dispute? Was he working on more material? Was there any discussion about what he was gonna be doing, if it weren't for the trial?

Prince: Yes and yes... We never stopped working on songs. I mean, jumping ahead a little bit, even when Michael was in Bahrain, he was working on songs over there with [John Barnes]... but he was also calling Brad, and working on ideas. They were working on something for--I want to say Hurricane Katrina or something like that.

MJCast: Was it John Barnes?

Prince: Yeah, yeah. And I've had several meetings over the last 5, 6 years with John Barnes, nicest guy in the world. And in a lot of ways, he was sort of Brad before there was a Brad, you know what I mean? So Michael would work on new ideas with John Barnes, and, at some point, I think he--Brad Buxer and Michael just kind of gelled and Brad could be reached 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and I think Michael really liked that. And then Brad sort of became the go-to guy for collaborating on new songs. So even when Michael was working with John Barnes, he was calling Brad, giving him ideas--and there were several songs--but the one I remember the most--it was gonna be for the Hurricane Katrina victims, and I can't remember what the name of the darn thing was.

MJCast: Was it "From the Bottom of My Heart"?

Prince: It might have been. If I heard the music, I would know, because it had a couple different working titles. But the big picture, oh, and there was, by--

MJCast: What would 2004/2005 have looked like for Michael if it weren't for the trial, and I'm just wondering if he talked about that?

Prince: Well, the one thing that I remember is, in 2002 and 2003, a lot of people in the film industry were coming up to visit him. Big directors, big producers, people that he had known for years, or friends of people that he knew. And we would be in the dance studio, we had all the equipment set up, working on a new song, and Michael would come in there with them. And he'd go, "Oh, this is--" I don't remember anybody's name, but he did. And he mentioned three big, giant films, and I'm going like, "Wow. What's this guy doing here?" But Michael knew everybody. And Michael made it a point to tell Brad and myself, and I'm sure he told others, "I don't want to hear anymore talk about touring". He wanted to either act or produce or direct or do music for film. In fact, Michael and Brad wrote about--oh gosh, five or six different, little things, hoping to get it into the movie called "The Green Hornet". I don't think they ever made it into the movie. They were working on a lot of different things, and Michael really--and I think this really speaks to the fact that, here is somebody who has now been touring on and off for, at least 40 years, 38 years, quite a few years, and he really wanted to, somehow, break into the movie business. And he didn't really care so much if he was an actor or a director, but he felt he

had learned enough, and was a real student of film, as he was with music, to be able to be given the reins, and direct and/or produce a full-fledged motion picture. And I think that's why some of these gentlemen were coming up to the ranch, is Michael was talking to them in earnest about trying to do that. And I think a lot of it was just knowing how much of a stress touring put on him physically, and that he would love to have just--I think been a big director/actor for the rest of his life, and it just didn't happen the way he wanted. He was really hoping--and I don't know if many people know this--he really tried to get that Johnny Depp role in Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory or something like that. And he was also hoping to get that role in that movie "Powder", which I think he would have been great in, but the thing is when you're Michael Jackson and you're so well known as being Michael Jackson, one of the world's greatest singers and dancers, it's hard--I mean, Hollywood, the industry, really typecasts you. Just like they do if you're a TV actor that does comedies, nobody's gonna hire you for a drama. If you're a TV actor, nobody wants you to do movies. If you write music for television, nobody really wants to give you a chance to write music for film, because it's a "different thing", and it's not. It's all these little clubs, and everybody--well, that's just how the music business is, and that's how the film business is, and the TV business. I mean, once you're something, they figure, "Well you can't be that and that". And some of the biggest stars have proven that that's not true, you can have a TV career and a film career, and you can actually have a TV career, and have a band and have some hit songs and go on tour and have a lot of fun, like Rick Springfield. He made it clear that he didn't want us [laughs] to bring up the word "tour".

MJCast: Were you involved in any sessions with Michael around [the 2004-2005 trial] period?

Prince: We were up at the ranch--Brad and I--in two separate rooms, two separate studios setup, and we were working on thing up until about 2 weeks before the trial. And I think this was a mistake on the attorney's part, because they told Michael's brother Randy and [Eddie] that they thought this music was a distraction and they wanted Michael's full attention in preparing for the trial, so they said, "Ok, you guys need to pack up your stuff and head back to your studios at your houses", which we did. And still kept in touch with Michael, but I think it would've been much better had we at least kept one of the writing systems up there so that Michael would have this release, because for him that was like meditation, it was his yoga, it was what gave him an artistic release, and I think that would have been very, very good for him.

MJCast: Could you give us an idea of the evolution of ["I am a Loser"]?

Prince: Yeah, that's a song--don't ask me what year it was--but we were up at the ranch and Brad had just broken up with this really pretty girlfriend, maybe more than a girlfriend, and I think she just, at some point, had enough of this 24/7 life that Brad had to--sort of dedicate himself to Michael. And Brad was walking around, and I think this might have been in Vegas in a hotel, but I'm not sure. And he was saying out loud, "I'm a loser, I'm a loser", and he was getting mad at--he was worked up. He was just really upset, and he kept saying, "I'm a loser, I'm a loser", and then Michael knocked on the door and said, "What's going on?" and then Brad told him the story, and that's how that song was born. And the original title was called "I am a Loser". And it was that for a long time, we worked on it mostly up at the ranch, and then the funny thing is--or an interesting thing is--in 2008, I was working with Michael on music and on vocals, and it was just the two of us, and we were at the Bel Air Hotel, and Michael, unbeknownst to me, was in L.A.. That's when he was having all the meetings with AEG. But I did not know that, and it wasn't any of my business, so I'm just working on music, and then Michael looks at me one day, and goes, "I need to re-sing the chorus on this song". I go, "Why?" And he goes, "Well, I love the song. But I don't want people to think I *am* a loser. It's okay if I *was* a loser, and I'm not anymore". And I go, "Okay. That makes sense." So we have a newer version of that song called, "I Was the Loser". And, of course, I have both of them on the hard drive, but if Michael--if

we were to release a version right now, the one that would make Michael happy was "I Was the Loser", not "I am a Loser", so it's the same song, he just re-sang the chorus.

MJCast: How do you feel about these songs sort of slowly leaking...?

Prince: Well, it's my general understanding that the reason or the way these songs got leaked is--at some point, we turned them all over to the Estate and the Estate turned them over to Sony, and Sony had them on their server. And somebody got into Sony's server, and they didn't just get Michael's stuff, they got other stuff, but it hurts to know that it's been released, just knowing that it hasn't been properly mixed. Bruce Swedien is still alive, it's something that--I've mentioned it to people at the Estate before, but it hasn't really gone anywhere where I would love for Brad and I to, at least, musically, finish these--Brad still has notes on what Michael wanted done on the songs, and touch 'em up a little bit, and then--but not do what they've been doing on his last two records--and get the producer of the moment and have them do all-new music. That to me is sacrilegious. If it has an MJA on it, that means Michael loved it the way it was, but we knew it wasn't mixed, like by Bruce, or I could even mix them, but I think--especially since Bruce is so connected to all of Michael's biggest hits, while we still have that amazing genius on the planet, I would say, "Michael Prince, put those songs on a hard drive and fly to Florida, and spend a month there with Bruce and get Bruce to do a final mix on these songs. And then put those out there for the fans, because I don't want to hear those songs with somebody else's idea of what drum loop Michael might've liked on there, you know?"

MJCast: Corey Rooney, the original writer/producer of "She Was Lovin' Me", isn't happy with the final mix [on the Xscape album]. He didn't even get asked to mix that.

Prince: Yup. All I can say is, it's another example of somebody making bad decisions, because if you are gonna release the original version--or call it the "demo version", or whatever you wanna call it--why wouldn't you talk to the person that was actually working on it with Michael and say, "Which one do you think was the furthest one along?" or "Which one did Michael seem the happiest with?". I think either Sony or the Estate just went to the vault and sort of said, "Now here's a version" and they don't know if it's the latest version or it's the middle version--I don't think they really know that--but, yeah, I'm aware of that. I know with the two Dr. Freeze's song, nobody called him. And that's not really how you really want to find out, "What was the boss thinking? What was the boss' favorite version?" That's about all I want to say about that. But I do commend L.A. Reid for having that bonus album with, at least the attempt at putting the original, unadulterated, un-modernized version on there, just because it sort of shows you where the song was when Michael left. It might have been a different time, it might have been a slightly different sound, but it's still something that came out of his mind and the mind of whoever he wrote it with. So I had a meeting with L.A. Reid actually six months before the record came out and he told me he was gonna do that, and I thanked him for that, not knowing what versions he was gonna pick, 'cause it didn't really matter to me, but I said, "That's really what the fans want. They probably want that more than so-and-so's version of it." So I'm glad he did that, I wish they would've done that on the "Michael" album.

MJCast: Blue Gangsta is a great example of what you're talking about. The version that's come out of that song on the second disc of the "Xscape" album isn't the finished version. There was a leak years earlier of that with percussive elements, that I think yourself and Brad worked on, that take the song to a whole new level, and I didn't know why that version didn't come out on the "Xscape" album...

Prince: I think, just because, the people that worked on the album didn't take the time to ask the people that worked on the songs which one Michael would have liked, or which ones they felt was the best. Like, why wouldn't you ask Freeze, "Hey, which version were you and Michael the happiest with?", and just go with it. I think sometimes people up in ivory towers tend to do things in a bit of a bubble.

...

[Michael Prince receives "MPSE Award" for "This Is It" album, and mentions working on Ultimate Collection, and Number Ones]

Prince: I know that, after MJ passed away, and I worked on the movie "This Is It", which was one of the hardest things I've ever done, both from just an emotional point of view, it was like--I worked on Michael's memorial service, which was hard enough, and it was something that you felt you wanted to do, and you needed to do. And the busier you can stay in times of grief, I have learned, in a way, the better it is for you. Sometimes it just means you're postponing mourning, or your real grief, until later when things kinda quiet down, but I think it does sort of help you. And so while everybody's out there, being sad at Michael's memorial, I'm back behind the curtain, running all the audio and stuff, but I was happy to do it. And then, after that, I took my family on a--just a little, sort of a camping vacation. We have a little RV, and we took it up to Northern California, we went to Yosemite, which is one of the most beautiful places on Earth, and then we went to Lake Tahoe, and that's another beautiful lake, and some nice camping areas. And I remember I started getting phone calls from a friend of mine, Bill (William) Sheppell [Jr.], who was our front of house mixer for that show. An amazing, amazing mixer. It would've been one of the best sounding live shows you've ever heard. It was that good. And he said, "Hey, where are you?" And I go, "I'm up in Northern California." "When are you coming home?"

"I don't know. Why? What's important?" And he goes, "Well, we've been looking at all the video and we've been listening to all the multitracks that we were making"--and the multitracks were being made, by the way, just so you can do what's called a virtual sound check, so when the band's not there, you can run the audio back through the mixer, and you can practice mixing it, make the drums sounds better... add different EQs and compressors to things so you're even more ready for the next rehearsal with the live band. So, he says, "We think we have enough here to do some sort of a documentary". I went, "What?" And I was like in shock. And so I said, "Well, I'll be home in four or five days if that works for everybody." And it did, and so I got home, and I remember driving down to AEG's office downtown, and that's where they had like all these little Pro Tools systems set up and video editing systems set up, and wow, the first time I sat down and saw Michael in those raw rehearsals, I just started crying. And it was hard, but in the long run, it made me so happy 'cause I felt I was working on another Michael Jackson project, and it's as though Michael was there. And you're seeing him everyday, and you're hearing his voice, listening to him talk, and it was really like a journey of joy and grief at the same time. And I remember when we finally finished that project--it was really hard to finish, because they kept changing days on us and different performances, and so you had to grab the audio from that day and try to blend it with the audio from 3 days earlier where it sounded a little bit different, so it was a lot of work. But when we finally got finished mixing the whole thing, and we played it for everybody that worked on the movie--they had like a family and friends day, then I remember them going, "Well, Michael Prince, I think today was your last day. It sounds great, you're done.". And I just remember feeling that same, lost sadness that I felt the same day that Michael passed away, just packing up my stuff for the second time. Calling the guy with the truck, having him come pick it up, and having it delivered at my house. To wind the clock back to June 25, I just remember--I had notes from the night of June 24 from speaking to Michael about things that needed to be changed on three or four songs, and even after Michael--it was announced that he had passed away, I still felt I had to finish at least all the things that I had promised I would do, and so I did all that. And now it's like two or three in the afternoon, and I'm just walking around in a daze like everybody else, and I finally went to the production office and I talked to the head of production--really great man named Buggy--and I said, "Buggy, I don't know what to do". And I meant it. I was like, probably in shock. And he looked up at me and he goes, "You need to go

and pack up your equipment, and you need to go home". And, I mean, I really had to hear somebody just say it to me like that, in order for me to go and pack up my equipment, unplug it, and go home. And that was rough. And it was sort of the same thing at the end of "This Is It", but at least now we had something that I think really showed how hard Michael, the dancers, the band, how hard everybody worked, and how it started, and where we ended up, and Michael still--for those of us that have worked with him before and knew him well, Michael was dancing at like 25% of what he was capable of, he was singing at 15% of what he was capable of, because for Michael, those were just camera-blocking, trying to show the lighting guy where he was gonna stand, looking at video and saying, "Ok, that needs to have more blue in it." I mean, Michael--I always thought of the tour as Michael's sandbox, that was a giant toy for Michael, and he understood every nook and cranny of that stage, he understood lighting. I love that one little scene in the movie "This Is It" where Kenny says something to him, like "Michael, we should start the next song" and Michael goes, "I'm sizzling". And Michael knew that there were these sizzle moments and if you guys have ever seen like him play or videos, Michael knows there's times in the show where he could stand there for 3 minutes and just wriggle a shoulder, and the audience will go crazy for 30 seconds. So Michael was starting to, in his head, build all those things into the show, and it was gonna be unbelievably magical, that show, and hopefully we captured a little bit of it in the movie.

MJCast: It was a very important project to come out, and it definitely helped myself and a lot of other fans when we saw it. It was incredible to watch.

Prince: I'm glad to hear that, and I know--it was good for even--my wife loved Michael, she came with me to the ranch many times, she was on tour with us for weeks at a time with the kids. The kids loved Michael, they loved watching that. In fact, I know my wife came with me to the premiere--I don't remember if we were able to bring the children or not. They loved Michael to death, and so did my wife.

MJCast: Was that your decision to use the demo vocals rather than the live vocals [in "This Is It"] to show it as a more completed thing?

Prince: Well, it was at least 50% of my decision. I don't want to take credit, because it was a committee. My job was to get it to fit into there, but I remember saying, "Look"--and the other thing--I'll say this as a sort of interrupting myself. I went through great pains on that movie. If they were going to use any part of a vocal from a previous tour that was directly from an album, I went through there and worked hard to get some of the little idiosyncratic sounds that you know you would never hear live, and remove those from the vocal. And I did that, you know. And in fact, you know, a lot of artists that are out there these days, that are using a pre-recorded vocal don't use one from the album. They go into a studio and they re-sing a new one, because they want it to be a little bit different. Michael just never had the time, or took the time, to do that. We did talk to him about it for the "This Is It Tour", and we did set up a little studio, and the idea was to have some fresh, non-album versions of the songs, and we actually did start. I've got some of his vocals, a little bit of "Stranger in Moscow", a little bit of "Startin' Something" and then he and I had many nights, long talks in his dressing room, just the two of us, and he over a period of a week or two, expressed to me that he really didn't want to do that anymore. He said, "If we are gonna do it, I want just you and I, pick a studio, nobody else is there, and we'll do it." And then a week later, he called me into his dressing room, he goes, "You know what? I'd like to just sing live more, and if we have to use something, we'll use what we used in the past", and I already made in my mind if that was gonna happen, I was gonna take out any little foot clicks or little extra things that you normally wouldn't hear live. And I said, "Hey, it's your show, you're the boss. It's your decision, I stand by any decision you make.", so that's when we stopped trying to record new vocals for that tour.

MJCast: Are you able to shed some light on some of the other ideas that were considered or slated for inclusion, which we didn't see in the film.

Prince: Well, I know "Stranger in Moscow"... The mashup between "Will You Be There" and it might have been "Heal the World"--oh my God, that was one of the hardest things I ever did, because you got two songs that have hundreds of tracks of audio in them and you're trying to marry them without blowing out your system, and you have to figure out which bar you're gonna switch to the other song, and try to get the tempos close and stuff--that was almost a one-week project in itself. I think that's the one that I'm thinking about... The main thing is, some of those songs, we had not yet rehearsed. And because of that, there was no video of them, and there was no audio of them. I kind of had a feeling we hadn't rehearsed "Stranger in Moscow" yet. Michael was having a tough time cutting songs because by now, there were so many of them. And you had new songs he wanted to add, you had songs that did not get played on the HIStory Tour that they said, "Well gosh, you didn't do that on the HIStory Tour, why don't you put that back in the show?" Like Dirty Diana was going to go into the show. And so I remember Kenny Ortega would say, "Michael, you need to think about this, we need to cut another two or three songs" and Michael, he goes, "These are like my kids! I can't just cut these songs out", so that was one of the hardest things for Michael to do was to figure out what songs he was gonna have to just give the axe to. That was rough. We still hadn't gotten the show as short as it needed to be. When I say "short", Michael was doing a really long show, but he had so much material. I do have--I don't know if I have it in this computer. I might have the file setlist... Here, "MJ UK Master"... It says "6/25/09", let's open that one up. Yeah, we were gonna start with "Startin' Something", and then "Don't Stop 'Til You Get Enough"...

MJCast: Michael was going to perform that song in full in the show?

Prince: Well, I wanna say "full", but it might've been an abbreviated version. A lot of these songs we were maybe gonna do like one verse and a chorus and a dance section and a chorus, rather than do the entire song... and then "Rock With You", and then we were going to "Drill". "Drill" is that opening section to "They Don't Care About Us"... "Drill", and into an abbreviated version of "They Don't Care About Us", and then "Human Nature", and then "Stranger in Moscow", and then "Smooth Criminal", and then "The Way You Make Me Feel"--the slow version, much like it is in the film, if I remember correctly--and then "You Are Not Alone"... then [next to "You Are Not Alone"] it says "DNU" which means "Do Not Use", so it might have been one that I had programmed and then we decided it was gonna be in the set, so don't quote me on that-- and then "I Just Can't Stop Loving You", and then "Dangerous", and then "Dirty Diana", and then "Beat It", and then "Thriller", which was gonna have that cool ending on it, you know the [hums instrumental of "Threatened"]... I love that part. And then "Earth Song", and then--oh yeah, this was the big thing, it was "We Are the World and "Heal the World", getting those two songs married to each other, and then "Black or White", and then "Billie Jean", and then "Will You Be There" and it says, "DNU", so maybe, as of the 25th of June, we were not doing that song. 'Cause some of them, we learned more songs than we could actually fit into the show. And then "Man in the Mirror", which as far as I know--yeah, "Man in the Mirror" was gonna be the encore, the final song. And that's it.

MJCast: So no plans for any new music during the show, is that right?

Prince: You know what, I think what was gonna happen is, once we got this much learned, Michael told me that once we got to the UK, we were gonna--as soon as we started rehearsing, we stopped working on all new material. I had been going to his house and working with Michael, some days with a guy named Ron Feemster, also known as "Neff U" on new stuff... But some of the stuff "Neff U" was working on was just rehashing some of the stuff that Brad and Michael had worked on, just with different piano sounds or different drum sounds, so not all of them were like new, new stuff, but we did have some new stuff. Probably have 20 titles on a

hard drive of stuff that Michael and "Neff U" were working on. And then Michael said once we got to the UK and got settled in, I was gonna bring all my gear over to his house, and on our days off, and when he had the energy and I did, then we were gonna continue working on new songs. And this is something that, when he first said it to me, I thought, "What is he talking about? And then I realized within about two minutes that it was genius. He goes, "I'm not gonna release albums anymore. We're just gonna put out a single every couple of months." Because we all come from the land of albums, you know what I mean? So at first, when he said that, I thought, "Why would he say that?" And then, literally, within a few minutes, I realized it would solve so many things. A) You're already touring, so you've got this buzz going on because you're playing--and it wasn't just gonna be London, it was gonna be all over the world--and you release a single, so you're only trying to sell one song. It's a whole new world now, and he realized that. It was all digital, it can be a worldwide release [with] the stroke of a pen. And then what he could do is, after you do about eight or ten singles over the period, of course, of, let's say, a year. You do two new songs, and repackage it as an album. And I think that was genius, I really do, now that I think about it.

MJCast: What were some of his favorite titles that he had mentioned he would've worked on?

Prince: Well, there's a famous yellow sheet of paper with his handwriting and the pictures were taken or obtained by TMZ that were in his bedroom and it was on the wall in his bedroom. And I don't know if I have that picture in front of me... If you've seen that, that, I think, was, in his mind, the list of his ten, twelve, fourteen--I don't remember how many were on there--most important songs. And the interesting thing is, none of those songs were from the Cascio collection, which I find interesting.

MJCast: One of the final songs Michael was working on in the last ten years of his life was "Monster", as you know, and that also was a song that allegedly was recorded with Eddie Cascio in 2007 and came out on that "Michael" album--

Prince: Yeah, but that's not the same "Monster", that's a completely different song.

MJCast: Right, exactly.

Prince: We stopped working on "Monster" in 2001. When the album came out and it wasn't going to be on the album, Michael never brought that song up again. Good chorus, really good chorus. That's the only part Michael sang, he sang the chorus. I don't know if he'd even written the verses by that time in 2001, when the album came out. I mean, you had so many songs that Michael had started, Michael and Brad had started, Michael and "Neff U" had started, Michael and Rodney had started, and then you've got the few that came from... Carole Bayer Sager.

MJCast: Yeah, she did "We've Had Enough", I think.

Prince: Yeah, and then, of course, Teddy [Riley]. I'm not really sure what Teddy wrote that made it onto the album... ("2000 Watts", "Don't Walk Away", and "Whatever Happens") but there were so many songs that got pushed to the wayside just because newer stuff just kept coming in all the time. So once you sort of passed on a song, you didn't work on it anymore. But that list, that yellow piece of paper, if anybody has that anywhere...

MJCast: I think a lot of fans, us included, know a lot of 'em from memory and many of them have either leaked then released posthumously. And I think one that identify with as one of my personal favorites is "Hollywood Tonight"... Damien Shields does excellent reporting on that, and I know that one kinda goes way back. Was that a favorite of Michael's?

Prince: It was, but if you look at the fact that it didn't make it onto the Invincible album, it shows you that he didn't feel it was as strong as what made it on the Invincible album. But maybe, in that case, if he would've asked me, I would've said, "Well, I think it should be on there". But that was a Michael decision. "Hollywood Tonight", I still love that song. In fact, they weren't even aware of that song when they were working on the "Michael" album, and I remember speaking to someone--I won't mention any names--mentioning that that was one of the last songs that

Michael wanted to work on again, that Michael wanted to listen to again, that Michael wanted to maybe add a vocal thing to, and when they heard that, they said, "Well, can we hear it?" and I played it for them, and it ended up being on the record. Of course, a changed version.

MJCast: Yeah, because it's clear that the demo has the vocals that didn't come out on the final version. I'm pretty sure the demo [contains the lyrics] "she was only fifteen", and then on the final version, that line isn't even in there. Why would they take that out? Who--did you--who took that out? That would've been Teddy's production team, right?

Prince: It was probably an idea that Teddy floated to the label, and the label says, "You know what? That's not a bad idea, take that out" And Teddy also wrote that spoken bridge part. I can't really say that that's my favorite part of the song either, but it did need something there. I mean, maybe a guitar solo would have been more interesting or something, I don't know.

MJCast: There's handwritten lyrics of the bridge--isn't there--that Michael wrote that people haven't heard before. And usually when Michael wrote handwritten lyrics, something would have been recorded for that, like maybe even a melody or something like that. In the final version of "Hollywood Tonight" that you've heard, is it more complete than the version on the album?

Prince: Mmmmm, I like it much better than the version that's on the album. I haven't listened to it in a while, I couldn't tell you. But, I mean, I know that the version I've listened to the most--when we get to the bridge, Michael's sort of talking, and you can hear him saying, "Ok, the drums stay in here", and he's saying other little things that are almost like a producer, but I'm not sure that I was even aware he had written lyrics for the bridge until I heard it from--probably from Damien. Because you're right, if he had written words to the bridge, why wouldn't they have used the words Michael wrote, even if somebody had to speak it because they didn't know what the melody was. So I'm pretty sure nobody took the time, again, to really go back and--and like, I don't know where they found those lyrics, that'd be interesting to find out where those lyrics were. Like I said, Brad has what's called a--well, it's a big road case. And it's full of what we call "song packets", and a "song packet" basically is a big manila envelope that has everything that we have paperwork-wise, CD-wise, rough-mix-wise, and notes about the song. And so, some of them are quite full, and some of them have two CDs in them, depending on how much time we spent working on these, or how much development went into the song. One of my goals is to get to Brad's house, sometime next year, and go through the song packets and photograph, or Xerox... [or] scan all the written parts that are in those things. And some of them are like--if Brad wrote like a string part or multiple string parts for a string section to play, he would actually write all that stuff out on music staff paper, so some of it is music notation as well.

MJCast: Michael Prince, you've mentioned a few times during this conversation that people [are/were not] not taking the time to properly research and put together these posthumous products. And when you consider two things. Firstly, Michael's stature as an artist, and secondly, his perfectionism. As somebody who worked with him so closely, how does it make you feel to see his work being treated in that way?

Prince: More than anything, a little bit sad, not angry at all. And just makes me question who decides who to call and who not to call, because I can't imagine, and I--forget about me, I can't imagine somebody working on "Hollywood Tonight" without at least phoning Brad Buxer, who co-wrote that song, and saying, "Can you come down to the studio for a couple days and tell us where Michael was headed with this song?" It's almost like they sorta wanted to divorce, in many cases, the writers of the songs from the songs.

MJCast: I understand you were involved in some way [with the planned, but ultimately cancelled, 2008 Grammy Awards appearance], perhaps in putting together the music. I just wanted what recollections you have about that performance, what it was gonna be, and why it never came to be.

Prince:...I don't think I worked on anything for the Grammys, Lavelle was up there in 2008 before I came up there. I want to say I came up in May or June of that year, which would have been way after the Grammys. In earlier 2008, I wanna say "Neff U" was going up there and back, Michael was doing a little bit of work at the recording studio at the Palms Hotel, and I know Brad was up there quite a bit in 2007, and I'm trying to think when--the last time I was up there with Brad, I didn't get up there 'til, I want to say, the middle of 2008. And it was an interesting time, because Michael had Lavelle staying in one hotel, and he had "Neff U" and I staying in a different hotel, and we would usually go on different days. So, even though I had known Lavelle for a long time, I hardly ever saw him. So every once in a while, I would just call him, and some days none of us had to work, so I would go to his hotel, and we would just have dinner or something like that, and then I'd go back to my hotel. But Lavelle went--we call them, there are "dance days" and "music days", so Lavelle would go on "dance days"... and either I, or "Neff U" and I, sometimes just "Neff U", would go on "music days". And it was interesting because we worked throughout the summer, on and off. And then we were there one day, working on new stuff, and went to the hotel, and we're planning on coming back at, let's say, ten in the morning, or something like that. And we're at the hotel, and we get a call, going, "Ok, we're going to Los Angeles tomorrow". And I went, "We're going to Los Angeles tomorrow?" Then he goes, "Yeah. So, in the morning, we'll send a vehicle for you, just come over here and get the stuff that you really, absolutely have to have, and then [we're] gonna start working in Los Angeles for a while."

"Ok". And I thought they meant we're going to Los Angeles for a week. Well, we never went back to Las Vegas. That's when Michael was starting, unbeknownst to any of us, these talks with AEG. That's when he moved first to the Bel Air Hotel. So the next time I see him, "Neff U" calls me and he goes, "Hey, Michael wants us to come to his place at the Bel Air Hotel." I went, "Ok". So we set up our whole little thing in there, and then Michael would tell me, he goes, "I'm not moving here. I'm only here for business reasons". I still didn't know what was going on, because I don't pry. If Michael wants to tell me something, he can tell me, but I'm not gonna pressure him. That just isn't our relationship... It was shortly after that when he starts mentioning AEG and stuff like that... But I did not work on anything for the Grammys in 2008.

MJCast: Did Michael ever talk to you about the tracks he was working on with will.i.am?

Prince: No. Anybody that's worked with Michael long enough--not just work, but sorta become his friend, realizes Michael really liked to compartmentalize his life. In other words, he didn't want Lavelle and I coming, normally, on the same day unless he needed me to work with Lavelle, which I did a lot of times on coming out with--slicing and dicing songs up so they'd fit like a dance routine better or something like that. And so he wouldn't, necessarily have ever talked to me about who else he was writing with, because those were all like separate little shelves on his big bookcase, and they weren't supposed to really intertwine. And it wasn't always just music, it was other things too. But I remember one day, we were at the Bel Air Hotel, and we were getting four or maybe five songs ready to play for Rod Temperton. And Rod was gonna come over to Michael's suite around 5:00. Well, I was supposed to be gone before 5:00, right? And so that shows you the picture, like there's nothing wrong with me being there. I know Rod, I've worked with Rod on other projects, just that Rod was working on and stuff. And so I remember it took longer than we wanted it to, to get these songs ready, and I actually gave Michael a little lesson how to play them in Pro Tools, 'cause I had 'em all in Pro Tools, you could just hit play, click on the name of the song, hit play, so he was playing with that. And everything took a little bit longer just to really show him, and make sure it was all dialed in and sounding perfect, and then all of a sudden--'cause Rod is this English guy who's always early--and so, ten 'til 5:00, I was three minutes away from being ready to leave, and all of a sudden, this [knock-knock-knock] at the door... And then Michael looks at me, like wide-eyed, and he goes over and

he looks out the little peep-hole through the door, and he looks back at me, and he goes, "It's Rod!" and I'm going like, "Yeah, he's supposed to be coming over around now." He goes, "What do we do?", and I go, "How about I get up, and I walk over to the door, and you open it, and I shake his hand, and I leave and go out to my car." He goes, "Ok". Because he didn't want me to see Rod, and he didn't want Rod to see me. For not a reason like anything antagonistic or evil, it was just, "I'm done with Michael Prince, he's got me all ready to meet with Rod, now I'm meeting Rod", you know?... In a way, it was very humorous to me, but insightful at the same time...

MJCast: Songs with--I can never say his name right Walter [AfanasiEFF]...

Prince: Oh, "Walter A.", I call him "Walter A." I gave up trying to say his name.

MJCast: There's three or four Invincible-era songs that--and "Fall Again", I know, is one of them. We all know that one.

Prince: Oh wow, great song. Yeah.

MJCast: I get the sense that Invincible, even though he took a lot of time on it--was it kind of a rushed album? It just seems like there's so much left on the table.

Prince: Well, no, it's that--he shifted gears a couple times. Originally, I think "Neff U" was going to be one of the major contributors to that record, as well as Michael and the songs he was writing with Brad, as well as Davy Foster, and just some really well-known writers. And I didn't know this until I talked to Teddy in 2010 on the "Michael" album, Rodney was mentored by Teddy, right? And Teddy had spoken to Michael about Rodney very highly. He even said, "Man, this kid is just on it. He just writes incredible drum beats..." and so, I think, once he told Michael that, and Michael called Rodney and Rodney came in with his crew, Michael really thought, "Well maybe I should build this album around Rodney like I sorta built Dangerous around Teddy.", to a certain extent. And so, like I said, a bunch of "Neff U"'s ideas just went *rocket noise*, you know what I mean? And he ended up with one song on that record. So there's definitely a lot of stuff that was in the fringes that probably should not have been dropped and should have gone on the record, but, like I said, I think those decisions were really Michael's in the very end... I know he's written stuff with Babyface. I know that, I think Jermaine was getting ready to work with--it was either L.A. and Babyface, or Jam and Lewis. I get the story mixed up... And Jermaine was getting ready to start a project with them and then, this was during I think the Invincible time, and Michael called them and hired them for six months and never used any song they wrote with him. And I might be wrong, it could be the HIStory era, but it was one of those things where he just said, "Well, if they're that good, I want to work with them".

MJCast: I've heard rumors that ["Best of Joy's vocal"] was the last full vocal that Michael ever recorded, and I'm wondering whether you could tell us the story behind that song?

Prince: Well, he had a rough vocal on there already, but I would say "Best of Joy" and "I Was a Loser", and there's one other song, were the last three that we worked on. We recorded all those vocals at the Bel Air Hotel. Once we got to the Carolwood house, we were just sort of working on new music with "Neff U" and I don't believe we did a lead vocal at all. We did a few vocal effects and things like that, but Michael never really sang at the Carolwood house. So that was one of the last, if not the last, one or two songs that he actually sang on, for sure, "Best of Joy". And "Best of Joy" was one of those songs that was pulled from the tape vault, I had never heard of it before. Michael just--Michael had a memory for songs that he had worked on, but also songs, almost anything that had been a hit in the last 30 years, Michael knew it, and could sing it to you, right off the bat. And he said to me one day, he goes, "We need to call the vault and get a copy of 'Best of Joy'". I went--I had never heard the title in my life--I went, "Ok". So this is like late summer 2008, and we're already in L.A. and I have the song transferred digitally into Pro Tools, and picked up the hard drive, and we set up the mike, and Michael resang that. Now, I didn't know this at the time, and that's one of the songs where he sort of had Ron

Feemster sort of redo the music to, and I spoke to Brad about this a year and a half ago, and I said, "Yeah, I don't know who the original [musician is]. It's just a drum machine, and a Fender Rose" and Brad goes, "I did that." And I went, "Oh, I didn't know that". 'Cause when you get a hard drive, there's no documentation, it's just a bunch of tracks, and you have to figure out what's what. So I thought that was interesting. So there was another sort of thing that Brad and MJ had worked on that I wasn't even aware of. It might have been pre-1997 truthfully, I'm not really sure--the original music, I mean, the original idea.

MJCast: Well, it certainly went on to become something really beautiful. His final vocal, you said earlier, was recorded in a hotel, I think you said?

Prince: Yeah, in the bathroom of his suite at the Bel Air Hotel.

MJCast: Was that a very common thing in his final years, for him to record a lot of vocals? Or it was a once-off sort of...?

Prince: It was very uncommon for him to record vocals. He was truly upset when the song he did with Akon was leaked (Hold My Hand)... We would sit there and just be talking, and he would just get this sad look on his face, like how could this happen? Because 20 years ago, this would not have happened. And he--the song wasn't done, it wasn't to his liking yet, and somehow everybody in the world has a copy of it, and that really upset him 'cause he liked that song a lot. And I think that really changed his overall view of the big picture on when he should and shouldn't sing. I think that made him, pushed him, not wanting to put his voice on a song until it was for a record, and they were getting ready to really go for it, because he realized even a demo with his voice on it, if it got in the wrong hands, could end up on the Internet.

MJCast: I can only imagine what [the 2003 "Xscape" leak and 2008 "Hold My Hand" leak] would do to the mind of a perfectionist.

Prince: Well, and it's like--I talked to an engineer friend of mine, and he had flown over to Ireland several times with Rodney... Remember when Michael was staying at that guy's (Michael Flatley) really nice house... and I asked my friend, who's a good engineer as well, I said, "So, you went over there with Rodney a couple times?" He goes, "Yeah, but we never recorded any vocals". And that didn't surprise me. And in all the conversations I've had with John Barnes--John Barnes spent more than a year in Bahrain working with Michael. I never came out and asked him, asked him, but he sort of intimated that Michael didn't sing over there at all. I think he just--he knew that once his vocal was on there, if somebody put it out, he had completely lost control of that song. And as long it was an instrumental, it was worthless.

MJCast: Do you know anything about ["Can't Get Your Weight Off Me"]?

Prince: I'll check if I have the word "weight" on my computer... I have it, it says "Get Your Weight Off Me", it says "Michael Jackson", it's 5 minutes and 17 seconds long [*plays the song, censored in podcast*] Well, the date on it is 6/20/04. "Weight Off of Me", 85 bpm, studio [unintelligible], somebody was figuring out delays and stuff for it. So yeah, like I said, I like it, and I've never heard it before... It's in the same folder with the original "Monster", "Craze", I don't know what "Craze" is, I'll have to listen to that one day. I got stuff- "A Place with No Name"'s in here, "Don't Be Messin'", "Hollywood Tonight", "In the Back", "Fall Again", I got some songs I need to listen to at some point. Again, I've probably heard it before, but...

MJCast: What's amazingly interesting is that song you just played, "Can't Get Your Weight Off Me", to me, sounded like a very complete production and vocal.

Prince: Yeah. I'm surprised that song hasn't come out.

MJCast: That sounds, to me, as strong as "Xscape" and "We've Had Enough" and like--it just goes back to that old story, the best songs from Invincible sort of not coming out on Invincible, in some cases.

Prince: Agreed.

MJCast: Wow, that is--I literally--that sounds incredible.

Prince: Well, I have my earphones in, so I didn't hear it that well, but I could hear enough of it to sound like--that sounds like a really good vocal and a really good song... I kinda wonder how I got it. I know I had a couple hard drives at the end of Invincible that pretty much had everything on there, but this wasn't a final mix or a mix stem or anything. So it's kinda interesting... I can't believe this song wasn't put on one of the last two records... They don't want to give you everything at once, so if they thought this song had some--and I'd have to listen to the whole thing to really see, does it go somewhere? You know what I mean? Because Michael likes songs that kept building as they went. And maybe the song wasn't completely developed. I wonder what "Craze" is. What's "Craze"? I'm not going to listen to it, but... It says "Michael Jackson". It says it's six minutes long. Hm, I'll have to check that one out.

MJCast: Those few seconds you just played for us are like, what we live for.

Prince:...I mean, honestly, that's something that--I've talked to both Brad and the estate about. You know, "One day do you want to go through everything and really listen for stuff that you haven't found yet?" And I go, "Sure. Just hire me, and I'll be happy to do it". We almost were gonna do that, like six months or a year ago, and it just never transpired.

MJCast: Were you surprised by the decision to embark on the "This Is It" concerts, and what did you think Michael's attitude towards those concerts was?

Prince: I was surprised... a few weeks before he went and made the announcement, he called me on the phone and we talked for about an hour and a half that day. I was sitting in the very same room I'm sitting and talking to you right now. And he said, almost out of the blue, he goes, "You know, don't you remember how awesome it is to be on stage in front of, like, 50 thousand people" And I said, "Yeah, I do." And then I went, "Why is he saying this?" And then he starts talking about playing and touring, and getting that feeling. And I go, "Wow, he's leading up to something". And it was interesting, because he made it very clear--we talked about a lot of other things too--but he made it very clear that he was thinking about touring again. And I was really happy to hear that, primarily because there were so many new artists that, in my mind, were pretty much copying him, wearing the hat, and having four dancers, or six, or eight, and sort of kinda doing MJ--don't need to mention any names, but there were a lot of 'em, and I thought, "Wow, this'll be awesome. 'Cause he'll come back and show them who's boss" and I had no idea what the plan was. This was before he moved down here to L.A., so he was still in Vegas at the time, and I was going back and forth to Vegas, so this was just one of those calls. I figured it was going to be a little short call of him saying, "Hey, I need you to come back up to Vegas". And it was interesting in that phone call, he talked about all the positives and all the things he loved about touring and then he said something very cryptic, he says, "The only thing I don't like about touring is all the doctors" And I think I'll just leave it at that for now, there's more to it, but it was something I was unaware of, but I am now.

MJCast: And would you say his level of enthusiasm was the same throughout, or did it seem to diminish as the concerts got closer?

Prince: It did not diminish, 'cause I would have regular, like little, just one-on-one sessions with him in his dressing room, and I did feel that he was trying to do too much at once, and after the movie was put together, I learned he was even doing more than I thought he was. I didn't know he was at these sessions where they were making the videos that were gonna be on the big high-definition screen. We were gonna have the first 3D screen of all time. It was amazing. That show, between trying to be--remember Michael was an A-personality, he was involved in every aspect of that, from the songs to the music, the choreography, arrangements of everything, all the effects. If there was gonna be an elevator, a crystal ball, whatever--those were all things that he would be involved in the decision-making process. So between music, dancing, all the curating of the new video material, and then approving of it, and final edits and stuff. He was working a lot. And I remember in his dressing room one time, talking to him, and I just sat down.

I go, "You miss your kids, don't you?" And he says, "Yeah". And I said--'cause we were like two weeks away from going to the UK. I said, "Well, you know what, this is the hard part". I didn't need to tell him that, he knew that. But I said, "You know, once we get there, we're gonna be doing three shows a week". I said, "You're gonna have so much more time with your kids". And then he got his nice smile on his face and I think it was just--I think he definitely was getting more nervous as we got closer, because, remember, he hadn't toured really since '97, right? So that's twelve years. I don't think he had any doubts, but I just think he felt pressure in that--knowing Michael and how much attention to detail he paid to things, everything, I know he would have loved it, had we had an extra two weeks, or an extra four weeks to get ready.

MJCast: You have taken credit in the past for the postponement of the first few shows to buy some extra rehearsal time. So what was the thought process behind that, how did that come about?

Prince: Well that was pretty much me looking at the calendar. I went into the production office, and they had a calendar, and it said these days we're at a place called Center Stage, and then on these days we go to the Forum, and then on these days, we go to Staples Center to rehearse, and then we fly over to the UK, and on these days we're gonna rehearse at Wembley Arena, and then all of a sudden, it says on this day it's our first show at the O2. And so I went, "What?" Because normally, you want two, three, four, five days of full production rehearsals, meaning you run the show--costumes, lighting, everything in the venue, especially if you're gonna be in a venue on and off for six months. So I went and got Kenny Ortega, and I say, "Hey Kenny, can you come look at this with me?" And so we just walk in and I go, "Wouldn't it make sense if we had some actual rehearsals at the O2 before the show?" And like, the lightbulb went off. And, of course, I'm just Michael Prince, I'm really nobody in the grand scheme of things and Kenny, as soon as he saw that, he looked at me, and he went over and he talked to Paul Gongaware and anybody else from AEG that was there, and he goes, "Guys, we have to have at least [three or four] days of rehearsal at the O2" and the only way to do it was to move everything later by three or four days, or something like that. So I felt bad later on because I heard stories about people that had tickets for opening night and now they had it--it got bumped to blah-blah, and I'm like, "Damn", but you don't take somebody like Michael Jackson or any major artist, and spend all this time getting ready for a show, and not at least do two nights or three nights in that room, and get that sounds perfect for that room. You just don't move in there, set up, and play a show in front of people. That's just--I don't know who thought of that schedule, but it felt like somebody didn't really look at the big picture.

MJCast: And when we were in Cologne, you actually said that, when you first heard on June 25, that something had happened involving Michael, your first thought was that it was a stunt or a ploy to get even more rehearsal time. Would you mind talking us through June 25 through your eyes?

Prince: Sure. In fact, it's interesting, I had to transfer a Jackson 5 tape that a friend of mine got through an auction. We had no idea what was on there. So I went over to a place that does transfers, and I want to say "transfers". They take tape and they bake them if they're really old and they say, "It's from 1975", and so we had to bake it, and then we had to transfer it into Pro Tools. And this was the friend that called me on the morning of the 25th while I'm driving to the Staples Center, and he called me and said, "Michael, I don't know if you know this or not, but they just announced on TMZ that MJ was taken to the hospital in an ambulance. And I went, "What?" So I turned on the news, and I thanked him for calling me, and what went through my mind immediately, and if you've worked around Michael for as many years as I had, you would've thought probably the same thing. That it was like that very first show in 1995. He was dehydrated, he was tired, but at the same time, he knew he needed two more weeks, or wanted two more weeks. So my very first thought was, "Wow, maybe we're gonna have two more

weeks of rehearsals". And I kept driving, I got down to the Staples Center, and there hadn't been any sort of announcement yet, other than what we had already heard. And so we all--Kenny had us all stand on the floor of the Staples Center, and we all held hands, and he told us what he knew so far, and that was that Michael had been taken to the hospital. And then one of the guys who worked in the crew, his dad was a preacher, so he said a beautiful prayer, and then we all said a prayer, and then we all went back to work. And he says, "Ok everybody, go back to work, and as soon as we hear something, we'll make an announcement." And, I want to say, it was probably a half-hour later or something like that, that I guess they heard--'cause I didn't want to watch TV, I was--I had my headphones on, I was working on Pro Tools and they said, "Ok, everybody, come back out to the floor of the Staples Center. We have an announcement to make". And that's when he had us all hold hands again, and they made the announcement that Michael had passed away. And wow. It was just like, everybody just started crying. And a lot of hugging, a lot of, "I can't believe this is happening", and I really felt--I mean, obviously you feel the worst for Michael's kids, but when I saw the young dancers, who they hired, who had--this was gonna be--this was the biggest thing to even be on the stage with Michael Jackson. It just took the wind out of everybody, everybody. There were people that went in different rooms, dressing rooms, and lit candles. And many just told stories about Michael. And it was pretty amazing, I kinda walked in and out of several of the rooms, just to sort of see how everybody was doing and, like I said, I think I was in shock too, 'cause they finally had to tell me to pack my stuff up and drive home... You kinda don't want to believe it, even after it's on the news. You keep saying, "Well no, he's just gonna--he's gonna come back here later on today or tomorrow. He's got to"...

MJCast: When would you say you properly grieved?

Prince: Well, it was in stages, because we started working on Michael's memorial fairly quickly it seemed like. And we had all these amazing artists come down. I remember the rehearsal the day before, Stevie Wonder, when he did his song, he was crying while he was singing it. You're just realizing how many incredible people thought the world of Michael Jackson and loved him. And that helped a little bit. And then taking my family to a few beautiful spots in California, and just getting out in nature helped a little bit. And then working on "This Is It", at first, was very difficult, because it felt like Michael was alive again and then having a lot of 12-hour days kinda helped, but I think it really--I don't know, things come and go, I had to sort of grieve again, but probably a different stage, like I said, when we got done working on the movie "This Is It". Then, thank God I had, at the time, a lovely wife and two children to sort of lean on. It's also was special to me that they knew him and they loved him too, so it wasn't like they had never met him, and I have to go, "Oh, he was this great person, I really miss him". I mean, they knew him, and they missed him too. And that helped a lot.

MJCast: How much of a surprise [were] all of [the AEG emails] to you to find out after the fact?

Prince: It was a big surprise, because I didn't know about the emails. On the 24th, he and I at that meeting. During the day, and the reason we got such a late start rehearsing is Michael sat there, and he sat with the video crew that had finally finished all the edits that he wanted, and he watched all the videos for the whole show, top to bottom. And signed off on them. So much stuff was moving forward that day, all the videos were finally put to bed, all the final music arrangements were done--until after that show, I had a few more to do for the next day on the 25th, and then on the 25th, we were gonna have this, pretty much, the end-all-be-all meeting about singing, although that could've changed a little bit over the next two weeks. The 24th was a real milestone day, as far as getting that show from 70% to 95%.

MJCast: Were there conversations going on about concerns of Michael's health, or were you kind of kept separate from all of that.

Prince: I was kept separate from that. And I did notice Michael looked a little thinner the last couple weeks. But, I also remember talking to Michael at the ranch five years earlier, and he told me that the lighter he is, the easier it is for him to dance. And he told me that he was sick and tired of drinking these food supplements--I forget what it's called, but you drink it to help keep weight on, 'cause Michael had a naturally fast metabolism. And he goes, "I'm not drinking these things anymore", and this was just, not even on the road. This was just at his house. He ate fairly healthy most of the time. Like salad, chicken, and stuff like that. Like I said, he told me the less he weighed, the easier it was for him to dance. I didn't ever see a weak, tired, out-of-person on stage. I saw someone who was holding back. I saw someone who was holding back both dancing and singing. And I knew why, he already knew the songs, "I didn't need to sing them until it was time". So all that stuff was a surprise to me, the times I met him in his dressing room, he was very coherent. We had very normal conversations, and, like I said, his passing was just a huge shock and surprise. Looking back, I mean, come on--there is no person on Earth that could ever think that they could have general anesthesia every night for the next x amount of years. That's just not rational thought to me. I can only think that he must have really felt that doctors were a next level up, as far as intelligence and how they can keep you healthy and alive--and my wife's father was a doctor. They're just regular people. That's why they call it a practicing medicine... You never get perfect at it. I guess it's my own belief that maybe he could have medicine like that every night, but wow... I wish somebody would've just said, "Michael, you can't do this. You could do this once a month maybe.", but there's so many other ways to treat sleep problems. Believe me, I have sleep problems. When Michael told me had sleep problems in 2009, I didn't think much of it, because I've had sleep problems since I was in high school, and some nights I don't sleep at all. But I'll try to sleep again the next day, but I had no idea he had ever taken general anesthesia to help sleep. So I was very surprised and shocked.

MJCast: Did you, at any time, reevaluate your involvement in the film and come to have any second thoughts about whether you'd maybe been helping to improve the image of a company that didn't necessarily deserve the effort?

Prince: I have never read those emails, I've never really heard about those emails. I didn't watch the trial, I didn't want to watch the trial, because, to me, there was only one thing that mattered, and that was Michael had passed away. And the trial wasn't gonna bring him back. Did I think the doctor was guilty? Of course I did. But I didn't watch the trial--even the things that you're mentioning now about Michael being slapped, I don't know anything about that, I've never read that. And part of me doesn't want to know anything about that. I do think that this was something that, financially, Michael desperately needed, but also, that AEG realize that, as a company--and I heard some of their three to five year plan they had for Michael. There were some amazing places he was going to play, amazing events that he was gonna be performing at, and it was all jaw-dropping, and it was gonna put Michael back on the map, and it was also gonna really help AEG as well. But look at AEG now, I mean, they do Coachella, and Stagecoach, the Rolling Stones... I think they were sort of already there already, that's why they had the ability to keep writing checks for all the things Michael wanted. I didn't know until after everything was all over, I thought Michael bought that house that he was living in, I thought he bought it. I didn't realize AEG was renting it for him. 'Cause that's none of my business, it really isn't. And I would never ask Michael that. I assumed that he bought that house, or that he was renting it. I had no idea AEG was--I knew AEG was paying for rehearsals and dancers and salaries and equipment, and if Michael wanted a giant chandelier coming down, AEG paid for that. But those are all the start-up costs you normally have for a big tour. And that's why they hoped this was gonna go three to five years.

MJCast: You mentioned a moment ago the five-year plan. What was it?

Prince: Well, the tour was supposed to last from three to five years, depending on how long Michael wanted to do it, but it went way, way beyond London. And I've probably forgotten more than I could ever remember, but it involved--they had already talked to the people about having him play at the Super Bowl. They'd already mentioned a place in Japan, where he was gonna play, a place, actually, in Australia. It was all rattled off to me, this was while we were still rehearsing. I'm just going like, "Wow, this is awesome." And, of course, we didn't even get to play one show, which, like I said, to me, that's not the saddest--the saddest thing is that the kids lost their father. That's the saddest thing.

MJCast: There's just one more thing I'd like to ask about the "This Is It Tour", and it's to do with the song "Dangerous". That's a song that didn't make it onto the Blu-Ray. I think it was Travis Payne who said that that's because Michael wouldn't have been happy with his own routine potentially with that performance. Would you be able to explain to us like how different was that song to earlier versions? How had it evolved? 'Cause it had evolved a lot over the years.

Prince: I would have to actually listen to the audio again and see how much that changed, but it was just gonna be bigger and better. And that was one of the songs that we were getting new changes and making edits literally two to three times a week. And I actually think I got the final version of Dangerous the night of the 24th, and I don't think we actually rehearsed it that often because it was still a work-in-progress... The dancers had a separate room, and I had an assistant named Mike McKnight, and--amazing guy. He was working with the dancers, 'cause I couldn't be in two places at one time. 'Cause normally I'd work with the dancers and chop up stuff, and Michael would usually--well Travis would work there with the dancers, and then when he thought he had a version ready to present to Michael, they would have Michael come back into there, and show it to Michael, and then Michael would run through it. And I'm not really sure--I know we played the song with the band a few times, but the arrangement kept changing just a little bit, like I said, two to three times a week. So it wasn't something that I think would've been ready for that film. And remember, that film--that was just supposed to be outtakes for the eventual DVD that was gonna be filmed the last two nights in London. The last two nights at the O2 were gonna be filmed, and all the material you see on that DVD was probably gonna be cut down to about 15 or 20 minutes of outtakes and behind-the-scenes for the concert "This Is It".

MJCast: I'd like you to answer how you think Michael Jackson should be remembered.

Prince: I just think of him as one of the most talented souls that I ever met, and I've worked with a lot of people, just rhythmically. His rhythm was perfect. His work ethic was insane. I mean, he worked hard, I mean that's why he had Lavelle up in Vegas in 2008, he said, "It's time for me to start dancing again", and Lavelle said Michael was wearing him out. They would dance for four hours at a time, and sweat's running down and all that stuff... I remember him taking tap lessons up at the ranch, just 'cause he wanted to learn other disciplines. I remember him telling me how much he admired Fred Astaire and hoped that he would still be dancing when he was 80 years old. And I remember the speech he gave when we were getting ready to start "This Is It". This was a speech just to me, but he said, he goes, "I can spend the rest of my life doing my biggest hits. I don't wanna do that. I wanna keep writing great songs that are relevant, that people will love, and keep re-inventing who I am". So he didn't want to just sit on his haunches and just do Michael Jackson's greatest hits, and I think that's one of the reasons he didn't do the Vegas thing. 'Cause the whole time we were there, he kept telling me, he kept getting offer after offer after offer from different casinos to build him anything he wanted to perform in, and just get him to stay in Vegas for the rest of his life. He just wasn't ready to do that yet.