

The MJCast - Episode 061: Jonathan 'Sugarfoot' Moffett Special

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The MJCast (Q): Hello, and welcome to the MJCast! I am Q, one of your hosts for today, and today we're interviewing one of Michael's most long-standing collaborators—potentially his most long-standing.

The MJCast (Jamon): Jonathan 'Sugarfoot' Moffett worked with Michael Jackson and the Jacksons as their tour drummer starting in 1979 with the "Destiny Tour", and continued to work with them later for the "Triumph Tour", the "Victory Tour", Michael's 1988 Grammy Awards performance, the "HIStory World Tour", his "30th Anniversary" shows, and, eventually, "This is It".

MJCast (Q): Not only did Jonathan Sugarfoot have the honor of collaborating closely with the Jacksons, but he has also toured with artists such as Madonna, George Michael, Prince, Elton John, and Lionel Richie.

MJCast (Jamon): Jonathan, it's an honor to have you here on the MJCast how're you going?

Jonathan Moffett: I'm doing pretty good—I've been doing pretty good. A little mistake in there—I'd never toured with Prince. I've worked in a studio [where] Madonna and Prince [were] on the same song "Keep it Together", so I've never toured. I don't want misinformation to get out there, so I've never toured with Prince, although he has asked me about touring with him, which never just came about because he was at a lot of the after parties at the Jackson shows, Elton shows, and cameo shows, and he'd speak to me and give me a combination of performance and he asked me about playing with him, but it just never happened. I think because I was Michael's drummer. There was a bit of a conflict there, so but—I never—I want to correct that, I never played live with Prince, just in the studio on the same song with Madonna. We played at different times, but we played in the studio [for] the same song for Madonna.

MJCast (Q): Oh, thank you for the clarification, that's a pretty cool story on its own.

Moffett: Yeah, yes, and there were a couple of things that—I also did the Grammys in '88 with Michael, and I did the Diana Ross ["Muscles"] track with him. He produced, you know, I did that with him as well. There's a couple other things that I'd done with Michael as well that was left out. So many things, too many to mention almost. It's been quite the career for you. It's been a blessing, [in regards] to the work with Michael.

MJCast (Jamon): So, let's take it right back to the very beginning. We love to hear about people's early lives and how they got into music. When did you first start playing drums?

Moffett: Well, I was six years old, and my father came back from work. He worked at the post office in New Orleans, Louisiana—wild born and raised, and where I'm from—and he was supervisor there and one of his co-workers' sons played music, and he came back from work that afternoon with a notion of asking me and my two other brothers if we wanted to play music. They keep us safe and out of the streets and everything, and keep our minds on something positive, so we said yes. And I'm the youngest of the three brothers, so he went from the oldest to the youngest, and he asked my oldest brother what would he like to play, and he said, "I'd like to play guitar", but he didn't—he changed his mind and decided to play bass guitar and so my father said, "Fine". My middle brother said he wanted to play guitar and my father say, "Okay,

fine". Now I only knew guitar and drums, but I wanted to play guitar really bad to be upfront and there's all these concerts with the guitar stuff, they gettin' all the attention and action, so I wanted that spot too. So, he came to me, he asked me if I wanted to play guitar... He asked me if I wanted to play music, and I said, "Yes". He said, "Which instrument?" I said, "I want to play guitar." He said, "Well we can't have all guitars, you got to play something different." The only other thing I knew was drums, and I said, "Alright, I'll play drums" I was, like, stuck with drums [laughs]. And it turned out to be—I started getting into and learning my first beats, and then learning that—finding out that I can [unintelligible] my hands, which I started on a parade drum in my very, very beginning. Only had a parade drum my first two years. I had started liking it, having control, and being able to dictate what my hands are doing, and making sort of a musical sense out of it, and the rhythms, and it became exciting for me and challenging for me, so I got into it and I loved it. And after that, my father, every birthday, for the next three/four years, got me additional pieces to the drum set. The next birthday, they got me a bass drum and assemble and then an expert. They got me two rack times and then the next birthday, he got me a floor tom and two more cymbals. And by the time I was nine years old, I had a whole set, and I could play. But all that time I had a year to learn how to incorporate the other elements of the drum set. Oh, and I got a high-hat cymbal at one point too, so by that point I was playing at dances and parties and talent shows at nine years old, and black parties, and different events like that and school talent shows, and things. So, I did that, and at ten years old, my brothers—man, they were older than me—so they wanted to go into night clubs and play, so they'd sneak me in the night clubs at ten years old, and I make money. And they give me some money, and I say, "What's this for?" And they say they get paid for doing this. I said, "Wow, this is cool." I'm this little ten-year-old boy at the nightclub, I'd sneak in the back door, and I'd play. My mother and father said, "As long as you don't go by the bar and drinking... you guys take care of him." And it was fine. I come home at 1:30, 2:30 in the morning, unload my drums from the car with my brother's help, and I go to sleep and wake up at 6:00—5:30, 6:00 in the morning, only 2 or 3 hours of sleep, then go to school. And it's just an interesting life, you know? So that's how I started off.

MJCast (Q): Wow, so you started, really, not long after the sort of same ages Michael started as a kid, in the clubs, in different venues, touring around the local area. Incredible.

Moffett: It's very interesting that Michael, in our lives, in very, very many ways, are very parallel. I always say that God had planned on us being together all along. It was His intention, because a great many things in his life that happened in his career that we all know publicly, it was the same in parallel to mine, which most people don't know publicly. But once my book comes out, and things come out as it is gradually, like now, people are going to start comparing it, and making the determination that these guys were meant to be together. I was being groomed to be a drummer when I was a little boy, and he was being groomed to be the artist that I would work for, so at that point in '79, in February of '79, God had planned on gettin' us together. I got lost on the freeway and found him—him and his brothers—that they had found a musical director, said they were auditioning drummers—who was a friend of mine... I can't tell the whole story now 'cause nobody will buy the book, so... [MJCast laughs] It was "Destiny" and it was miraculous, absolutely miraculous, so when you read the story or hear it—in the book there's gonna be an audio CD—well, I'll be talking about my story and telling it verbally like this so you'll be able to read along as you hear me speaking it, and your hair on your arms will stand up because everybody does when I tell them the miraculous story of how I got with the Jacksons.

And I was a fan of them just like everybody else when I was a little boy. And all of a sudden, I was from being—I wouldn't say nobody because no one is nobody, but from an inspiring drummer, just made his way to California a month and a half later, here I was with one of the biggest groups in an industry, Michael Jackson and The Jacksons, though at that time "The Jackson 5" are "The Jacksons". And I could say my story will give you chills, and make you feel and believe that miracles are true.

MJCast (Q): Well, I was going to—before we ask you about The Jackson 5 and things "Jacksons", what sort of other artists have inspired you throughout your career from when you started so young right up until now?

Moffett: Well, I was born in the '50s and grew up through the music in the '60s, '70s, '80s, '90s, on up to now, but with my growing years, nurturing years in the 60s, there was—all the artists—Elvis, I was a big fan of Elvis Presley, and then the Beatles came out in '63, '64, '62. I got into them, and my brothers are older, but my older brother got into Rolling Stones, and I got introduced to them. Around that same time, Motown had just started jumping off with all their artists, and I like the grooves of their music, and the R&B is their music, and I got into a lot of the artists, even though I didn't know who the drummers were at that time, because they didn't label the albums with the musicians. They didn't give the respect to them at that point just yet, so I just—being inspired by the beat with a particular song, and sit down, and figure it out and learn it, and then I'm playing a Temptations song or Smokey Robinson, Miracles song, or The Jackson 5 song, different artists that were Motown. So, I got into that sound in those fields of playing drums, the Stax Records artists that we're on Stax Records—same thing, they didn't give credit to the drummers or the musicians, so I just learned the song that I liked, and I thought the beauty of the beats were really exciting. And then James Brown started getting more prominent and I absolutely got turned out by his drummers. His drummers are amazing. Clyde Stubblefield, unfortunately—rest in peace—we just lost him. "Jabo" Starks—we haven't lost him yet, thank God. Melvin [Parker]—I forget Melvin's last name—there's three drummers that were like really the cornerstones of his earlier stuff and in the mid 60's, and early '60s, and late '60s, I got into them really, really heavily, and learned all of the nuances and stuff, and they're a percolating group, so to speak. And then "Zigaboo" from "The Meters" is my hometown boy, I got into him. They used to call me "Little Z", because I had learned everything he had done on all his records and played it just like him pretty much, and people start calling me "Little Z" instead of "Sugar" for that one point. But he was a huge inspiration—my first inspiration, as far as directly as a drummer, and I still pay homage to him. He's a good friend of mine. All these people become friends of mine, who I met at some point or other, and then I start getting into rock. I start getting into "The [Rolling] Stones", Charlie Watts, I started getting into Led Zeppelin you, John Bonham. I started getting into Carmine Appice, "Vanilla Fudge", and all the groups he's been with—a multitude of groups—Rod Stewart, and I start getting into—after that, fusion, Lenny White and Harvey Mason, from the smooth jazz and fusion I started getting into Tony Williams and Narada Michael Walden, and a lot of the fusion drama started exciting me then, and I saw—growing my craft into fusion techniques, and then patterns and rhythms and stuff in time signatures, and quite a few other drummers you know and then I started getting into Doobie Brothers and a lot of the rock groups, "Grand Funk Railroad", Don Brewer is a huge influence on me. I love Don Brewer's work. And then I got into one of my absolute favorite artists and groups was "Tower of Power", David Garibaldi, so—huge influence much like "Zigaboo", which Garibaldi says in his conversations and his articles that he was influenced by

"Zigaboo" as well, so I understand the way he turns and rhythms around—the way he's got all the elements of the beat percolating like "Zigaboo", much like "Zigaboo" did, but in a different slick way. Most moves in a slick way, his own touch to it, and technique to it, and then I start getting to more rock and roll groups and pop and R&B groups too, and I start getting into funk, when they start coming around, "Con Funk Shun", "Slave", Steve Arrington is huge—I'm a big fan of Steve Arrington, "Cameo", who I'm working with now currently, in the late 70s, and I start getting into them, there's a lot of the treasured funk, R&B bands Dazz Band and I mentioned "S.O.S. Band", and Mark Hayes in the '60s and the '70s, and all the funk bands you know the owned that two-decade era I saw getting into them as well. And then, of course, at some point Michael decided to—and of course absolutely, I can't forget the Jackson—all the Jackson stuff as "The Jacksons" as well as "Jackson 5", but at some point we decided to go solo and that's when he called me to work with him and start doing things with him in the late '80s and '90s, and a couple which I missed, because I also got called by Madonna, who saw me on the "Victory Tour" in 1984 with Michael and the brothers at the Dodger Stadium, and I told her manager, "And that's my drummer" and called me for her first tour, "Virgin Tour" and the "True Blue" album I did with her. And so, I worked with Madonna five years during the "Virgin Tour" and the "True Blue" album, then I did the 1987 "Who's That Girl Tour", and I did the Dick Tracy soundtrack and I did the "Like a Prayer" album in 1990 and I toured on the "Blond Ambition Tour", my last tour with her. And on and on, and then—I don't know if you want me to carry force with the timeline of things or that's for a further question. I might have got ahead of myself, but I got going in the—[MJCast laughs]

MJCast (Jamon): We got a lot of questions coming up around Michael, and your work with him, that's for sure! So...

Moffett: It went on from Janet to back when Michael '96, '97 for the "HIStory Tour", his last tour unfortunately, that was on that, and then I rejoined him for the 2001 "30th Anniversary" special in New York which was an amazing event. It was unbelievable. It was incredible, and then I rejoined him when he called me for "This is It", and it was a very unfortunate result of that experience, heartbreaking.

MJCast (Jamon): Wow, you sure definitely have great taste in music by the sound of it, and speaking of those early Jacksons and Jackson 5 records that you were getting into back in the '70s and '60s, what were some of the records that they were putting out that you sort of gravitated towards the most?

Moffett: Well, in the very beginning, of course there's "ABC", "I Want You Back", "Stop the Love You Save", "I'll Be There", "Mama's Pearl", "Looking through the Window", all the songs of those of those natures in the early Jackson stuff. And then, later in the '70s, "Dance Machine" and "Blame it on the Boogie", early '70s, '80s and stuff like—and all the songs of that—and then they got into the "Triumph" album, and all the albums since then that they put out through 1990. I actually played on "2300 Jackson Street" record. I played on some songs on that one

MJCast (Jamon): I love that one.

MJCast (Q): That's one of your favorites Jamon.

MJCast (Jamon): Yes, such an underrated album, it's brilliant.

Moffett: I think so too, I agree with you. I don't know if it was a backlash for them not being with Michael anymore or whatever, but it didn't get promoted as well as it should have been. It was a good album, a really good album, and I think it had some great songs on it, and I was—I think I played on three or four songs on that one, overdub stuff... I'm kinship to all the Jackson stuff

'cause I love it, and not only is that [because] I work with them, but before I got with them I was a fan for the decade or so more that I was exposed to, just like everybody else, since they first came out, emerged on the scene.

MJCast (Q): Jonathan, what was your first big break in the industry?

Moffett: That was Michael and the Jacksons [laughs]

MJCast (Q): That was it, that was the big break.

Moffett: I took a chance on an ocean in—from a call from a friend, who had promised that Jermaine heard me on the tape of our local band, which he had—the band broke up, he moved to California, and, like I said, I can't tell the whole story because then they'd know my book would be like firewood for a fireplace.

MJCast (Q): The book is always better than the movie or whatever.

MJCast (Jamon): The podcast, in this case.

MJCast (Q): The book is always gonna be better.

Moffett: Yeah, he did mention that Jermaine had heard me on the tape and asked who the drummer was, and can he get me out to California? He lived there out here in California so, it took me about six months to make up my mind. I kept going back and forth, because I had never lived away from home, and I was a little afraid and nervous. I was very shy back then, very timid and shy. And so, I was a quite bit nervous and afraid to move from home and the safety of home that everything I knew. And the six months, I was going back and forth. "I'm going, it's gonna be exciting!" The next thing I know, next day or two or a week, I said, "No, way, I'm not going out there. I get stuck out there, and I get lost and somebody be homeless or something out there, I get scared, and then I go back". "I gotta do this". "No, I gotta stop being like, 'I got to do this'". All the battle what's in me for six months, and then finally, in December of '78, I was thinking about it really heavily and torn what to do, and then it hit me that "Jonathan, you may be an old man and you be on this porch, at the house on the porch, rocking in your rocking chair back and forth, and you'll think to yourself, 'I wonder what would have happened if I had just gone and given it a chance, if I'd have just had faith and trust in myself, and faith in God, and just giving it that chance, I wonder how different my life would be, as opposed to being here sitting in this chair, old and dilapidated and having done nothing with my music?'" and but—lives on the dream that never happened. "I wonder what would happened if I'd have gone?" and that thought right there, picture myself being old and decrepit and haven't done nothing with my music, it changed me, and I said, "I am going. I gotta take this chance. I'm going." And that's decided, I thought about it, I said, "I can always [unintelligible] for like six months, and if it doesn't work out, I'll always come back. Home will be here. I gotta give myself this chance." And I got determined, and I decided to drive out in the middle of January, and then the month and a half later, guess what, that was God tapping me on the shoulder, say go, go, you're gonna be all right. That little notion kept being in my mind. Something was telling me, "No, just go, trust Me, it's going to be all right." That kept reoccurring over and over again. "Trust Me, go, don't be afraid. Watch and see. It's going to be all right." That kept reverberating in my mind and my spirit, something like a voice or something, and when I decided definitively to go, I did, and as proof, a month and a half later, I ran into my friend on the freeways from New Orleans, and they told me that the brothers were auditioning drummers right then, and he decided to tell them about me. I asked him, "Well, tell him the guy you've been talking about is in town. He just wants a chance." And he said, "This is the last day of auditions, I don't know, they may have a drummer, they got somebody coming in today, that's the last day. I asked him,

"Please ask him, just do this for me. Ask him would they extend it one day just to give me a chance? Ask him that." He said, "Okay, when I go in this afternoon, I'll ask him, and then he called me about 11:30 at night, he said, "Sugarfoot? Be at mother's house at 3:30 in the afternoon tomorrow. They extended it, they're going to give you a chance." Now if I wouldn't have listened to that little voice when I was thinking about it in New Orleans not going, and if I wouldn't have listened to that voice, and had that notion in my mind. Who knows, God might have put it there, of me being an old man missing the opportunity of a lifetime, and which it turned out to be. If I wouldn't have listened to that voice, I wouldn't be doing this interview with you right now. You wouldn't know who the heck I am, and nobody in the world would've knew I existed or played drums, but sometimes you have to listen to those little voices that tell you things that's trying to guide you, and deliver you to your destination of your destiny. So, I'm glad I did, because I get to do this great interview with you guys and have fun [laughs]

MJCast (Jamon): Thank you.

MJCast (Q): Terrific advice, to listen to that little intuition and that voice. That was—yeah, amazing advice for people out there.

Moffett: So, in essence, I auditioned and I got it. After two—there are two weeks of rehearsal. The last person, me, who did it—I got the job with the Jacksons. I've been—you know my history from there, so it was a miraculous time, miraculous event in my life and decision. Life-changing decision I had to make, faced with, I just faced it on. I'm so glad I did because I've seen the world so many times, and I needed to share my gift with the world and enjoy playing drums, and have fun at things, and meet a lot of people in the world, which is wonderful, wonderful.

MJCast (Jamon): And I've read online that the song that did it for you was "Shake Your Body".

Moffett: Yeah, "Shake Your Body" was the hit at the time, around the time, and it was interesting because back in New Orleans, when it came out, it was the coolest beat ever. Everybody, every drummer was defined if you can play "Shake Your Body" or not. You were defining whether you were a good drummer or a bad drummer. Most people couldn't play it, and the thing is and it's that they couldn't play it without leaving any element of it off, you know? I had something missing in the beat, in the song, in the groove. They trying to do something else on the kit. So, in a way sometimes, how do I put this? Sometimes ignorance can be bliss, because I didn't know how the guy was doing it. I just knew he was doing it, and it sounded like it sounded and then I got to know something. He's human. If he can do it, I can do it. I just got to figure it out, so I got the experiment on the drums of that beat, put the needle back in it 'cause we had the needles, 45s, and LPs, and I had to get off the drums each time when I make a mistake, and put it back and forth, and run back and forth to the kit. So, I just figured out and pictured in my mind as I'm listening to the beat—a video in my mind of how he had to be doing, across his hands, not to leave out the hi-hat, and then I started scientifically experimenting in different ways, and then Eureka! I came up with the way to do it and nothing was left out... what sealed it for me with the auditions was that beat. But little did they know, I had worked that out back in New Orleans. And when the first record first dropped, then I had to play it on a recording session for a producer at Allen Toussaint's world-famous studio in New Orleans. He's a great producer, historic producer down there, who had one of his staff member producers--and I used to work for him doing demos--and he was producing this woman or this girl, and he wanted to steal that song, straight out rip it off. I had learned it already, so I told him I could play it, and we got in the studio and I played it for them, but the brothers didn't know that, so of course when I

auditioned, they were shocked. They were like, okay, we gonna see if you can play this. Nobody that came in here can play it. I was pre-prepared, I already played on a record that basically the guys stole it from. But anyway, they call that song after playing "Stop the Love You Save", "I Want You Back", "ABC", "I'll Be There", and that's when she goes, "Okay, okay, we want to see if you can play this. Do you know how to play 'Shake Your Body'?" he said it with attitude with his arm across the neck of his guitar and had a posture like, "We're gonna see..." His head was cocked to the side like, "Yeah, yeah, right. Here comes another sucker. He gonna think he can play it, and we gonna see this. Can you play 'Shake Your Body'?" I said, "Yeah, I can play that", and I said it with so much happy confidence, he sat up and said, "What? You can play 'Shake Your Body'?" I said, "Yeah, I can play that." I had total confidence because I knew that. He said, "Okay, okay, and everybody looking at each other, there was laughter, and murmuring in there and in the room and this is a studio at Hayvenhurst and the brothers in the family studio, and they say, "Okay we gonna see if you can play this." And so, I say, "Okay let's go", and he counted off and I start playing it. And about thirty seconds in the song--Randy was there, and Jackie was there, Marlon was there, Tito was there, Michael was not there. And almost from across the room Randy comes walking towards me, and I'm playing it, and everybody start looking at each other, and the band members was there—you know the band members were there—and they like looking at each other with a puzzled look on their face. But I said to myself, "Oh man, I'm blowing it. I'm screwing it up. They all looking at me funny." I'm thinking that, you know. And I'm playing it, I said (to myself), "I'm going home..." And Randy came over toward me, looked at me, he turned his head to look under the hi-hat and the snare drum, and he's looking around. He's looked at the guys with this funny look, and he put his hand on his mouth and I'm saying, "Oh man, you blowing it. What are you doing wrong?" And then he said, "Hold—wait, wait, wait, wait, wait!", he waved his hands. "Wait, you guys, wait, wait, stop!" I said, "What, I'm playing it wrong? I said no, no, no, just play it again. Play it again one more time, so I said, "Okay, okay". I start playing it again... and he said, "No no, stop. Play it slow, play it slow." I said, "Oh okay, I've never played it slow before. I'll do it slow. So I play this slow, where he can see the exchanges of things, and I start playing it slow, and he's looking at me, at me playing and analyzing my foot, my hand—both hands and the way I'm crossing over to the times of different things, then he grabs his face like real quickly, and suddenly "Oh!", and threw his head back and stumbled back from my drums, and looking at the people and the guys in the room and they say, "Wait, wait, wait, wait!", and they start laughing and talking and mumbling to each other, and Jackie and Marlon whispering in each other's ears smiling. I'm thinking to myself, "Man, they laughing at me. Man, I must be really screwing this up."... and that's when Randy came back over and said, "No, no." I said, "What's wrong, I'm playing it wrong?" Then Randy came to me and like laughing, smiling, and said "No, no, Foot. You don't understand." I said, "What?" He said, "That beat was a three-part overdub." I said, "Three-part? What is that?" I didn't know what that was. He said that beat was played three times, three separate sections. The drummer couldn't play it all at once, so we had him go play the main beat, and there was kick a snare hats with straight eighth notes, and then we had to go back on a separate pass of recordings and overdub on a different track, the hi-hat part, that opens and closes at certain intervals. We had to go back on the third pass and overdub the time parts that interwoven in the pattern, and here you are playing it all at one time and nobody else who came here could play it at one time. I said, "Oh really? Why they couldn't play it?" I was just puzzled. I said, "Really? Why?", and they bust up laughing, and then he put his hand on my shoulder. He said,

"Sugarfoot, you're our drummer, you're our drummer." and he said, "Yeah, you're our drummer", and I said, "Oh, really? Thank you! Thank you, thank you!"...Jermaine's the one that my friend got the call, at first, had asked me to come to L.A. and be with with him on some project—I never found out what it was about. But that's what Randy said, "No, no, you're our drummer for—Jermaine's not getting you, we got you now." I said, "Oh, okay", so that's how I got with the Jacksons. They said, "You're our drummer, and then they told me, "Well, Joseph want to talk to you", and so now he said, "Now come out in the yard." We ended everything because, you know I had a gig, and I went in the yard, walking around in the field of the grass with Joseph, talking business and the first time talking with anything about that, my first tour ever. And he said, "The boys like you, they really like you. They want you to be their drummer. Do you want to be the drummer for the Jacksons, my boys?" I said, "Yeah, that'd be great! I'd love that." He said, "Okay, yeah, they really want you, you're hired." And that's how I got the gig.

MJCast (Jamon): Jonathan, that is honestly, out of all the years we've been doing this show I think that's the best story—the best told story I think we've heard.

MJCast (Q): I cannot wipe the smile from my face.

MJCast (Jamon): That was amazing.

MJCast (Q): You painted a picture, that was incredible.

Moffett: Thank you so much, I appreciate—I'm glad you enjoyed my story—

MJCast (Jamon): I can't wait for that book.

MJCast (Q): Yeah. Wow.

Moffett: Yeah, I will give it more details in the book, of course enough and I'll do a great recording of it and I'll tell every aspect of it that happened and transpired from the beginning of that whole episode that got me here, and the miraculous story is just unbelievable. Yeah, that's how I got my first professional gig was with the Jacksons, and that's how it transpired... The audition, I didn't know—like I say, ignorance is bliss sometime, I didn't know that the guy—I couldn't see him doing when I put the record on, I couldn't see how he did it. I just know he did it. I was ignorant to the fact that it was a three-part overdub, that he had to cheat and do it, and I just figured, he can do it, I can do it. He's human being, I can do it. I got to figure this out, and if I get this, it'll be really cool. That was my thing as a young man. I get this, it would be really cool. And he's doing it, so I want to do that. So that was my challenge to myself, and it worked out.

MJCast (Jamon): We spend a lot of time as Michael Jackson fans talking about those later tours, like "Bad" "Dangerous", "HIStory", "This Is It", all of that kind of thing, but I think some of the tours that get missed in the conversation a little bit are those early tours, like "Destiny", "Triumph", and "Victory". I want you to talk to us about the Jacksons as live performers. How hands-on were they in their tours in the '70s and '80s?

Moffett: How hands on? They were in absolute control. It was their vision, their project, their endeavor, and they were absolute controlled. I don't know who they clanned with, as far as production people and all that stuff. I wasn't privy to those meetings and things like that, but the things that we were described by them to do, as far as show arrangements, the brothers had total control over everything, and that was collectively, not just Michael's, everybody. All the brothers had input, and it was a great experience for me, and you got to understand, that was my first professional tour ever, and I was at school. I was all eyes and ears pencil sharpened and ready, tablets ready to be written on, I mean mentally and emotionally, because I don't read music. I don't know if I said that, but I don't read music. Everything's from the spirit and the soul, and memory retention, because I don't read music not compensated by developing a sharp

memory retention, as to what I hear, and a few times I can get it, you know. Time and two or a few times, I can get it and mimic it. So they come in and explain what they wanted to do, and we all get copies of the cassettes—at that time that was what was happening—get copies of the cassettes and of the songs—those record songs, album songs—and we learned, and that was our homework. We get that, what, a few days a week? Maybe sometime a week or two before, and we do our homework as professionals, it was my first time being a professional, but I do it because I knew it took. I wanted to be on that level, and I didn't want to miss the opportunity, so I took it so seriously, very seriously to go in there, knowing what my part was, and doing it very, very well, just like the record. That was always in my mind, just like the record, so I can impress them. So, I did my homework and I show up, then we start dissecting the song as far as how much of a song we can do in the intro, the first verse, second verse, if you're going to do a second verse or not, a bridge, if we're going to go to the bridge or not. If we're going to have a breakdown, are we going to have a solo extra soul section in the song. Are we going to stretch out the ending, the tag of the song, and the vamp of the song. And all of that was done in the rehearsals, and the brothers' ideas, and—I kept quiet all of that time, 'cause I was like a student in school. You don't talk when the teacher's talking. And all of them were teachers for me, and I was learning from the best—what I considered the best, so I had great, great love and admiration for them. Love grew even more as I went along to be used with them, but my admiration was always at its fullest when I started with them, first started with them. I had great admiration so, of course, in respect and so, of course, I adhere to what they wanted. I was learning, I was a sponge, absorbing everything I could. I was like Michael. Michael's like a sponge, me and Michael apparently are, like I said, in many, many ways and levels, and I was like a sponge, and absorbing from all of them, because they all had great ideas and very intelligent and very creative, because they had been in a business so very long, since youth, and I had so much to learn. So "Destiny Tour" was my training ground and my proving ground, and it was a fun, fun tour. It only lasted, I think three months but it was the experience of my lifetime, 'cause it being the first time, it's the experience of my lifetime. I mean, all the other tours, even the big, big ones are magnificent and great, but you always remember your first time, because that's your challenging time, and the one you overcame to be that, become that, what you wanted to be, and sought to be. So "Destiny Tour" was that, and we played all the hit songs from the Jackson 5, of course, and then from the "Destiny" album... featuring was out there promoting, and all of those songs was fun to play. And great arrangements, and it was just a small band. One keyboard player, the musical director—who got me the audition—my friend James Macfield, who's from New Orleans and his mother's house wasn't a block and still is a block from my mother's house, and we were in Rabble bands back there and he was a wonderful spirit and a great player, concert pianist, and pop pianist, and he had a lot of input with the brothers. I can't afford to leave that out because I submitted the brothers doing everything, but no, it was also including expertise with James who helped guide them to and had great, great ideas because the arrangements of the show were fantastic. They would collaborate with him, put it all together. They had really, really great ideas as well, but he would formulate the whole thing, and if they had something really creative, he'd go around with them and figure out how to incorporate it within the song, the arrangement, or the embodiment of the song within the show as a collective, so yeah, they had a great collaborator with James. He's a great friend of mine. And still to this day we talk, now we back in touch, and we talk and reminisce when I go to New Orleans, I go down there and talk with him and hang out. He comes

to my mother's house and we have great love and admiration for each other. We're like brothers, kindred spirits, as we were when we first met playing in Rabble bands in New Orleans. We hit it off right away, and we've been that way all our lives. It's pretty remarkable. We're close, close friends and he helped guide me. He helped groom me as well. His tutelage in that period of time was most beneficial to me, and effective for me, because I trusted in him. I knew he knew what the brothers wanted, and he knew I had the skills and stuff, and I knew he had the knowledge, and he had also had the ways the brothers like to work. So, I just listened to him and did what he said, they liked what they liked, and he got me in things like that and he did a lot of the breaks and the accents, and taught me all that stuff because they were doing tunes before I joined them. I replaced the drummer that had left, so I'm redoing that show. I had to learn the show. And I only had three days, three measly days to learn the whole show—my first professional tour ever, I had only three days, I don't even read, so I would memorize everything, every aspect of it in three days' rehearsal, then we hit the road, so...

MJCast (Q): Superhuman, Jonathan. Superhuman... You said "Destiny", you have such fond memories of the "Destiny Tour", it was like your first—was "Destiny" your favorite or, if not, what was your favorite of "The Jacksons" tours and why?

Moffett: I love that tour, and it was amazing, and it was learning, and it was a great show. I sometime listen to the audio recordings I have of rehearsals and of some of the shows, and I still you know like that—I really liked that show, and it was new for me. Know what else was new for me about that show? It was my first introduction to costumes, stage costumes. I had never been around that—so New Orleans, you just put some clothes on you got from the local hip-hop store, a store that was like the local fashion, with the bell bottoms, you tie your shirt up, let your stomach staccato or something like that, muscle shirts and theater stuff like that, tight pants, and that was a nightclub scene in New Orleans, but these were actual stage costumes for a professional concert tour, and I got my first experience on the "Destiny Tour" to look at the amazing costumes to me at the time. Amazing costumes, and they gave me some old Jackson costumes to wear myself, and I'm like, "Wow, got old Jackson 5 costumes", and I've never been in that element of it. It was exciting for me to be in the whole show business element of it that even went to the costumes... And then after that what Tour you failed to mention was "Off the Wall" tour, was the second half of '79, which was a combination. Michael had already dropped "Off the Wall" album was out there to promote that and the "Destiny" album, so we call or tend to call it the "Off the Wall / Destiny Tour"... And that one was in the fall, winter of '79 destiny was from March 1st, and we finished around—I think right before June 1st, something like that, early June, and then we went back out September 1st and 2nd, and then the first show was my real treat, [it] was in my hometown New Orleans, so I got the first time to play on a professional level in my hometown for my family and my friends and my city to see me with "The Jacksons", so that was pretty incredible for me, and that was the "Off the Wall Tour", which was amazing. And you could feel the step up it was, and see the step up it was that from "Destiny", because there was a lot more production, stage production, and tremendous more lighting and—not tremendous, but a lot more lighting. And the stage was different, and the show, we changed the show around a bit to add the "Off the Wall" stuff in there, and you could see it on YouTube, and they got incredible costumes—way better than the last ones. It was pretty amazing, brothers' costumes were amazing even more so, which got me excited 'cause I'm into fashion and stuff like that and designing clothes, so that's another hidden element that had be excited for doing concerts because of the uniforms in the concerts. So there were designs of them, concept of

them, and so that was a really great tour as well. And we added horns and then I would say, but my favorite—when we did the "Triumph Tour" in '81 and the "Victory", but I would have to say the "Triumph Tour" of "The Jacksons" tour is my absolute favorite, because the way the stage was designed, with automatic pods that—I should say remote control pods, the lighting pods that would move like robotics and scissor arms, and I was on risers most of the tours, the second two tours I was on risers. I had a riser and they had 10k lights. I don't know [if] you know what those are—super movie-set lights, like ten thousand kilowatts—whatever it is, and it was underneath my riser, underneath the horns' riser, underneath the keyboard player's riser, and it'd shoot right into the audience and their faces are blinded by all—[laughs] Not that I can take pleasure in blinding the audience out, but—[laughs] Send 'em to the eye doctor and stuff like that. Personally, I'm not like that but—

MJCast (Q): They would leave with the sunburn.

Moffett: Yes, indeed. A tan at least, you know [laughs] But they wouldn't do that the whole show, it would be on occasionally on certain songs—they come on for a little bit, then they turn off, but to me that was the magnitude that Michael always talked about—bigger than life in the magnitude of having a lighting I had never seen my life, that big, and utilize them in that fashion in order to create the silhouettes that they wanted to have while it was on stage, was extraordinary to me with a person of a production mind and designer's mind. And our risers move front and forward and backwards and those three separate robotic pods and scissor arms with lights all over them, they would work like three independent robots, moving up and down and the pod panels with different directions independently. It was something like out of "Transformers", something out of Spielberg movie or one of those kind of movies, you know. It was just incredible production, they'd advanced in production over the other two tours "Victory" was the two of magnitude. It was phenomenal, stage—I can't remember the dimensions—240 feet by something else, 90 feet deep 240 feet across, something like that, we had 80-something trucks... The magnitude was phenomenal... That's the first time we start doing stadiums, and all those stadiums and the magnitude of that would be what it is. Costumes were amazing too, and once again, the show was amazing as well, but I think on that tour for me, the songs were a little bit too fast, and that's what they wanted—the brothers wanted—but I always thought they were too fast, so I like the tempo and the pace of the songs we did in the first three tours. It was more relaxed and comfortable. The only thing about the "Victory Tour" was the tempos and pace of the songs were a little bit fast for me. And even in the "Triumph Tour", it got a bit fast. In that live album, I thought they were too fast and I used to mention it, but they said that's how they wanted it, so... But out of the "Destiny" and "Off the Wall / Destiny" tours were more sensible tempos, but I like "Victory", because of the magnitude. It was on a scale that had never been done before, and the audience that we played to—we sold out six nights at Dodger Stadium in a few hours, and we did six full sellouts in dynasty, which was unheard of at the time, and it was a great tour, great tour. I just wish they had gone over Europe like they had intended, but so big they said they couldn't make money. To ship it over there would cost exorbitant amounts of money, and they couldn't make money on it, 'cause the venues in Europe aren't as big as the ones here, and to fit that down, they would have to scale it down, and they didn't want to compromise the production value of the show, so we wound up not going to Europe with it so... But of the tours that I did with the brothers, I'd say "Triumph" was it.

MJCast (Jamon): That's great, and that was a question from one of our followers on Twitter, @NigelWilliams7, he really wanted to know the answer to that, so thank you Jonathan. And

when we spoke to Tito Jackson just a couple weeks ago, that was actually a thing he said as well. He was, as one of the Jackson brothers, he was extremely proud of that Dodgers Stadium achievement of selling that out so many times for the "Victory Tour", even so many years later.

Moffett: Yeah, it's pretty incredible. Even today, we think about it. Dodger Stadium is a humongous stadium and the sellout—yeah, six nights there, and I remember the tickets sold out so fast, it was unbelievable, that set a record on the ticket selling out. I was very, very proud of that show, but I just, for some reason—and it was a magnitude of lighting, sound, and everything was like off the Richter scale and off the chain on, as far as magnitude of it. But I'm kin to the lighting design of the '81 tour. Maybe because I like "Transformers" movies and all that stuff and the sci-fi stuff. It was like sci-fi stage, to me, and "Victory" had some of that too, but for some reason I just liked the concepts that they had on the "Triumph Tour", with being a smaller stage, but having that kind of dynamic.

MJCast (Jamon): Yeah, I mean, I love "Triumph Tour" too, that's probably, I would say, my favorite tour of "The Jacksons" as well, because the sound is just so organic, and all the singing is all completely live. It's just the instrumentation is incredible with the horns and I absolutely love it. I think it's a beautiful tour, and we were lucky enough to see some high-definition footage of it actually in the recent Spike Lee documentary that came out. I think it's called "Michael Jackson's Journey from Motown to Off the Wall".

Moffett: I'm in that. I'm in that. I'm all over that.

MJCast (Jamon): Yeah. That's it, that's exactly right.

Moffett: It was great for me to see that. I didn't see that high definition footage as well, and I want to look at it—I mean, I'm so proud of that, and having been a part of that, and I did the tour that promoted us where they put me in—I'm not on a record. John Robinson did the record, and he's another master drummer. He's a big hero of mine I admire so much, and I'm grateful to him. He said the templates that I had to learn and pray to, that made it so pleasurable and enjoyable the way he approached the music, and he created those beats within the studio. And what he did was so masterful and so artistic and so musical, it makes it fun for me to play all the time. I don't get tired of playing, replicating what he's done. I just put my attitude, my energy, my finesse, my articulation onto what he's done to make it live, to bring it up to live, and the strength and attitude and the power and the dynamics, it's all in those things to touch. I try to play it that it feels like him, but I put nuances in myself, and it makes it personal to me. But he's done a lot of Michael's recording work and the stuff that he's played on again. Really fun to play, and great to play because it's so musically such a music—he's a musician, he's not exactly just a drummer, he's a musician. He writes music on drums, that's what I do. I attempt to do, I strive to do. I'm not a drummer, I'm a musician, and I write music on drums when I play music and writing songs. I'm playing songs on the drums alone, and I can play a song with no other instrumentation, make the drum sound like a song. And that's what I strove to do since a young kid. I wanted to be musical, not just a timekeeper, and not just for dynamics and accents and stuff like that. I wanted to play musically, and I wanted to move people spiritually, and make them not able to control their body. They have to move, they gotta dance. And it's the power in that, there's a magic power net, to touch without touching, and I play my drums. You can be in the back of the stadium, and I guarantee you, I promise you—let me play my drums, and you will move. Your neck's gonna move, your foot's going to tap, something your body—your body's gonna wiggle, you gonna start dancing, and just give me the opportunity, and I can make you dance because that's the power of spirit God gave me to do. Musicians are that. We have power over the souls

of many who come into the distance of our work, and that's how—

MJCast (Jamon): Yeah, and not just in stadiums either. I mean, I remember sitting in a movie cinema after "This is It" came out, and I remember just hearing those initial beats of "Jam" and "Wanna Be Startin' Somethin'", and people around us everywhere were moving...

Moffett: Yeah, it's an amazing thing. It's like magic, it's wonderment. I can reach inside you. Everything John Robinson can do, and many other drummers can do, and musicians—but mostly drummers—can reach inside you and turn the switch on, and make you move like a public group, like a dance puppet... I take it as a gift and it's a blessing to have that gift. It's a power, I always say it's a power that we have—especially the drummers, as I mentioned—something with rhythm, which is the original language from mankind from the very beginning was drum people beating drums across in Africa that send a message, an original language. Something about that that can—

MJCast (Q): Primal. It's something very primal, and it goes across every culture, every continent from the earlier civilization. That's such a primal thing, and it's carried through, right through to now.

Moffett: Drums is the global language. Drums and rhythms—music is as well, but it stems from drums. The rhythm of drums, I'd like to say, is the Tower of Babel trampled the language, but for some reason, rhythms weren't touched. Drums, and the beat of a drum, we can reach every language, every culture, every nationality, every religion. We can reach the souls of them that bypass all the other particular differences that divide us. We play a rhythm and it unites people all over the world. We play drum beats, so if I can get my drums and play, and everybody understands it all across the rule with understood, appreciated feeling, and that's a power, and I can say it as a blessing God gave me, and all other drummers that I love and respect out there. And I don't feel I'll have no competition, and that I don't look at other drummers as competition. I look at it as brotherhood and there's just people of language... And we bring people pleasure to dance, and we're just people like that that we're uniters, no matter where you're from them, what you do in life, and all the dividing aspects of mankind—we bring you right back together. You get us in a club—we get you in a club, an arena, stadium, and we bring everybody back together. I think it's a blessing to have that kind of power, and I don't take it for granted. It's fun, it's there. It's a pleasure of my life, except for my fiancée. She's a blessing of my life too now.

MJCast (Jamon): Jonathan, another great thing you do is your social media presence and we love your account on Twitter it's @jmoffettmjm and you put out some great material on that. Some video footage, all kind of things, and I remember about—it was a few months ago when you were tweeting about the Grammy performance, the 1988 Grammys. It was the first time that I actually learned that you were drummin' there, but sort of backstage. You were watching a video screen watching Michael perform. Can you tell us about that experience and how that show came together, and what you thought of it?

Moffett: Do I have to? [MJCast laughs]... It's not my favorite memory [laughs] I mean, it was a great memory, but when you hear the story, you're gonna bust up laughing, and you're going to see why it's not my favorite memory [laughs]

MJCast: Well, you can't not tell it now! [laughs]

I just love that I'd choose not to tell it, 'cause it's not the most proud thing I can talk about and let people know. Ok, God dog it, you gonna push me into this. Why'd you have to bring *that* question up? [laughs] I was [unintelligible] the Grammys with Michael, and I was all excited. You know, "The Grammys with Michael! I'd never seen the Grammys before!" Right? Fantastic! So, I

get there and I meet with Michael, and we talk about things and something, they gonna do "Man In the Mirror", and stuff like that so... At the time, I was with Yamaha drums, and so I contacted the cartage people there, I told them all the sizes, I had this humongous Yamaha kit, and I'm thinking I'm going to be on stage at first. I said, "Oh, this is going to be awesome! It's going to look cool, and I'm gonna set up nice, and I have all my cymbals, I got all these cymbals"—at the time I was using 10 or 12, and that's all I said. All the stuff, but then they said, "No, you're not setting up on stage, and I said, "Huh?" He said, "You set up behind the curtain backstage." I said, "They're not gonna see my drums!" And so, they said, "No, you behind the curtains and we're gonna have a monitor for you to watch Michael, so you can do the performance with him. I say, "Aw man, alright, alright." So... there's several artists much other top artists on the Grammys and—of course—and they're musicians and all the top musicians. They were like, "[Gasp] Sugarfoot's here?! Oh man, it's gonna be off the chain! It's gonna be amazing, man, if we get to see Sugarfoot close up—and backstage too! We gonna be right up on 'im!", and all these musicians around, top people, and artists and stuff. And I set up my drums, they saw my coldblooded drum set set up, and I'm settin' it up proud, I'm thinking I'm gonna be playing and everything. Then all of a sudden, right before we get to play, they called me for Mike, we [unintelligible] "Well you're not gonna really be *playing*. You're gonna hit the accents with Michael." So, what happened was, they stopped playing the song, and then I saw I was like, "Oh my God. Oh my God, I got all these musicians and artists here, waiting to see me play, and I'm not gonna be playing!" They still gonna have the tracks! So, I'm like, "Oh my god", and I start thinking—this is kind of funny—I said, "Oh, what am I gonna do, what am I gonna do?" I was panicking. "What am I going to do, oh my God. They're gonna see me just sit there all that time." I said, "Oh, I got to do something." And I looked at my big old drum set, and I said, "Oh, I'm a little terrible with all this stuff here", and I said, "I know, I gotta get rid of some stuff." And I start talking to Tech. I said, "You know that cymbal over there? Those cymbals? You could take those two down, I'm probably not going to hit those." And they said, "Okay." I said, "And you know what else, too? Those two drum toms like that? I probably don't really need those, I could use them on another... but you can strike those too, that's okay. I don't need all that stuff..." Little by little, I whittled the set down to, like, half of what it was. I mean, doing that kind of stuff, there were people looking. "What's going on? They're taking the set down. He's supposed to be playing." All the people folding their arms and looking. "What's going on?" And I got it down to like five cymbals, a ten, a twelve, and I got the tom down to like four or five... "Yeah, well that's fine" It was like, still too much, but I couldn't keep one and make me look worse, so [laughs] So I got it down, and I said, "This is still going to be embarrassing" because—so what happened was they started, Michael came on and started the thing. Man, it's so hard even to tell this story, and all the people say—y'know how they shuffle in place? Like, "Oh, it's about to be *on!* This is gonna be off the chain! Sugarfoot gonna be killing it back here!" And so, I'm sitting there, I wanted to have a cloak over my head, I wanted to hide in the closet, and I just had to sit there. The song started playing, I'm sitting on my seat, not doing nothing. They hear the drums, they hear the music going, and they said—they're looking at each other like, "What's goin' on here?" And I had to sit there and eat crow, whatever you want to call it, and be humiliated, and sit on the drums, and the drums are just—chairs are clean, not a strike on them or anything... And I'm just sitting on the seat looking around, I'm closing my eyes because I'm looking at the screen, I'm looking at the curtain, but they couldn't see my eyes exactly. I like close my eyes. I said, "Oh Lord, why did You put me through this? Why this is happening? Why'd it have to be like this?" I

couldn't hide anywhere, I was right there. They're right around me, and I'm like, "This is the most humiliating thing in my life." So, the whole time going by, and they just waiting for me, "What're you gonna play? What're you gonna play?" And it gets to the end of the vamp, where Michael runs. If you watch that video of Michael "Man in the Mirror" and 1988 Grammys, he started getting excited. He's jumping up, and he start running around, and then he's shaking his hand real fast, and he spins around. And when he spins around, I go [drum sounds] and when he drops on his knees, I go [drum sound]! And that was all I did.

MJCast (Q): Ugh.

MJCast (Jamon): Wow.

Moffett: [Laughs] He did that twice. So, he got back up, and he started doing it again. He did it again, and that was my whole performance. And all these people looking around, and I can just hear them laughing. It was like so humiliating, so embarrassing. But you take a job, you do what the job entails, and that's what it was. And I had to ride through that humiliating time and experience, but at least I can say I was on the Grammys with Michael.

MJCast (Q): And you were on the Grammys, and we can understand now that you've told the story.

Moffett: When I tell that, it's funny, like I had to say, "You know what? I'm not gonna need that tom. You know what? That's a bit too much stuff, I don't need all that stuff. That cymbal over there. I don't like the sound of that one, just take that one away." I'll whittle that set down in a few minutes, after setting all that stuff up. It was so embarrassing, man, but I lived through it, and here I am. I've survived it, I'm a survivor, and I'm talking to you guys now, telling this lame story.

MJCast (Q): Well, you got a story from it, and those little moments that you did play, we appreciate those, and I'm sure Michael did too.

Moffett: Yes, I know you're being kind.

MJCast (Q): I'm going to ask you about the "HIStory Tour". I actually was very blessed to see two performances in Australia of the "HIStory World Tour" in 1996, and that was the only MJ solo tour that you worked on. How did the HIStory tour, in your work on that, compare back to "The Jacksons" tour? And did Michael seem as enthusiastic about touring by that stage in his career?

Moffett: Yeah, that tour was steps above any of the other tours with the brothers. I wasn't on "Bad" because when they called me for "Bad", I was supposed to be musical director actually, then he pushed it back 10 months, and I got a call a week or two later from Madonna for "Who's That Girl Tour". And that's when I contacted Michael's organization and told them and they said, "Well, we pushed back eight or nine months, ten months, and so you can go go ahead and do that. And when we're ready, we'll call you." So, I accepted the Madonna tour and then, when it came up, I was still under contract with Madonna and Madonna had extended it. I couldn't do the "Bad Tour". That's why I wasn't on "Bad", I was supposed to be there, and I was supposed to be musical director. So unfortunately, I couldn't get out of the contract with Madonna—it was impossible to do—so that's when the Ricky [Lawson] stepped in at that point and did that tour, and while I'm doing a "Bad Tour"—and "Dangerous", I happened to be with his sister Janet. His assistant, he's trying to pull me, and Janet said, "No. He can't get you, I got you." And so, she wouldn't let me go, so I missed "Dangerous Tour"... And that's when he called me for the "HIStory Tour". I was with the Isley Brothers at the time. Just was finishing up their rehearsals with them, to get ready to go out on tour with them that next week, and then I got a call from

Brad Buxer, musical director for Michael, and he said, "Michael wants you. He wants you really bad. He wants you to come back to him." I tell him, "Well, I'm with the Isley Brothers". He said, "You gotta get out of it. Michael said he don't want nobody else but you. He wants you. You gotta do it." So, I said, "Oh my god, I got to talk to Ronald Isley", who was the leader of the Isleys, and appeal to him if he would let me out of it. But fortunately enough, they didn't do contracts, so I didn't have a contract. It was just a word of mouth, verbal thing, and fortunately enough secondly, was that he understands—like everybody else in the industry know—my history with the brothers, that's my family. And if I didn't have contracts or other things, it would've been easier to make a move, but I couldn't do it for that paperwork and the legal aspects are a little bit crazy. But with this one, I didn't have a contract... The next day I went in rehearsals and talked to Ronald, and appealed to him, and explained to him, and he was so understanding. Ronald is really wonderful with me. I love playing with Isaac, I miss the time I just did the rehearsals. Actually, I did a couple shows with them, until my replacement came in. And he was really understanding. He said, "Well, Sugarfoot, you know we love you here. We love you here, we are so happy to have you here. We want you to stay. But then, again, I know that's your family. You started with them boys, and then that group, and that's your family. And I also know we can't afford you, to pay you what they pay you" [Laughs] Had him laughing. But he was kind enough to say, "We understand that you have to go and that's family call, you have to go" and I say, "Yeah, that's my family, I love my family. And they need me", meaning Michael. And so, he said, "Well, I don't know who're we gonna get" I said, "Well, Rayford Griffin used to tour with you last before I came here. You can call him back, he knows you're sure already, you just have to add the new things in", and he said "Yeah, yeah! That's what we should do." So, they wound up calling Rayford, and I wound up switching out, going back with Michael. They shipped my stuff from their rehearsals, the second gig I did with them, and then shipped Rayford's stuff in, and he just took over 'cause he knew this stuff, he'd been with them for years. He's another one of my hero drummers, extraordinary drummer, truly remarkable drummer that I admire greatly, and a great friend now. I love Rayford, and since his Jean-Luc Ponty days, I've been a big fan of his, and trying to study him. And so, he went to the Isleys and took over that seat 'cause he knew it already, and I went to Michael 'cause I knew Michael's stuff. And I got back with Michael in '96 for that tour. And '96, '97 we did that tour. I'd say the best tour I've done, out of all the tours that I've done. That one and "Blonde Ambition" were the two best tours, and in different ways they were best from each other. "Blonde Ambition" was fantastic, because the magnitude of that staging was truly magnificent. They had thirteen hydraulic lifts on the stage, columns that come out of nowhere. I mean, just the whole stage was so robotic and animated, and the tour itself. I played on a number of Madonna's records. I got a chance to play my own work for a change as well as other works that are—people that I admired who played on our stuff, or was programmed. She has a multitude of fantastic songs, hit songs. I love Madonna and I love her work in music too. There were great opportunities for me, and that was my favorite tour of hers, "Blonde Ambition". Magnificent tour. So those two tours in my favorites of all time but "HIStory Tour", because Michael's at his peak and his songs were many albums that come out. "Bad" had come out, "Thriller" of course, and since I last worked with him, and then "Bad". And I would visit the Victory Tour with Thriller, but since the "Bad" album came out, the "Dangerous" album came out, then of course the "HIStory" album had just been dropped, and it was at this peak of things. Each magnitude—and that was the most incredible tour with him, because he was on, he was magnificent. Man, every time I thought I saw everything he can

do, he had me electrified, and I'm back there in the drums screaming like I'm in the audience, a fan, or something I guess. "Yeah, yeah, yeah!" I was going crazy back there, watching him do some mind-boggling, unrealistic things and the spins. Long, long spins and the different other things, body movements, and things that I'd never seen him do before, so I was still watching the role as a performer and artisan. And I'd been away from him so long that it's fresh and new to me again, so it was my best tour I would say. That one and "Blonde Ambition". They were almost like what I think "HIStory" was—because I loved Michael and his music—was a bit ahead of "Blonde Ambition". They were close, but "HIStory" was my favorite, my absolute favorite tour I've done in my career. I've done 25 tours in my career.

MJCast (Jamon): You spoke a little earlier about the magic of being able to drum and control people's body movements with your work, and it just sort of dawned on me right then how amazing it would have been to sit at the back of the stage drumming, controlling Michael Jackson's body movements... Or at least inspiring his body movements, through your work. That would have been—that feeling must be indescribable.

Moffett: Surrealistic. I stand back there and I look—now, I don't think—I'm in the midst of that. First of all, when I tour, and I'm playing, I'm in the midst of my work. I'm there to work, and my mind is—from the first downbeat of the first darkness of the curtain, I'm in the phase of the mentally, emotionally, spiritually. I don't analyze things. "Ohh, this is a great opportunity... Okay, look I'm showing for Michael", and I don't think like that. "Ok, alright I gotta make this show better than that last show. I got to do more magnificent, I gotta have more power. Play more finesse, more articulation, be more precise with my hits, my accents got to be spot-on like a computer, my timing got to be like a computer. I'm feeling and thinking all of those things, you gotta be focused Jonathan, a hundred percent focused. Michael's counting on you, and that's what the midst of my work, more than moments of appreciation or thrills over what—I'm there, I'm behind Michael and stuff like that. I'm looking at him like, I'm watching him like with eagle eye for responses to his dance moves, that's what I'm mainly there to make him feel it and hit responses to his spontaneous movements that he may do something and the theatrical way and just stop. And I got to be prepared, and got to be MIDI to him, I got to be "synthy" to him—if you know that means—and respond as if I'm a Foley artist and us doing a soundtrack for film and something visual is happening. I got to add the Foley to it, that's the way I look at it, and I approach my work with Michael—all the artists when I do accents and stuff like that. I'm always on cue, always on point. My focus and concentration is astute, and it's like I can feel it—it's beyond the spiritual being. I'm so attuned to the moment in the time and the second I'm in. From second to second, to minute, to minute, to moment to moment. I'm in that moment, and I can't allow my mind to drift, so something can and will happen and you'll miss something, and then your reputation is not what it's supposed to be, and what it was or what it should be, as far as being reliable. So those things are utmost important for me. I take my work seriously. Very fortunately for me, I'm sure many other musicians feel the same way. My work is my play. Because I don't work drums, I play drums. I play music, I don't work music, I play music. You can say I work music anyway since from pulling income with. I basically I go on stage to play music, not work music. I'm fortunate that my work is my play, is my pleasure, so I'm blessed in that respect, but I take it as serious. With that play on words, I do take it very, very serious. I mean extremely serious, and I treat it as if I am the artist. That's how important it is to me as if I'm Michael, I'm the artist, and I want it meticulously done, I want it perfectly to my standards. I treat it as if it's my show, not that it's my show I know who they're there to see, but I put as much

focus of input into it as if I'm the utmost important thing up there, and it's for me, my reputation, I'm the artist out front. I approach my supportive role as if I'm the artist, and I know I'm not. But, in other words, I have that kind of concentration of focusing and will to do it right, and do it the best, and do it impressive that moves the audience, to shock the audience, to enliven the audience, to blow their minds, I'm there to do that. And even though they're looking at Michael mostly, I'm doing my part to contribute to that excitement for him, and it means the world to me. It means everything to me at that moment, whatever tour I'm on, whoever's tour I'm on. Means everything. It's existence of my life at that moment in time, that period of time. If there's two hours, that's my existence in life, and I put that much importance in it, and that's what I feel about, and that's how I approach it. I love working with Michael and I miss him so much. I miss him so much. He's incomparable. Yeah, I don't think they'll ever be anybody like him. It can't—I can't see. I'd be surprised.

MJCast (Jamon): So, the "HIStory Tour" happened and a few years later, you would have got the call to work on some two special shows that happened at Madison Square Garden in New York, the "30th Anniversary" concert. And it was the first time that Michael really, I think, did a show with a full orchestra. Tell us what it was like working in that kind of scenario?

Moffett: Other than the "HIStory Tour", that was the most fun in my life, my career... It wasn't like a big concert at the stadium, and the production value he had there, but it was incredible production value, but the fact that the magnitude of stars that was there, that turned out to support Michael, and celebrate Michael, and be there for Michael, it was mind-boggling. It was a who's who of Hollywood, and there was a who's who of fans shipping and enthusiasm was just off the Richter scale in that building. It was so, so electrifying and you got to remember, the brothers hadn't been together in so many years. I mean, a tremendous amount of years, so for them, and it was a reunion of them. That made it so special for me as well, because I'd always been hoping that the brothers get back. Michael gets back with the brothers and does something and, together, tour or something, a new record tour—I always wanted to see that. I know Michael has reasons for doing this whole thing because he had the calling to be who he became, and you can't stop the calling. At the same time, I love family, and I missed my family, hanging with the brothers, so it was a great time for me to have the first reunion of him and the brothers in so long of time, way overdue, and I loved it—I relished it, and I loved it, seeing them all together. And put the pieces back together and doing that show, but the talent that was there to celebrate Michael, and the talent that was there to participate, which is incredible, and I got to play behind Michael. I got to play for some other things too, but when Michael's segment started, the whole world stopped. It seemed like the whole world stopped, and it stopped—the globe stopped spinning. It was just electrifying in that room, and it was magnificent. I said, "Oh man, it's on now!" We had rehearsed it, we knew what we were doing, so I knew it's gonna be great, barring anything catastrophic, having the stage collapse and something crazy happening. I knew it was gonna be great, because the show they had put together was just amazing. And even outside of the part I did with Michael, the show they had put together with Quincy and other people—the conductors that conducted orchestral parts was amazing, the songs that they did with the other artists was amazing, and it's just a very positive night—two nights, they filmed on the 7th and then on the 10th, and there's a very positive and rewarding night of spirit, celebrating somebody had done so much in his life. It was his life and so much for many other people around the world out of love and caring and contribution and unselfishly, so I think it was a perfect night. the perfect times, two nights, and perfect event that it always should have been.

I'm glad they got to do that. When you got to experience that before the unthinkable happened, you got to experience that, how much you loved it, how much he's appreciated, on that show. And those concerts, and then I see mother smiling so much, she was so proud. I never forget that, she was so proud of not only Michael, but all the brothers, and that they were back together. That meant a lot to me 'cause I love, love, love Mother. She's like my second mother, and I mean really been wonderful to me. I never forget her, I always appreciate and love her. But to watch that smile. I remember looking over there and watching that smile, periodically, look over there and try to see her smiling. And feel her pride. I felt proud to be with her sons and be with the family and considered like family, like a brother. I felt proud to be a part of that. So, in many ways, it was great for me and exciting for me and rewarding for me, but mainly the magnitude of the energy in the room, and all of these stars that came out to celebrate Michael, and finally... to be back with Michael and do that show was just incredible mark in my life and badge to wear that I was on the "30th Anniversary" special with Michael. It was a tremendous tribute to him. I'm so happy to have that on my resume.

MJCast (Q): The energy of that show reverberated completely around the globe. I know that a lot of fans of Michael became fans from seeing that performance on TV, even Jamon—that was the moment he became a mega fan. And then a few years after that, new fans were born with the "This is It" project. What were the rehearsal sessions like for "This is It" before Michael became involved, like learning all of the later songs and things like that? Because these are such milestone events that they created new fans right from these moments.

Moffett: Yeah, it was mainly about pulling the show together, everybody doing their job, much like the other ones. Learning the songs, as far as musicians are concerned, I didn't know the band got put together a little bit late... I got called on the 15th of April and I went in on the 16th, my drums and everything set up, but we didn't have all the band members it just yet, they had to audition some people between for the next two weeks or so. We didn't really have the full band 'til like the first week I think it was of May. So, what you heard on that movie was not a lot of time. Usually we take about two to three months to rehearse, sometimes three and a half months to rehearse the tours. Two months with the band then two to three weeks with the lighting and staging. It's kind of normal, but what was heard in that film was pulled together, say from the first or second week of May through the unthinkable, which is the 24th of June. So that's not a hell of a lot of time, we had a lot of songs to learn. Everybody was focused and pulling all these elements together and doing their parts and contributing what was expected of them, and it shows professionalism all across the board, from the lighting and staging, the sound, stage crews, the department heads and leaders, and the sound engineers on both monitors and sound, the film crew, and in the band, of course, wardrobe, and the band itself, and of course the dancers and Michael, and Kenny Ortega. What was seen was only part of it, and from what I know—and they've been told during the last week of rehearsal, that there was the next week was some things that none of us had seen before that was supposed to be introduced, a production-wise, a magic act or trick or something they paid a ton of money for, to produce—over a million dollars to produce it. It was supposed to be introduced that next week, because they kept it secret all that time. And I kept begging, "Come on man, come on, I've been with Michael a long time. Show me, you can tell me. I'm not gonna tell nobody!" I was trying to psyche the production, and they'd laugh, laugh. He says, "No, Sugarfoot. No more. You gotta wait just for next week, just like the rest of 'em." said, "Aw man!" I was like a little boy. "Aw, man! Come on, I'm not gonna tell nobody, I promise you!" And he said, "Nah, nah, you gotta

wait for next week, but it's gonna blow your mind. This magic trick is amazing." I think Copperfield did it, or somebody did, I forgot who it—one of the biggest magicians. And there was a bunch of other things that had been seen with the outside—it was supposedly, I was told, elements of production that was going to start soon as you pull into the parking lot, and people are in the costumes and all kinds of things, and people along the ushers are in costume. It was supposed to be a big, big difference from your normal concert, so to speak. So, what you see in the film is—what I'm saying, to culminate things, is that that you see about 75% of what was meant to be, but 75 to 80 percent that you've seen and another 20 to 25 percent nobody got to see. The experience of that show that was intended to be, so it was—the film is great, and you get to see our things coming together, and it was gonna be amazing, the music—and we were still working on the music at that time too, so it wasn't completely done. The actual finished product was gonna be even greater than what was introduced in the film so just—

MJCast (Jamon): Yeah, well I think, musically, it's one of my favorite sounding Michael Jackson tours. The sound is incredible, the actual—the production of the music is—I think Michael Bearden really put together something amazing. Was that the first time you'd worked with a percussionist as well? I think Bashiri Johnson was working with you on a lot of the rhythms as well, wasn't he?

Moffett: He's a very, very good friend of mine. He has a beautiful spirit. Incredible, incredible player. Yeah, and that was the first time Michael used the percussion, I worked with other percussionists and Randy of course on "Victory" and "Triumph" and stuff and—

MJCast (Jamon): What's the difference? Can you explain to our audience? What is the difference between a drummer and a percussionist?

Moffett: Oh, a drummer plays a whole trap kit. Percussionists, they play rhythmic things within inside the rhythms that the drummers are playing as a complementary to that, and of course, they can be there nowadays. It's evolved into hand and foot instruments, but back in the day, it was just hand instruments. But it's amazing what the percussionists are doing now. I'm very excited about what they're doing, and happy. I love it, they doing all kind of things with their foot, all kind of step-ons and control agents and cajóns, all kind of things going on. Remote cajóns, and all kind of things going on with that. It's really exciting, but the difference is that drums are the four elements of the kit, and all the different tiers. You got the upper tiers, the cymbals... its upper frequency of register of sound, brightest sound, and you got the toms with the mid-registers of sounds that you manipulate with melodic fills and intricate skills. Then you got the kick drum as the lower—the bottom in. The snare drum is in the mid-range frequency with the crack, and the mid-range tones. And then you got the lower foundation—it's a bass drum, so you got three tiers of elements of sound that are all manipulated individually, rhythmically, that come together to make the complete rhythm. Percussionists, nowadays, like I said, you're doing a lot of things. Some of them even incorporate bass drums and stuff, but as far as traditionally, they're hand instruments being the congas, the bongos, the claves, the tambourines, the shakers, and all the triangles, all elements of hand instruments. But it's evolved into something greater, which is magnificent to me, but more traditionally, percussion has complemented the drum rhythms and colored them. They made it musical even more so, by adding in to what the drum rhythm is doing, and making it one complete cycle of rhythm. So, we're very important to each other. Michael had never used a percussionist before. And as I understand Michael Bearden had decided to bring him in. I'm glad and Bashiri is my buddy. I love Bashiri, we've always had a wonderful relationship, and I respect him. He's amazing, amazing percussionist.

He's worked with Whitney Houston, I mean just tremendous number of list of people, the who's who of artists, and I was glad that Michael decided to be open hard enough to allow a percussionist before. He never wanted a percussionist in his live shows, and that's a testament to Bashiri and his work, his playing and his work and his spirit. Michael felt comfortable with him, and liked him. But he's also good with his performances, enough to let him stay and want him, even though he never did take one before. He decided to bend his rule, because Bashiri was an additive to his show and entered the spirit of the people that surrounds him, meaning the personality, that Bashiri had fits into Michael's spirit and all spirits and he felt comfortable with him, and said, "I don't usually do this, but I'm gonna allow Bashiri." Something about Bashiri he liked, I know. And he felt, and Bashiri more than handled it. I'm so glad that he was there. I wanted him to be there so once I found out he's gonna be there, I was excited and that was a great move on Bearden's part, and Bearden did a great job of producing the show and with Michael and arranging the show. I mean, a great job, and so it turned out to be—wow, the legacy of that film, I'd have to say, has stood the testament of my career, because it shows what we go through and it takes to put on, not only a Michael show, but a show of that magnitude, and when we all individuals go through and all the elements of everything, and it shows the element of how I work... 'Cause I do a lot of sessions [unintelligible] I'm mainly known for doing live shows, and it shows the element of my work. How I work, and how everybody works to make it all come together. So that an end result, when people get their tickets and come to the arena and get these seats, they get to see what they see as the full entertainment presentation, and now they get to see what goes into it, to make it that and they appreciate it more, if they had seen a show when it was done. But they got to see it and they got the one thing—very important to mention—is that they got to see that Michael was in charge. A lot of people thought that Michael had people dictating things or doing things and arranging things, and he just do what they tell him. It goes to show that Michael was in charge and he knew what he wanted. He's been doing it so long, since he was young, from very, very young. He was seasoned when he first started. I have to say, when he first sang and opened his mouth and sang, he sang like a seasoned artist, [like a] grown man singing about love and experience, like he had a woman and broke up with her, and he was like five, six years old. But you know about that, man! But he's singing like he had really experienced it, and he related to it, the heartbreak and the hardship of a breakup. "Who's Loving You" blew everybody, at that time on Earth's, mind how this little boy sang with such an experience of knowledge and spiritual knowledge and of heartbreak and heartaches, but with that much emotion as if he lived it, and he's only six years old, eight years, or whatever. This tour, this movie goes to show the journey of Michael, from that point when he still had—I think he had a head start as an artist, being the child prodigy and being gifted beyond most people. They never lived as artists, he was gifted when he was born basically, to sing that seasoned that young. He was special anointed. I always tell people—everybody on Earth is gifted, they just got to learn what their gift is, and spend time nurturing it. Most people don't get to find out what their gift is because they don't spend enough time to study themselves, and really—and learn and find out what makes them happy and what their true gift is. So, they never find it, so they figure they're not good at anything. But that's a mistake. And so, I always say that everybody is gifted, but I say the truly gifted ones like the artist and fortunate people like myself—musicians who play with three artists too. I think that God lays his hands on all of us and the really gifted ones like an Aretha Franklin and Stevie Wonder, Michael Jackson, and the other artists that are [unintelligible] Prince, and then

Madonna, and all of those that have something to lift it up to the stature where they were, but there's certain when God lays his hands on them a little bit more than most average person, it shows what the accomplishments and their gifts. But with Michael, I feel and I tell people that God put His hand on Michael's spirit and on him when he's a baby, or in the womb or wherever it happened, and he forgot it there. He left it there longer than most people, because He anointed Michael with traits and attributes that other people, even the seasoned artists don't have or don't do. That's why Michael lifted up and became who he is, and what he is and what he is to the industry, and magnificent and somebody to see, somebody to hear as an artist. He's like the guidepost and the lighthouse of the industry. Everybody waited for him, dropping the record, to see what the new sound was going to be, see what the new song arrangement's going to be, to hear his inflections of his voice, and his tremendous vocal talent and wait for his videos to come out to set a new precedence for music videos. Everybody was waiting in the industry, every time. Every year or two, he put an album out. The anticipation was growing, and I waited for his next one. "I can't wait 'til Michael's next new album come out", because he set the trend in the precedence of the industry to follow. So, I think God left His hand on Michael longer, and it shows through the depth of his talents, from beyond the years that he was when he first started contributing to music and entertainment, when he was just [unintelligible] as a little boy's. And how he moved the world then, and shocked the world with his abilities. First, shocking mother and their mother... turned to Joseph on her, she's talking to Joseph. And then with the brothers, what he did with his brothers. I think he was a special human being.

MJCast (Q): On that thread, being touched and Michael's sort of essence—Michael was really focused on getting his message of love, peace, humanitarianism, and looking after the planet out there, through the "This Is It" project. Was this true of your interactions with him?

Moffett: Yes, absolutely. It was always—now he's been working—he worked on the show and his focus is on the show being the biggest and the greatest thing. Like he always said, his motto was "Make it bigger than life. Everything's got to be bigger than life. You have to leave them walking away with something that they'll remember for the next 10 years, or maybe all their life." So, make it bigger than life. And I think that that was just a main focus, is getting the show together to impress that much and to blow people's minds and be the greatest show that ever happened. But underlying—behind the scenes and underneath all of that—was his intention to be able to further move the world and affect the world, so his philanthropy and his caring and the things he had planned on—the money as well as his visits to the hospital—they continue like he did before, and to be present in people's lives, to touch and affect their lives. Those with little hope or no hope, the needs caring for and those with challenged physical states and the starvation in Africa. I mean, Michael—all those things was in his spirit, to be able to step in and do something about it. He's just one man, but one man could do something, and he sure did prove that. One man could do a lot. People say, "I'm just one man. What can I do?" You can do a lot. He showed that, he proved that. And in the magnitude of who he was and what he could do, he showed and proved that. And I think that this tour was going to be an extension of that, a continuation of that. But even on a grander scale, he had plans for a lot of things that he wanted to do, to continue to wake the people up, that we need to do more for people that can't do more for themselves. We need to do more for the earth and the planet, and be aware of what we're doing to it, and it's our only home. He cares about ecology. He cares about every little thing. I remember in this concert in Germany, on that live video that we did—but there was one point—one of the German shows where he is on stage and talking, right before I think the J5 medley,

and one of the songs. I'm not sure if that's the one. But you know he's talking, walking back and forth, and he happened to look down. Thank God he did, and he said, "Oh, a bug! There's a bug on the stage!" And it's right at his feet, Yeah, that was the Munich show, yeah.

And he says, "I almost stepped on it." So, he said, "Security, come get this bug." The security guy Wayne Nagin had to come up and pinch the bug, pick him up, and carried him off the stage, 'cause Michael cared about that life. Now most people, they wouldn't even either see it, or they just don't care about it; just continue the show. If they stepped on it, they stepped on it, whatever. Michael stopped that show, that multi-million dollar show, to save that bug's life. So, I guess you can say, he was a superhero in a way.

MJCast (Q): [Laughs] That's how we think of him.

Moffett: He just didn't have a cape on, that's all. He forgot his cape in a dressing room, something [laughs] The leotard—there was no phone booth around so he could change. So anyway, he had to save that bug's life, and he did. So, bravo, Michael. Bravo [laughs] So humanitarian and, I guess, "insectatarian", whatever you want to call it.

MJCast (Q): Well, not every superhero needs a cape, as I think Michael proved.

Moffett: Yeah, yeah.

MJCast (Jamon): I've got a question, this is from one of our followers @MJFFC on Twitter, and—I had a similar question, so I kinda joined them both together. Michael having worked with so many big name hip-hop producers that have a lot of very interesting, sort of complex beats on records. What was the process of trying to adapt a beat that's really like a hip-hop inspired complex beat on a song, to being a live production on a drum kit? How do you start adapting that?

Moffett: Well, you just start—

MJCast (Jamon): Like "Scream" for example, or something like that.

Moffett: For me, it's easy. New Orleans music, and especially New Orleans drummers, we're very, very rhythmic. Our beats down there is really tribal, as you're saying, tribal and rhythmic and syncopated a lot... And my learning and training through all the years playing in clubs and just the culture of it was all the drummers sayin' "How do you play New Orleans music? How do you learn that special thing one drummer's got?" I say, "You have to go down there and live amongst the culture, then you absorb it and you become it." There's nothing you could teach in a book or anything like that. But me having grown up in that element and being part of my instinct to who I am and as I play as a drummer, our rhythms are so complex a lot of times, that it's just instinctive and natural, and I listen to it, and I just copy what I hear. Become a Canon copier... Brother copier, and my mind copies what I hear, and I replicate it and I duplicate it, and elements in the mounts that is supposed to be done, or whatever verse, of course, whatever. I count the bars—I don't read—but I know how to count bars. And so, basically, it's not difficult for me; I just figure out the rhythms that's happening, and a little percolating rhythms underneath, on the snare, and just mimicking what I hear. It becomes more complicated when you try to get too scientific about it, and you confuse yourself, and then you have trouble getting it and learning it. But, basically, what we just do is we just listen to something, we copy it, we make it simple, and I just copy it to the best of my ability, and—it's natural for me, like I said, because New Orleans rhythms are complicated like that, and a lot of the hip-hop rhythms and hip-hop artists and songs have rhythms, and it's exactly like, or very, very similar to, or most like New Orleans type rhythms. So, I've been doing that all my life. A lot of people haven't gotten to hear

me play that because—on Billie Jean, I can't play that. It's a very simple 2 and 4. Madonna's music, I can't play that stuff, except for "Keep It Together". Madonna's song "Keep It Together" I got to play a little more here. I played on that record, that album. Like I said, Prince played on that too, but I got to demonstrate some of the funky, syncopated hip-hop things that I kind of do, that feel and that style, and that bass drum rhythmic thing that I do, and it's kind of syncopated in a hip hop kind of style. But that's been in my blood since I was young, since I was nine or ten. So, when hip-hop came out, and rapping and all that stuff came out, and New Jack Swing and all that, I was doing that since I was a little boy. That stuff was easy for me. So when they'd program all that stuff, it's pretty easy for me because it's part of my nature and nuance of who I am and my character, spiritual character from my culture down in New Orleans. So, him working with the rap artists is right up my alley because seeing those rhythms that I'm familiar with anyway. It's not difficult.

MJCast (Q): Jonathan, this is maybe a bit of a tough question. Around the "This Is It" time, we were sort of just wondering, as the preparations continued and then, of course, the tragedy happened, do you remember, or do you feel comfortable sharing what was the last thing Michael said to you?

Moffett: He said—at the end of rehearsal, after we finished, and then we almost finished the first run. That was the first run-through, full run-through we were making without stopping, so to speak. We had stopped a couple of times, but for the most part, we had just almost through first runs when it got so late, that we had to break it for them till the next day to finish up the last two or three songs, whatever. And then he talked to everyone, but he's grabbing [everybody together] and we stood there, and he said "Thank you, Foot, you sound great. You sound amazing. It's going to be so great. Isn't it gonna be great?" And I said, "Yeah, this is gonna be great", and he said, "So exciting, huh?" I said, "Yeah, it's gonna be exciting." He said, "You're doing a great job." I said, "Thank you Michael." He said, "For what? I love having you here. It's gonna be great! We'll have a great time and everything. You did a great job today and I can't wait 'til tomorrow. I can't wait 'til tomorrow" He's like excited, enthusiastic. "I can't wait 'til tomorrow. I can't wait 'til tomorrow. We'll go through the rest and our first run-through, so I'll see you tomorrow, okay? Get some rest, we'll be back at it tomorrow" And I say, "Ok". Then he hugged me, and then I said, "Ok, alright, bye Michael". He said, "Bye Foot". And he's laughing, smiling like a little boy, and then we hugged, and that was around one o'clock in the morning, and I had no clue that that was the last hug I'd get from him, that last time I'd hear him talk, see him. It's just different looking back on it. Very different, very difficult. Just think about that, you don't know, in people's lives. That's why you gotta treat everybody with love and respect every time you see them. Every time you're around them, every time you approach somebody, every time you address somebody, because there's somebody you care about or you know, or whatever—especially those are you related to you. You don't know if that's the last time you're gonna see them, breathing, alive, and animated. I look at that now, and I see—but I'm thankful. I've always shared my love with Michael and told him I love him, and hugged him, and he'd laugh and smile about the old tours. And we always talked about that and the kids, and he met my kids and stuff, and he asked me about 'em. Something like, "Remember the tours? Remember the 'Destiny' tour." He's like, reminiscing all that kind of stuff. "Are you still smoking?" I had never smoked in my life. He said, "You don't smoke?" I said, "No". He said, "Good, good. Don't start, don't start." [MJCast laughs] "Do you drink alcohol?" I said, "No, I don't drink. I never did. You know, Michael". "Oh, good. Don't start, don't start." We'd talk about personal things like

that because we have a relationship in a personal way too, not that I was there every day with him at his house or around him. No, it wasn't that. When he needed me for a tour, he'd call me, but we started back where we left off. And some personal love relationship between two brothers, and it just was spiritual that way. We didn't have to say much, we just knew, and we would connect. And so that's what basically happened and that was that. So I was left with the results of what became, what it is. Extremely difficult, extremely difficult.

MJCast (Jamon): Did you have any inkling as the tour was progressing in production—did you have any inkling that he was battling something so full-on in his personal life or—many around you, like Kenny Ortega and Karen Faye, they could pick something was up. Did you notice, or were you just focused on the music and the performance with him?

Moffett: When I first saw him—when I first got there for rehearsals and we finally saw each other, I saw him and he was a distance away on the phone. He got off the phone, he came and hugged me. When I hugged him, I said, "My God, there's nothing here!" He was so skinny and frail, I was scared. I mean, I really had genuine fear within me. That was first day of rehearsal. I got there, I think it was the 16th of April, and I was afraid, but I knew Michael was always thin, but he was painfully thin then. But I also—you got to remember, and I remember. He had just went through extraordinary ordeal in that courtroom with all that stuff, that teared [him] down spiritually, mentally, and physically, so I knew he was trying to come back from that, rebuild himself and his health and everything from that. That was so destructive and I knew that—maybe that was why, because they had heard, in the press, that he wasn't eating, and he was having trouble like that for things like that, so—but it shocked me to no end how my arms wrapped around him, and touched my own shoulders, and I'm like, "Oh my god". But then we got into rehearsals, he was fine. Most of the time. Sometimes he would seem tired, but I can understand that, because you learn all the hats, we ran all the hats, the promotion aspect of the show, the accounting aspect, meeting with accountants, meeting with the lawyers, all this during one single day on the phone. And physically, you're meeting with your management team, you're meeting with the wardrobe people, measuring up the top of my costumes and stuff, you're meeting with the dancers, all this is separately. Then you gotta meet with the background singers and work with them and get that stuff right, then you gotta come eventually to the band, then you gotta meet with everybody, and do it all together. That's just so many hats to wear, that can wear anybody down, and the kind of energy he puts out. Now even knew what he wasn't gonna pull out at rehearsals. You got to remember, he hadn't been on tour since '87 or '89 we did those two shows, and he had just been through a tremendously horrible ordeal, and it'd break anybody down spiritually, mentally, and physically, so my fear was his weight and his physical stature, but then he show days, like "I see nothing wrong with him, what am I worried about? He's killing it up there, he's tearing it up". But, I say the tiredness, I thought, came from all of those meetings he had to have. I just get there—I drive from home, I wait until the time last minute before the time for me to show up at the rehearsal, I drive from home, go right then the time to rehearse, and that's all I got to do. Finish rehearsals, drive home. He had to be there early in the morning, do different things, meetings, all his meetings I mentioned, and be a part of every aspect of it pretty much. That was very difficult, of course you're going to be tired. So I didn't think about so much fear about all that, because I knew how it takes. It always took a lot out of him because he's doing everything. So yeah, I was there, and sometimes he would be there, and he wouldn't—he'd be like, a little disoriented about parts and stuff like that, he would [unintelligible] be my position, and stuff, he wouldn't be with the other dancers, but I knew he

was tired. Then the next thing you know, he'll come in here, and he will kill it. I mean, like "Yeah, that's the Michael I know! That's Michael!" He would absolutely kill it. So I knew it was fluctuating from day to day, that he would be different. Sometimes two or three days really great, then next day, he is just tired. He wasn't sleeping—now I didn't know he had the problem sleeping. I had no idea, all the years I worked with him. I didn't know he needed that stuff to sleep. I didn't know he had a sleeping problem, issue. I never knew that he kept it quiet, and I had never knew it felt like that. So that was a shock to me when I found out what was happening. I said, "No, how did he kill those shows on the 'HIStory Tour' with no sleep?" That made him more of a Superman, if you can put doing them shows like he did on "HIStory Tour"—they said he was going through that no sleep period back then too—and I said, How did he do that? He's really a Superman, 'cause he was killing the shows on the "HIStory Tour". It was amazing, and on the "30th Anniversary" special, so further to me, he earned the cape, the "M" on his chest or whatever, because if he was going through all that stuff with no sleep and perform the way he did, it's absolutely remarkable he could put on a two and a half hour show, a two hour show under those conditions, and perform like he did on the "HIStory Tour" and on the "30th Anniversary" special. So, my thing is I didn't know he was having sleep problems. That was something that was kept from me. I didn't know that until the trial, so—but there was a lot of days he was right on. And he was directing things, as you could see in the film... I think he had something wrong with the sleep element and stuff like that... I'd never heard the word "Propofol" in my life until the trial, but I didn't know he was doing that stuff, but what I'm trying to say is—yeah, he had some impairments, I could tell. Something was wrong. But then he'd come and kill it the next day, so what I'm saying is—if he was totally dysfunctional and torn down, you wouldn't have a "This Is It" film, would you? It would be nothing good enough to produce it. This is a film with—there was enough of him there, that he was trying to rebuild as you remember, where he'd get himself back together from a hiatus of touring since '97, and enough of him to rebuild it to give you enough great footage to do "This Is It". Now, he's pulling himself back together. It may not have been the "right on point" on everything, but he was good in a lot of things, enough for the world to appreciate that film, you know what I'm saying? There was a lot of things I wasn't privy to know, that I didn't know was going wrong or going on, so I was blinded to that until the trials. Remember when I saw him "on" some days and I saw him some days troubling to me, I was worried about him, but I knew he was tired, and I thought about it. I was trying to figure it out. I said, "Man, Jonathan. He's got to do all the other things, work with all the elements of the show. Of course he's tired." Neither rationalize it that way, not thinking, because I didn't know he was sick or not sleeping or taking that stuff, so my rationalization said that he's doing all these other things, meetings, and rehearsals, and stuff. That's why he was tired. But that's the way I explained it to myself and from what I saw.

MJCast (Q): So, Jonathan, a question that we ask every single special guest that we ever have on the MJCast is how should Michael be remembered?

Moffett: Michael... to remember Michael, is to remember a beautiful spirit and a beautiful human being. His talent is something altogether different, but I think the talent stemmed from his original spirit for being a very, very sensitive, in tune with life, and tuned with appreciation and tuned with love on the same frequency, and circuit of love. I think that's the person that used those elements of love, and the appreciation of life and the caring, to become a great artist because you apply those things to your craft and what you do, and what does that equal? Greatness. It equals the greatness of talent because he's that sensitive to hone your craft and

develop yourself, and—more sensitive than others to do that, to the degree that he did—to become the King of Pop or the king of music, or into the king of entertainment. However you want to look at it, you have to be extremely sensitized to develop your craft, to be as prolific and dynamic as he was as a performer. As a singer, his sensitivities in his vibrato and his tone, his vocal inflections, many things, his sensitivity to the words and expression of the words of his music that make people cry, many people feel the emotion of his songs, and relate to his songs and the lyrics of the songs. It all stems from the depth of love and depth of caring, depth of humanity that was in him. And like I said, most of all, the depth of love. And I think that stems from Mother [Katherine], who guided him in his younger years. She was Jehovah Witness and that faith, they profess love and caring. They want kids to go door to door. Michael used to do that with his mother, and I think she was a culmination of the Michael that we got to know. I mean, if not for that, we may have maybe a different Michael. Mother, I should say, she lay the foundations with the humanitarian traits that she had instilled in him, to her beliefs and her, the way she is. She's like Michael, she's so sensitive, so caring, so loving, you couldn't find a person more so than her. And Michael gravitated toward that, and became that, because she guided him in his early life, was carried over to his older life, and his generosity and his love, and going to visit people, just like he did when he was with his mother going to visit people as Jehovah's Witness, go door-to-door. He's going hospital to hospital, visiting people, spending time with these kids, buying them gifts, and bringing 'em things they never expected to get, making them smile when they have everything to frown about. You know, some of them facing the end of their life, and then it Mike shows up and they make them feel like they gonna live for another twenty, thirty, forty years. And all of that stems from the guidance of Mother. I've always seen it that way, I've always appreciated that, and I think that's the seeds of the origin of greatness that made him become who he became. He applied that to his music, that same kind of passion for those things, he applied to his passion for music, which is all this sensitivity, human sensitivity and magnitude, and the magnification of the soul and of the light, which we all are. So he was so in tune with life and life force and the depth of soul of the creative source, that it demonstrated through everything he did, and that he chose to do and focus on in this life, even his artwork as magnificent as the artists. He excelled at everything as a prolific artist. All that comes from depth of soul and depth of sensitivity as a spirit, and I think Mother had a lot of times—I think he was born and gifted with that before we could ever know, at what stage of the birth process—we can never know that. God lays His hands on us so we become a living human being and we haven't figured that out yet, but as far as once you hit the earth and landed on Earth to birth, his mother had everything to do with that because she's just a sensitive human being and as he was. He is her, she is him, and what he brought to the world is basically her, in her spirit, to basically shower the world with who she is, basically through him, so she guided him. I think they'll remember the things he's done is of his music, of course, and his creativity and magnitude of his gifts and talent and prowess, but I think a lot of people remember what he's done for people that he didn't even know, he wasn't even related to. He had no real requirement to do that for anybody else, but he did it. I think that's what he should be remembered for. To me, and what I call him, I call him the "American Ambassador of Love". I think he's in the basket of love that represents—'cause he's from America—so "American Ambassador of Love", they represent the country where we went globally, and it didn't matter what country you were from or was in, and dilemma, or in the hospital or whatever, an old folks' home, or whatever you were faced [with]. He went there as if he was an American citizen—

basically, beyond that, a fellow human being. He bypassed the labels that we give each other, from country to country, denotation of race or color, religion, and nationality. He bypassed all of that he saw the human being, he went straight to the source, human being. That human being needs something, needs help, whatever. So I think that's what he should be remembered for, just as much or more so than this music, creativity of course, that's the vehicle that he used to be able to do these other things. That's what people understand. He used the vehicle of creativity in his music and his popularity of music as a vehicle to be able to reach out to the world and get his messages across about the Earth and about caring and love for everybody—love each other—and to go visit these people at the hospital. He uses—you really look at it under the microscope. He used all that popularity and stuff like that, and gold and platinum albums, and all the money he made, to be able to have a chance to travel the world. And as a traveling salesman of love, so to speak. He peddled love and unity. I think, to me, I'll remember him for both, of course, but I remember him as being a very sensitive human being that we unfortunately lost. We lost one of the best ones, one of the best human beings. Now they be like sheep, a lot of the world is like sheep with no shepherd, because he was the one, he was a shepherd.

MJCast (Jamon): That's a beautiful answer, thank you Jonathan.

Moffett: You're welcome.

MJCast (Jamon): And just as we're wrapping up now... I'd love to learn from you what you're up to now, like have you got any cool projects coming out in the future. You spoke about a book, which I'm incredibly excited about.

Moffett: Yeah, I'm working, I'm working, I've been working on it for many years. I keep saying it, but I got to find a publisher, and I'm looking for publishers... so there's going to be a coffee table book type book—oversized, make it an interesting conversation piece at people's homes, those who choose to have it in possession, it and the accommodating pictorial, big videography of my life and career. I have so many elements, one of my blessings—I'd say the smart things I did, I'm a collector, I'm an archivist. I got writings from when I was a kid, where I write mindset material, like my social feelings of different things. I got songs that I've written, I've got poetry I write, I have video from our tours that's going to be included. I will tell my miraculous story on audio disc, because there's gonna be an audio disc included in the book and, as well as in printed, you can read along, like I said, and all of this stuff. And I have so many elements to this book, it's going to be all-inclusive like I said, there's going to be an audio disc, a video disc inside. I got tour footage—I filmed a lot of stuff as I travel, tour footage travel, and with me talking in the background in different cities and countries and interesting things like that, and my photo library is pretty extensive, and I'll be soliciting photographs and video from Madonna, Elton John, George—unfortunately, there's another thing, my heart breaking with George Michael, losing him Christmas Day. It was very hard for me. I know he was planning on rejoining, putting the "Wham" band back together and my name was up for that for this year, but regardless of that, I lost a very dear friend, and so unexpectedly. That's another loss that I had beside Michael. So I have footage from him, working with him, and everybody I've worked with. I got—I'll be soliciting all the different organizations that other people that I work with, to get some input and commentary and photographs and video to include in the book that makes it interesting as well. And that something's there. A lot of things, they have that, I don't have. So contributions in that light. So I'm working on that book project, I'm writing music all the time. I have so many songs, maybe 200 songs and works at some stage or other. Working on albums.

I have a Christmas album that's already done and it's called "Christmas Again" and we're promoting that this Christmas coming up. I got dance music album project to do. I have pop music records to do, smooth jazz album to do—I have a lot of things on slates, because I have music for all of these [unintelligible] and things I've just been working and not able to finish everything up. Focus on one project because I get excited about another project.

MJCast (Jamon): [Laughs] A true artist.

Moffett: My mind gets so scattered and excitement about all these things. I don't finish one thing, 'cause I'm working on all these things so there's a lot of things happening that I like to do and want to do.

MJCast (Q): Well, Jonathan, your story is incredible. We want as many people as possible to learn from your stories and to learn from you and to appreciate not only you as an artist and as a musician, but as a person. And I don't want anyone to miss out on this, so I'm going to quickly share where people can find you, so they can cover all of the bases, 'cause you're across a lot of platforms on the internet. You're on Instagram and Twitter, as @jmofttmjm. On Facebook and YouTube, you can be found as Jonathan Sugarfoot Moffett—you've got a great YouTube channel there—and you've got a website, which is—so much detail on your website as well, and that is <https://www.jmdb.world/> Have I missed anything?

Moffett: You missed giving credit to my beautiful, wonderful fiancé Myra Hissami, who put all of those things together, and she runs my social media, and she created the website. She handles my Facebook, she handles my Instagram especially, and she's wanted out of the Silicon Valley. A range of talented people. She's remarkable, and not only a stunning—the most beautiful woman in the world to me, a stunning looker, so to speak... An incredible talent of the medium that she works in. She's truly amazing, and if you want to see her work, you go to my site, my JMDB site, and you can see her, as well as the Instagram. She does all my videos, and she does the photos, retouching, and all the things that promote me, and I'm very thankful and grateful to have her in my life, and in my world of business as well. We're working on projects to do for the rest our lives together, as a company and as a team... She's extremely talented, in those aspects as well as an artist. So, I'm very appreciative for her, and her making me be able to be seen in a global scale.

MJCast (Q): Well, credit where credit is due, because you're a very lucky man in more ways than one. She's doing a terrific job. You've got some great stuff online.

MJCast (Jamon): Yeah, I love those videos.

Moffett: Truly blessed, yeah, to have her in my life.

MJCast (Q): Well we've been truly blessed to have this amazing conversation with you, and one day we're going to have to get you back because there's so much more to learn!

Moffett: [Laughs] Yes, I'd love to come back on... I love it, that's fantastic. I really feel comfortable there, feel natural there, feel normal. The people are so friendly and loving and caring, and it's just a wonderful place to be. So, I'm looking for the opportunity to get back there on some tour or something, event. We'll see what happens in the near future or far future.

MJCast (Jamon): Yeah, that sounds great. Well thank you again, Jonathan, for coming on The MJCast. It's been an absolute pleasure and honor, and we can't wait to have you back in the future. Thank you.

Moffett: You're very welcome, it's been my pleasure. Thank you so much for having me.

MJCast (Q): Oh, our absolute respect to you, and we know that we're going to have some great feedback when this does go to air, so we really appreciate your time and the detail, and also just

the candor that you've answered with. You got really deep, and I think people are going to really appreciate such incredible answers, and really putting us there in the moment and helping share the feelings that you had. So, thank you so much.

Moffett: You're very welcome. I'm glad that—if any of them can relate to it—what my life experience is and was—and I'll be very appreciative, and happy to know that they appreciate my life, and thank them for following my career.

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