

SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE

People



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BRAVE LAST DAYS



THE TALENT
AND TRAGEDY

MICHAEL JACKSON

1958-2009

JULY 13, 2009
DISPLAY UNTIL JULY 20, 2009

\$4.49US \$5.99CAN

28>



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1958–2009

MICHAEL JACKSON

SHOCKING END

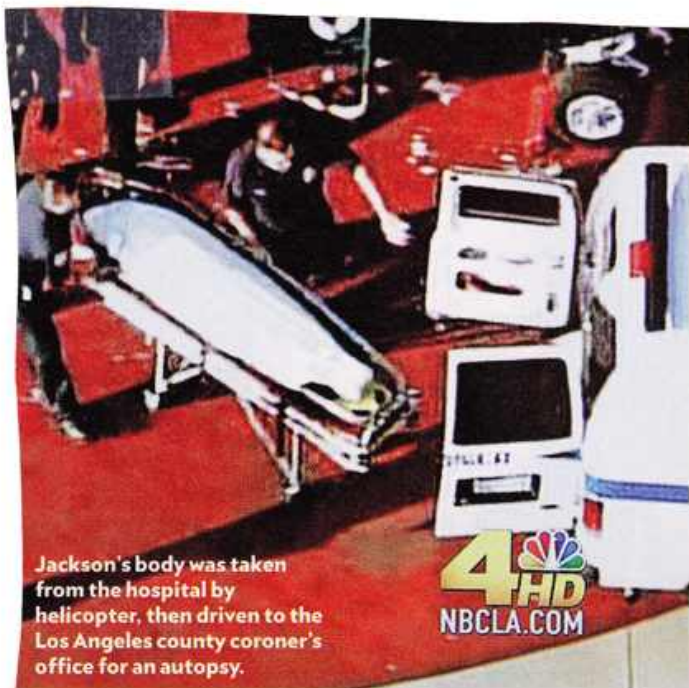
The King of Pop's death just weeks before his comeback concerts in London raises questions about his health—and his children's future

Michael Jackson lived the last hours of his life doing what he was born to do. On June 24, after eating grilled chicken and romaine lettuce, the 50-year-old hit the main stage of L.A.'s Staples Center and put himself and his backup dancers through a lengthy rehearsal for his

50-date London tour set to begin in two weeks. "He did the moonwalk—everything!" says Michael Bush, one of Jackson's costume designers and one of only 30 concert staffers watching in the otherwise empty arena. Jackson, who at one point wore a new "Thriller" jacket with fiber-optic lights, sang "Human



Mourners paid tribute to Jackson with a cappella songs at the Apollo Theater June 26. In London, fans performed a mass moonwalk.



Jackson's body was taken from the hospital by helicopter, then driven to the Los Angeles county coroner's office for an autopsy.

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"We don't like what's going on," said Joe Jackson, far right (with Rev. Jesse Jackson and an unidentified man, outside his Encino home June 26).



"We miss him so much," sister Janet said at the June 28 BET Awards in L.A., which honored Michael.

says the singer actually did receive a daily injection of Demerol. Asked if Michael's death was drug-related, dad Joe, 80, told PEOPLE, "That's what we're trying to find out."

Friends and family had worried about Jackson's addiction for decades. He began taking painkillers after a 1984 explosion on the set of a Pepsi ad left him with severe scalp burns. In 1993 Jackson went to a London rehab clinic. His dependency worsened when he was charged with child molestation in 2003. Though he was acquitted on all counts, "the stress manifested as back, neck and chest pain," says pal Deepak Chopra. Doctors "gave him drugs instead of managing the stress.

A DOCTOR UNDER FIRE

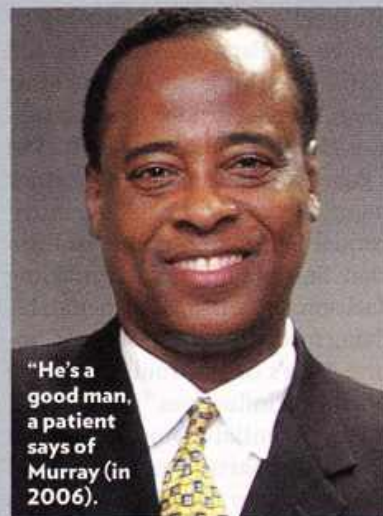


Hired by Jackson in May as his personal physician for his London tour, Dr. Conrad Murray, 56, took leave of his Las Vegas practice and had been living near Jackson's home in the weeks before his death. The pair became friends in 2006, after Murray treated one of Jackson's kids for a minor illness.

While not board-certified in cardiology, he is licensed to practice medicine in Nevada, California and Texas. Since graduating from Nashville's Meharry Medical College in 1989, Murray has had offices in Las Vegas and Houston.

Like Jackson, Murray has had money woes, including over \$400,000 in court judgments filed against his Nevada practice Global Cardiovascular Associates, Inc., over the last 18 months. (None appear to be linked to malpractice.) While L.A. officials say Murray is not a suspect and there is currently

no criminal investigation, rumors continue to fly about his possible role in Jackson's death. His lawyer Edward Chernoff says any drugs Murray did prescribe "were appropriate for Michael's condition." Still, if drugs are ruled the cause of Jackson's death and Murray is found to have overprescribed, he could face serious criminal charges.



"He's a good man, a patient says of Murray (in 2006).

well said at the time, "Michael is a fighter—if he thought someone was just trying to take advantage of him he would never give in." Jackson himself said in British journalist Martin Bashir's 2003 *Living with Michael Jackson* documentary, "I didn't want to do a long, drawn-out thing on TV like O.J. . . . I want to go on with my life."

If so, he was to be spectacularly unsuccessful. In 2003 a 13-year-old boy who was a cancer survivor befriended by Jackson made similar accusations and pressed ahead with a criminal case. The prosecution relied in part on the Bashir documentary, in which Jackson bizarrely defended his practice of sleeping with kids—innocently, he claimed—who were not his own. "It's very right; it's very loving," he told Bashir. Still, the sometimes circus-like 2005 trial, which lasted 14 weeks and featured one memorable episode in which Jackson gleefully danced on the roof of his SUV, ultimately turned into a referendum on the accuser's mother, who, as the defense pointed out, had once been implicated in a welfare fraud. After seven days of deliberation, the jury acquitted Jackson of all charges, but



Adding to the spectacle, the singer (with father Joe, far right) showed up for his 2005 trial in a variety of unusual outfits, including pajamas.

not all suspicion.

Indeed he seemed to emerge from the trial a broken man, the downward spiral of his life and career only accelerating. His friend Dr. Firpo Carr says that the singer, who spent his last years often traveling abroad and raising his children, continued to be tormented by the stain the accusations had left on his

“
He never recovered from the trial. . . . That was [a] reason for these concerts: to prove himself again”

—FIRPO CARR



Jackson gave journalist Martin Bashir (left) remarkable access for the 2003 documentary, only to have it backfire.

reputation. "It took a great toll on him," says Carr. "He never recovered from the trial. He never did." As Carr tells it, Jackson's planned comeback was not just about money but about some attempt at personal redemption. "That was part of the reason for these concerts: to prove himself again," says Carr, "to give something great to his fans, the show of all shows, and to have the comeback of all comebacks. This was so everyone would remember him for his music, not for the scandals. He didn't get a chance to do that. But that's what it was about."

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