



KING OF POP
**MICHAEL
JACKSON**
THIS IS IT

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TOUR PLANS AT A PRESS
CONFERENCE HELD AT THE O2 ARENA
ON MARCH 5, 2009 IN LONDON,
ENGLAND.

Behind the Mask

The Private Life of Michael Jackson

As Told to Stephanie Wilson by Alvin Malnik
Cover Photo by Tatijana Shoan

As soon as the untimely and sudden death of superstar Michael Jackson hit the airwaves, the rumors began flying. From the highly suspicious to the utterly ludicrous, falsehoods spread through the media like wildfire. Michael Jackson—a superstar with unmatched talent and charisma, a national treasure under a glaring global spotlight from the time he was 10 years old—was an incredibly private person. And though millions revered the man behind the pop-king mask, few really knew him.

Al Malnik, the famous and legendary lawyer, businessman, and restaurateur whom *Haute Living* referred to as a “Living Legend” during our cover profile in the January/February 2007 Miami edition, was one of the few people whom Michael trusted wholeheartedly. In fact, Malnik is the godfather of Michael’s youngest son, Blanket, a piece of reality that got twisted and misconstrued in the weeks following his death. The rumor mill warped the truth so much that it was claimed that Malnik was actually the biological father of Blanket—a completely fabricated falsehood. Malnik appeared on *The Today Show* to answer the claims, which he called a “Ripley event,” considering he didn’t meet Blanket until he was one year old. Speaking out for only the second time since Michael’s passing, Al Malnik shares his personal history with Michael Jackson with *Haute Living* in hopes of setting the record straight about the private life of this public figure.



AL AND NANCY WITH MICHAEL, PRINCE AND PARIS JACKSON



MICHAEL WITH HIS THREE CHILDREN, BLANKET, PRINCE, AND PARIS

I first met Michael

about nine years ago. I was told that he had heard about me and was interested in meeting, and in particular wanted to request a tour of my house in Palm Beach. Michael was an architecture buff, and he had admired the property from afar. He was in L.A. at the time, and expressed interest in discussing several different business ideas and plans. He finally asked [director] Brett Ratner, whom I refer to as my 11th son, to call me and ask to meet with him. I initially said no because I was not a fan, so I really didn't see the point in inviting him to come over and entertain him.

When I told my wife Nancy about it, she raised holy hell! She said, "Are you kidding? Michael Jackson! I grew up with him! His posters were on my wall! You have to let him come over, I want to meet him." So to please her, I invited him to the house, and from that first meeting we all developed a beautiful friendship.

Throughout the past decade or so, Michael would come and stay at the house quite a bit, sometimes with the children, and sometimes alone. It was an extraordinary time. Michael was an amazing houseguest because he really didn't require any attention. He liked to clean his own room and make his own bed, and he taught his kids to do that, too, much to our amazement.

Michael soon became close friends with my son Shareef, along with Brett Ratner and Chris Tucker. The four of them spent a great deal of time together at our house, always having a ball, filled with a lot of laughs. I also have triplets that are around the same age as Michael's two older children, Prince and Paris, who are 12 and 11 now. We would travel often with Michael and the family, going down to Acapulco or other family vacation spots. We also have fond memories of our times out at Neverland Ranch. The most important bungalow there is called the Elizabeth Taylor suite, which is where we stayed. The first night, he had Elizabeth Taylor herself call me, welcoming me to her suite at Neverland Ranch! The kids, of course, loved Neverland; they went around with Michael's children and saw the zoo and rode the train. It was such a magical time.

One year, at a birthday party that Nancy was having for the triplets, Michael came to the theater and surprised not only us, but the birthday guests as well. Everyone thought it was a Michael Jackson impersonator. They couldn't believe it was really him! Come to think of it, some of the people may still think it was a lookalike.

All of our children spent a lot of time together, and Michael's children especially enjoyed it. When they were with us, they were able to go out with Nancy and I and our family and not be haggled. They didn't have to wear their veils because no one knew who they were. When they spent time with us they got to experience normal situations that were lacking in their daily lives, like visiting St. Andrew's school or going to the movies. When they were with my family, they literally were able to take off the masks and no one bothered them. Michael was able to do the same. We worked to create everyday experiences for him, like going shopping. One time we rented out a Publix supermarket so that he could do what ordinary people do on a regular basis.

Michael was able to relax when he was with us and let his guard down. We live on the beach, and he and I would go down to the water together after the sun went down where he was just an ordinary guy, kicking his feet in the surf.

When it comes to my history with Blanket, Michael asked me to be Blanket's godfather when the boy was a year old. My relationship with Blanket is limited, because he was just a baby at the time, and I did not really participate in his upbringing. But I think that in the event something happened, Michael really wanted me to be a sort of safety net. He wanted to know that I would be willing to raise Blanket as though he were one of my own children, and that's what the legal document says.

I haven't spoken with the family since Michael's passing. I am not used to being in the media spotlight so when the stories came out, I was shocked. I know if I go to the funeral, the press will besiege me again. So instead, our family will just pray for Michael, and wish him bon voyage from this Earth. Our family loved Mi-



MICHAEL WITH
PRINCE, PARIS
AND THE MALNIK
CHILDREN



ROCKING HIS
OWN T-SHIRT



AT AL'S 70TH BIRTHDAY
PARTY



RELAXING ON AL'S
PRIVATE JET WITH
THE MALNIK'S
DAUGHTER

MICHAEL WITH
NANCY MALNIK AND
HER DAUGHTER



AL WITH HIS
GODSON, BLANKET
JACKSON



He was walking up one set of stairs, and then down
He said, "I'm doing two songs at once! I am walking
down the other, I do the other song." He could write a

AL & NANCY WITH
MICHAEL

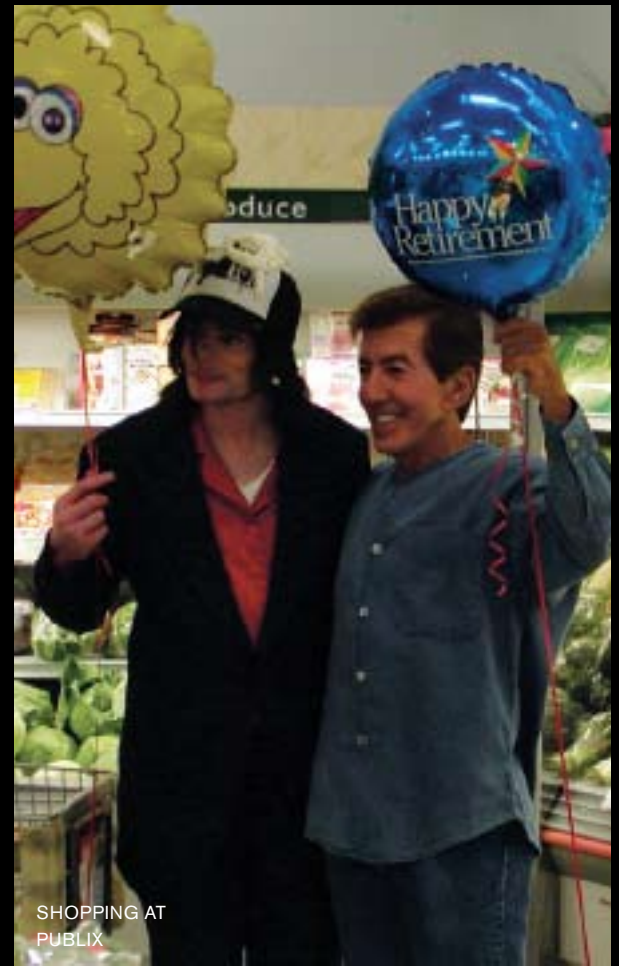


AL'S BIRTHDAY
PARTY





VACATIONING IN ACAPULCO



SHOPPING AT PUBLIX

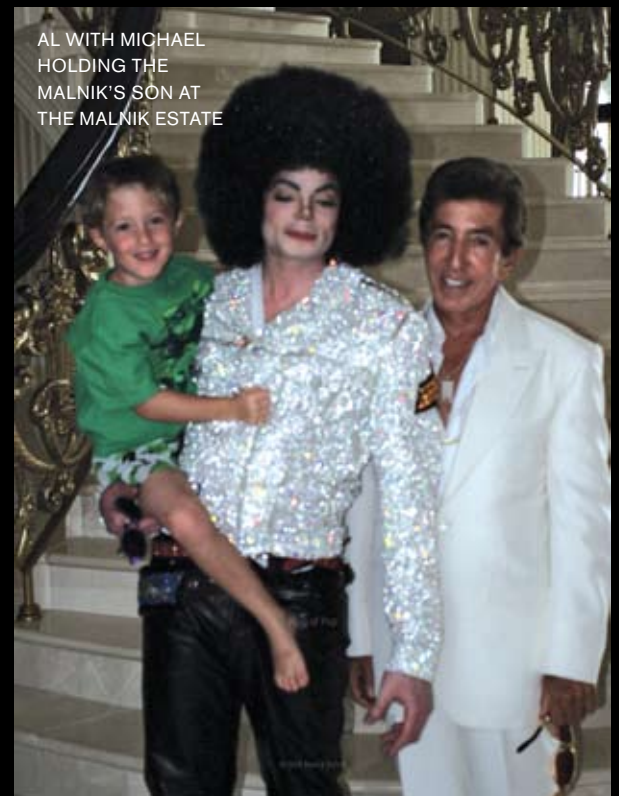
another. I asked him, “What are you doing?” up this set doing one song, and when I walk song in five minutes, it was unbelievable.



AL WITH PRINCE



MICHAEL WITH PARIS AND PRINCE



AL WITH MICHAEL HOLDING THE MALNIK'S SON AT THE MALNIK ESTATE



AL WITH BRETT RATNER AND MICHAEL



BRETT RATNER, MICHAEL, AL, AND CHRIS TUCKER



AL AND NANCY AT PUBLIX WITH MICHAEL



AT PUBLIX, CELEBRATING THE SUPER MARKET EXPERIENCE



BRETT RATNER, SHAREEF MALNIK, AL, MICHAEL, AND CHRIS TUCKER



MICHAEL, AL, CHRIS AND SHAREEF AT AL'S BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

AL AND MICHAEL AT AL'S 70TH BIRTHDAY PARTY



SHAREEF MALNIK, AL, SERENA WILLIAMS, MICHAEL, BRETT RATNER, AND CHRIS TUCKER



Michael very much, and we will always be respectful, and always extend our hand of friendship to any of his children, should they ever need our help.

Michael had such an amazing energy and such talent. He was always composing new songs and singing them a cappella. One day, he was walking around the house in his pajamas, singing some new pieces that he was working on. He was walking up one set of stairs, and then down another. I asked him, "What are you doing?" He said, "I'm doing two songs at once! I am walking up this set doing one song, and when I walk down the other, I do the other song." He could write a song in five minutes, it was unbelievable.

I know he did end up recording some of these new songs. He planned on making his comeback by doing an outrageous concert tour, starting in Europe and ending in the United States. At the same time, he wanted to simultaneously publish some of the new albums that he had been working on while he was staying at our house—all new, never-been-heard stuff.

He was so excited to do this tour, so prepared for it. One of our friends who had seen his rehearsal one or two nights before his death, called me and said, "You ought to come out and see Michael before he does his concert. He is unbelievable. It's like you have never seen him before." I did have the opportunity to see him perform before, at our house. While visiting, he asked if we could get him a portable dance floor, so of course we did. When I saw him move around on that floor, I was wowed. I had never seen anything like it. I knew he was unbelievable, and it's nice to know that five years later, he was equally impressive.

It was great fun in those days, but we also shared some hard times. I helped Michael out financially in a lot of different areas when he needed it. At that time, we managed to resolve all of his financial problems. After that period, which was after I had paid for his bail when he was arrested, I felt it was not in our best family interest to spend all of the time that was required to get Michael on the right track again, because at that point he had capable people around him. And, of course, geography was a big problem because Michael's business interests are essentially in California or out of New York or Europe. I really just didn't have the time to continue to devote myself to trying to resolve the many considerations that were in his life. The last time I saw Michael was right before his trial, although we spoke many times after that. He was a bit meaner at that time; he was so furious and so disappointed at the charges being hurled at him. He swore to me that he was absolutely innocent of each and every charge that was made against him. And that's the way it turned out.

I think the legacy of Michael Jackson will endure for many years to come. Ultimately, the negativity surrounding him in the press will dissipate. He will be more acknowledged and respected for the musical genius that he demonstrated, and that legacy will survive our decade and the ones to come. Our children will rediscover Michael Jackson again many years from now, and be amazed that he created the music that he did, the style of dancing that he did, and more importantly, the wonderful charisma that he generated. His death is another piece of history that we are all experiencing right now, and unfortunately, it's taken his demise for us to have a wake-up call about the real importance of Michael Jackson. 🍷