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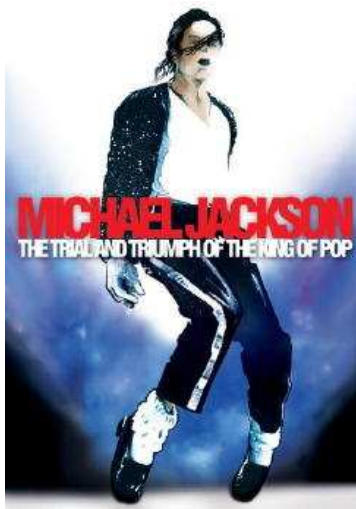
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Entertainment :: Music

Michael Jackson - The Trial and Triumph of the King of Pop

by Christopher Soden
EDGE Contributor
Thursday Aug 13, 2009

I'm not interested in trashing the recently released, straight-to-DVD documentary: **Michael Jackson: The Trial and Triumph of the King of Pop**, but I'm not sure if there's much to recommend. A good-hearted tribute that focuses on Jackson's trial for child molestation in June of 2005, it is seriously undermined by its own self-indulgence and ineptitude. The fact that it was produced, edited, directed and narrated by the same two people : (TV news personality?) Pearl Jr, and/or Cecil Hughes, should be the first red flag. The next is the title, which is just ambiguous enough to imply a broader scope than this movie includes. To give them the benefit of the doubt, this film would have probably worked better in the hands of more experienced technicians. Sadly it has the slapdash feel of a project that was rushed out to capitalize on Michael Jackson's untimely demise.



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Trial and Triumph has some intriguing content and details possibly unrevealed till now. There are short excursions following the primary narrative in which authors Geraldine Hughes and Aphrodite Jones disclose evidence of Jackson's innocence. The vast majority of information, however, is redundant, unless you were ignoring the media saturation that summer of 2005.

Appropriately they've ignored the irrational conviction held by many at the time, that someone so clearly besieged by personal demons was capable of anything. Pearl Jr. and Hughes seem to come down on the right side of this debate, depending on where you stand. Suffice to say the guardians of the young man in question had dubious motives for accusing Jackson. The film makes a point of including statistics of how often false accusations of pedophilia are made.

The hordes of fans who have come to show their
I was surprised that no link was suggested between Jackson's widespread celebrity and a

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support, instead of being sympathetic, come off as loopy and deranged.

perhaps more zealous search for absolute truth. I'm not sure if you screened this movie for someone unfamiliar with the case, that they'd comprehend all the forces at work.

As I've already suggested, all the flaws of *Trial and Triumph* seem to fall under the heading of amateurish errors. Sometimes a movie can get by solely on content, if it's tawdry and gossipy enough, the raw entertainment value will keep us absorbed. *Trial and Triumph* is divided into two parts, during the proceedings and the four years following as epilogue. But the first part is abysmal and the second delayed too long.

The first part, shot outside the courtroom, is nothing if not a dog and pony show, but curiously lacks even that much amusement. The hordes of fans who have come to show their support, instead of being sympathetic, come off as loopy and deranged. Same for the protesters convinced of Jackson's degeneracy. Simply put : *Trial and Triumph* undercuts its own ideology. Pearl Jr. and Holmes can't decide if they want to utilize Jackson's devotees or exploit them.

You don't need to be a film student to understand that *Trial and Triumph* is turgid and poorly cut. As if they grabbed all the local news footage and spliced it on the fly. Narrator Pearl Jr. tries to be effervescent and jovial but like most of this film, she goes on way too long and tries way too hard. Even the interesting parts lack bounce and strategic composition. You don't necessarily need sophisticated, state-of-the-art technology to make a powerful documentary. Sometimes footage that is neither crisp nor iconic can be highly effective. But you do have to know what you're doing.

Christopher Soden received his MFA in Poetry from Vermont College in 2005. He is a teacher, lecturer, actor, performer and playwright. In addition he writes film, theatre and literary critique. In his spare time he likes to read, cook, dine, do crossword puzzles, chill and nap.

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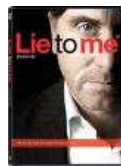
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