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## This DVD isn't 'It' but it is compelling

Thursday, October 29, 2009 at 12:26am

By Ron Wynn



1 Trick of a tiny belly:

Cut down a bit of your belly every day by using this 1 weird old tip.



Weird tip

Since his death in June, it seems Michael Jackson has never been out of the headlines. Stories have ranged from revelations about drug abuse to an amazing resurgence of sales for his classic releases and multiple nominations for the 2009 American Music Awards (including Album of the Year and Artist of the Year).

This week's latest Jackson events include the Wednesday release of *This Is It*, a concert film culled from 120 hours of rehearsal footage for what was to be the ultimate comeback and grand finale — a hectic Jackson 50-date residency reported to be his last time appearing in London. The film will only have a two-week theatrical run.



Jackson in court in 2007.

The soundtrack was released Monday, and large crowds have been attending showings ever since a Tuesday night 9:30 p.m. sneak. Despite online controversies over whether the long hours of preparation and behind-the-scenes furor contributed to Jackson's premature death at 50, plus the complaints of some fans that the film is nothing more than rank exploitation, it's still expected to do quite well in its opening week.

However, the current DVD *Michael Jackson: The Trial and Triumph of The King of Pop* (Elbow Grease) spotlights a very different period in his career. It covers the 2007 child molestation trial that many observers at the time felt could permanently derail his career. As it turned out, Jackson was found not guilty of all charges, although as this documentary shows, not before the proceedings became a complete circus.

Director/interviewer Pearl Jr. doesn't exactly take a clinical, down-the-middle approach. While speaking with various fans, supporters and even Jackson attorney Tom Mesereau, it's evident she and the producers are upset and unhappy over what they deem could have been a miscarriage of justice.

Of course, the fact the person who made the original allegations has publicly recanted them adds weight to their approach, and it's apparent rather early in the film that the state's case was woefully short on factual evidence.

There are several appearances from various celebrities and supporters, among them Kanye West, Billy Gibbons, Ashford and Simpson, Yolanda Adams, and Michael's brother Jermaine. The disc also includes the March press concert where Jackson talked in glowing terms about the potential for his upcoming London shows.



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This DVD is the ideal companion piece to *This Is It*, and another addition to the lengthy line of Michael Jackson reissues and releases since his death.

**New country DVDs**

*Jason Aldean – Wide Open Live & More!* (Eagle Vision)

This release covers performances from a sold-out Knoxville show that saw one of contemporary country's finest live acts in prime form.

Besides stirring performances of two chart-topping numbers ("Why" and "She's Country") there are also equally excellent renditions of "Amarillo Sky," "Johnny Cash," "Asphalt Cowboy" and "HickTown" among others in the 15-song menu.

A DVD bonus feature is an extensive interview with Aldean that covers his influences, early days in the business and family background.

*The Willie Nelson Special* (Eagle Eye Media)

One of the more endearing and rewarding musical friendships in any idiom was between Willie Nelson and Ray Charles. Besides enjoying long-distance chess matches and other correspondence, the duo had some chart hits and occasionally performed on each others shows. *The Willie Nelson Special* contains 14 mid-'80s numbers, several of them Nelson/Charles duets.

The best of these include "I Can't Stop Loving You," "Seven Spanish Angels" and "Georgia on My Mind." Nelson adds his patented reworking of standards ("Without A Song," "There Will Never Be Another You,") plus signature tunes ("On The Road Again," "Always On My Mind") as well as pop ("To All The Girls I've Loved Before") and country ("Whiskey River," "My Window Faces The South.")

*Rocky Mountain High – Live in Japan* (Eagle Rock)

John Denver's *Rocky Mountain High - Live in Japan* is a combination greatest hits anthology and concert presentation. Denver's brand of sentimental vocals and environmentally conscious material wasn't for everyone, and it certainly was a lot more on the pop/folk side than country. But he was also a polished, skilled performer, and such songs as "Sunshine on My Shoulders," "Thank God, I'm A Country Boy" and "Take Me Home, Country Roads" have been covered by performers in many genres.

*Mr. Rock 'n' Roll – The Alan Freed Story* (Eagle Media)

Cleveland DJ Alan Freed may or may not have been the first radio person to use the term "rock 'n' roll" on the air, but he was certainly among its greatest early champions.

Until his career was ruined by his involvement in a payola scandal in the early '60s, Freed helped expand the music's audience through national concerts, syndicated radio programs, television specials and even appearances in a handful of films. He was also among the most influential disc jockeys of his era, breaking loads of hits and helping break the musical color barrier by playing the original versions of R&B tunes from black artists rather than the sanitized cover renditions of their white counterparts.

Sadly, by his death in 1965, Freed's spirit had been broken and he was also deeply in debt.

Judd Nelson's portrayal of Freed in the 1999 film *Mr. Rock 'n' Roll – The Alan Freed Story* was based on John Jackson's biography *Big Beat Heat; Alan Freed and the Beginning of Rock & Roll*. It wasn't the most dashing or colorful Freed treatment, but the film was more accurate than many other depictions in terms of the music and the era.

*Mr. Rock 'n' Roll* has just been reissued. It includes guest appearances from Paula Abdul and Madchen Amick, plus recreations of many classic songs from the early days of rock 'n' roll. It's not the greatest rock movie from an acting or performance standpoint, but it does tell the genuine story of a man who helped start and cement the rock 'n' roll revolution.



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By: [NewYorker1](#) on 10/30/09 at 8:19

I loved Michael Jackson, but damn he looked terrible. He went from handsome to just plain ugly.

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