

Industry Bigs: Music & Michael

Contributed by Chris Yandek
 Wednesday, 08 July 2009
 Last Updated Saturday, 12 December 2009

Cory Rooney with Michael Jackson (left) Chris Apostle (right)

Listen to the interview with Cory Rooney and Chris

Apostle:<http://thesportsinterview.com/mp3/CoryChris.mp3>Michael Jackson has entertained the world, with his voice and moves, since age six. His recent death has provoked many questions. More than anything, people around the world want to know why the King of Pop suddenly passed on.

In 1979, Michael released *Off The Wall* through Epic Records – a division of Sony. The album received critical acclaim, while selling over 20 million copies and netting Jackson Grammys for the first time since the early 70s.

Three years later, the *Gloved One* would release the most popular album in music history, *Thriller*. His singing, dancing and performance generalship was unlike anything the world had ever seen, leaving an indelible mark on the music video genre.

In 1993, music executive Chris Apostle began his stint as Vice President of Special Recording Projects at Sony Music Entertainment. He would become better known as Tommy Mottola's – the company's topper and a music industry legend – right hand man, working with everyone from Mariah Carey to Jennifer Lopez to Marc Anthony.

For the last 20 years, Apostle has been friends with producer/songwriter Cory Rooney. In 1998, Mottola named Rooney Epic's Vice President of A&R. VH1 has called Rooney the best kept secret in the music industry. He has written and produced for artists including Jennifer Lopez, Mary J Blige, and Destiny's Child among others. During his time at Epic, Cory became friends with Michael Jackson.

While working on music with Michael, Rooney had an opportunity to see a side of Jackson few ever did. For example, in one telling conversation in 2001, Jackson told Rooney that he was done touring and if he ever toured again it would kill him.

Among other things, Cory shares that Michael was easy to work with – contrary to how the media portrayed him. Rooney relates one instance when Michael apologized for being late to a studio session by sending a gift basket with over 100 DVDs and a note that read, "I'm very sorry for not respecting your time." Rooney was not surprised when Jackson lashed out at then Sony head Tommy Mottola in 2002. He says Michael felt nobody was in his corner, that he wasn't getting the love and respect he deserved. Apostle clarifies that stars at that level are often under extraordinary pressure and may say things in the heat of the moment. Both men were major players during pop music's peak.

Most importantly, Rooney and Apostle hope people remember Michael Jackson's contributions to music and as Apostle says, recognize the musicologist he was.

Chris Yandek: Cory, you had a chance to work with Michael, you wrote and produced some songs with him. What was your relationship like with him?

Cory Rooney: "It's funny, someone asked me this the other day and I said, 'I waited all my life and my career pretty much to finally get a chance to work with Michael, be recognized, to have my talent recognized by Michael.' When it came time finally for us to get in the studio, we spent almost a month of just talking and he was educating me on like so many different things. We barely got a lot of music done. It was a completely different experience than I thought it was going to be."

CY: Kind of like almost an utter distraction, not getting work done and talking about a bunch of other things?

CR: "Yeah. Then the relationship quickly turned into me being an executive at the time. I think I felt like my strengths for him at the time more so than being a writer or producer, but to be his inside man at the time because it was weird. He felt like at the time at Sony that he didn't really have any allies or anyone that was going to be in his corner."

CY: Really?

CR: "It was amazing! I quickly became his number one ally at the company."

CY: So what did you learn from him in that time that you became his ally? Like who he was? It just seems like there were always people trying to leach off of him and telling him to do one thing or another. It seemed like he didn't at some point

have control of his life, am I right?

CR: "Yeah. I mean that's the – you hit it on the head. I mean, it was to the point. The first thing that I started to learn about him is that he's always so eager to please. He was so eager to please that he kinda over thought a lot of things. It's like he would have an album done and I would listen to all this music and say, 'Michael, this is unbelievable!' [Michael]: 'Yeah, but I don't think it's ready yet' Because he's got a million people in his ear telling him different things in different directions. He was easily led in all sorts of directions by people and I was amazed by the fact that he was so easily led."

CY: Chris, I have to say for more than a decade there you were a major player at Sony Music Entertainment. What were your dealings with Michael and what did you learn about him while he was with Sony?

Chris Apostle: "Well, my dealings unlike Cory were very limited. The actual time I spent with him was just a couple of days. He was doing a mix of a track with Jay Z and Jay Z had already become quite a player in the business. I just remember walking in the studio before Michael had gotten there and Jay Z was working on lyrics for what he was going to do and I just remember that Jay Z almost was, I never saw him so humble. He was almost a little bit nervously excited that he was working with Michael Jackson. That left a lasting impression to me.

I'm older than Cory and I grew up with Michael since he began. The thing that I learned on the inside from the Sony side was most people, the executives like Cory was saying, giving him direction, all these ideas, what he should do and shouldn't do, the thing that I think was most forgotten about Michael and what he did was Michael was always working on music. You hear all the other stuff going on and everything, but it's funny you watch like a recent interview, that Martin Bashir thing and Martin was saying, 'Well, it's good you're working on music again.' And it was extremely poignant when he said, 'I've always been working on music.' What do you think Cory? He probably has a couple hundred tracks sitting in the tank somewhere."

CY: There was a news report that I read an article the other day and he has 200 unpublished songs that are left to his children that they can profit off and it's valued at somewhere near 60 million dollars Chris.

CR: "Right. I think that was kind of the old Motown way. Stevie Wonder has over 2000 songs that he's stored and put away for the same purpose. True. Michael was always working on music. Always...always working on music. Like I said, he was never really satisfied with himself."

CY: The comments he made about Tommy Mottola many years ago, the comments he wasn't happy with the album he released back in 2002. It was 30 million dollars that was put behind it, but were you surprised when he made those very candid comments calling Tommy Mottola a bunch of different things?

CR: "I was not surprised. Like I said, he didn't really feel like he had people in his corner at the record company. For the most part, I don't think people really showed him the love and respect that they should've been showing him at the record company. True, they may have spent 30 million dollars on the record, but at the same time the business affairs on that record was set up to the point where Michael couldn't win if he wanted win. You understand?"

CY: Yeah.

CR: "They set it up and they put such a high marker on the record in terms of his recoupment and things like that. It was kind of a lose...lose situation. And they did that like to dangle a carrot and say ok, we want you to do the whole thing. We want you to sell records. We want you to tour. They thought that he was going to go running after the carrots saying, 'Man, I gotta do all this so I can recoup.'

CY: Chris, thoughts?

CA: "A powerful artist like Michael, he's not the first artist that has ever decided when he's not comfortable at his home, the label to sit there and decides he's going to take some shots and say his piece. When artists at his level aren't comfortable they say things. Someone like him, who only dealt with the top level – Japan and Mottola and stuff like that, he came out and said he's fine. I'm sure the frustration level was out of control. There is a lot of circumstances that pushed him to that point.

The thing that I'm so brutally offended about and it's only a rumor, but it's something I really believe, but I really think he got blackmailed in that whole scandal thing. I think at some point the truth will come out. This man gave people millions and millions of dollars to philanthropic stuff. Never comes out what he did. I think his reactions were natural and I'm sure he was getting pushed. If you look at the quality of his work Chris, go back to Off The Wall, which is my favorite Michael Jackson record. But every single record, I don't care if you go to Dangerous, any single one, these records are perfect, blue book standard records, nothing but hits.

Cory and I sat in an office at Sony once and watched a concert, a live DVD. A colleague of ours Ron Grant called us in and said, 'You guys want to watch something?' And we're figuring alright, middle of day, we'll watch something for five to ten minutes. It was unedited, two and a half hours from a stadium at Brazil. He never stopped working for two and a half hours. The point that I would love to make about him is that he's not getting enough play for what he has contributed to the world musically. He's probably, arguably the greatest musician we'll ever see in our lifetime. You'll never see anything like this again. That has to be discussed and mentioned."

CY: How will the music industry be affected going forward now?

CR: "I don't really think the music industry has taken a deep enough look at what Michael Jackson meant to everybody, all of us artists, producers, actors, actresses, all of us, entertainment as a whole. I don't think that they took a deep enough look because everyone is too busy with their head up their own butt. When Michael was on trial, nobody...nobody stopped to go and support him at the trial."

CA: "Yup."

CR: "The guy is acquitted on ten counts of child molestation. No one said, 'Sorry Michael.' No one said, 'Michael, we knew you were innocent.' No one did a BET tribute to him then. Nobody played his music and did a marathon then. Nobody rallied up and did a concert. Why should Michael have to go on tour to raise money? How come all of the artists didn't band together and say, 'Hey! You know what? Let's do a tour like Michael did the We Are The World Tour and let's raise

some money. Let's get this thing going.' No one did that. Tookie Williams is the founder of the crips gang. You know the crips and the bloods?"

CY: Yes.

CR: "They were trying to get him pardoned from the death penalty and half of Hollywood showed up for this man. What I can't understand is like, ok people didn't want to go near Michael Jackson when he was in trouble."

CY: But they show up for a murder.

CR: "But they show up for a guy who executed families. A little girl begged for her life and he executed her. They said because he wrote in his time in prison he wrote children's books that he tried to turn his life around. He was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize. Well, how about the millions of children Michael Jackson has helped over the span of his career? Yet two children come with some false allegations and those two children become the two children that destroy him. It's crazy. It makes me look at the entertainment business and just say I'm surrounded by a bunch of hypocrites. When you ask me how would it affect them? I don't even think they realize what this is. Everyone's gonna do their tributes, but the tributes now if you look at it, it's all because now everyone is going to get some spotlight, they're gonna get some shine. Now all of the sudden everyone wants to say something good about him."

CY: Everyone wants to be relevant.

CR: "Everyone wants to be relevant and that sucks to me."

CY: After '93, should he have known better going on the Martin Bashir Documentary Living with Michael Jackson and saying it's ok to share your bed with a child? Don't you think most people are going to say in some senses well, he kind of set himself up for that?

CR: "Let me explain to you what was said to me directly from Michael. Michael and I spoke about that. He said, 'Cory, when I was a kid, I was denied not only a childhood but I was denied love. When I reached out to hug my father, he didn't hug me back. When I was scared on an airplane, he didn't put his arm around me and say Michael, don't worry. It's going to be ok. When I was scared to go on stage, he said, 'Get your ass on this stage.' Not just him, but every other adult around him.

So he said to me 'Cory, I will never deny a child love and if it means that I have to be crucified or put in jail for it, then that's just what they're gonna have to do.' When it was time for him to stand trial, the first time he went through it, his advisors told him, 'Michael, this is not good. Pay this kid off and let's keep moving.' Second time he said, 'You know what? All that did was make me look guilty like I was hiding something. So this time there won't be any payoffs. I'm going to fight this in court. You'll see. I'll be innocent.'

Right to the day when they finally had to read the verdict and the verdict was in, I talked to his family cause I remember watching on the news that Michael had 45 minutes to get there. So I spoke to some of his family members that were in the house with Michael. I said, 'Well, what the hell is he doing?' He's upstairs getting dressed. He came downstairs. He said a prayer with his family and he told everyone, 'I want you guys not to worry about me because I will be ok.' And he rode there, he had maybe a little nervous energy patting his feet, singing in the car and everything and he rode with his brother and his sister. But he wasn't worried. I'll tell you something, I would've been a mess. I don't even know if I could have stood up in court like that."

CY: Chris, any thoughts on any of this?

CA: "When I watched the Bashir thing last night, I just wanted to see what it was all about and reflect on it. When Martin asked him about the first incident where he paid off these accusers, I found it very ironic and I look unbelievably sincere and honest the way he said, 'I just decided I wanted it to go away.' And he made it go away, which by the way again, not the first person to do this in the history of our business. He wanted to make it go away. The second time he fought. But what Cory was saying going back to his childhood and stuff like that, he was reflecting on the fact that he had acne as a kid, which we all gone through at one phase of our life and how his pap would always sit there and make fun of his acne and his skin condition. You're talking about a young kid here who never had the chance to grow up and be normal. Kid grew up very differently than a lot of people. Granted he's Michael Jackson, but there is a lot of reasons why he had certain insecurities. As for his bit with the second thing, I believe a thousand percent, I'll go to my grave with it that he was innocent completely. He was being blackmailed by that gentleman that wanted to be a screenwriter or write books or do movies, whatever. That was inside information that's close around enough that I can say it."

CR: "The Martin Bashir thing, I don't think people remember that a week later or maybe a few weeks later, Michael himself re-aired his own version of that show."

CY: And he had the whole thing because he was smart enough to video camera.

CR: "He was smart enough to video camera it and it clearly showed that the guy just twisted everything and made it, he turned everything into a false or a lie. They ask Michael a question. Are you gay? And Michael said, 'I don't want to answer that question.' Now that was the one that he said. So it quickly edited to Bashir going, 'Obviously he didn't want to answer for obvious reasons.'

So then when Michael showed his version, he said, 'Are you gay?' Michael said, 'I don't want to answer that question.' Then he said, 'But if you turn your camera off, I will answer your question.' Then the guy said ok, turn the camera off. Then Michael said, 'No. Absolutely not. I am not gay, but I have millions of gay fans and if they believe I'm gay, then let them believe I'm gay.' He said, 'I don't care. I don't want to offend anybody.' You know?"

CA: "I gotta say something here, I can't believe at this point that these are even issues that are being discussed."

CR: "Yeah. I mean this is crazy."

CA: "Anything about what this man contributed to the world and I have a very good friend that Cory doesn't know that we know that was working on this tour with him, someone that worked with Cory with another diva in our lifetime and he said, 'He was looking better than ever.' He was struggling cause it was a long hard show, but this was going on. He canceled a couple of shows, fine. This guy had 50 shows lined up.

This was going. They were in Staples Center, full production. You're talking about a multi multi million dollar show. This was going. This poor kid goes home the night before and says he doesn't feel well and the next day he's taken from us. I'll use a word that Cory used, probably the most devastating thing I've ever had to deal with in my life. I feel like my right one has been taken from me. People have to pay a little bit attention to what he contributed to the world and stop with all the Whacko Jacko stuff."

CR: "But they won't because that's what they like better."

CA: "Liza was very cool. I watched her the other night."

CY: Yeah. I watched her on Larry King.

CA: "She sits there and says stop and she was talking to Larry King. She said stop, come on, let's celebrate for a little while. The stuff will come out, people will start flipping, you'll start hearing stuff, the books will start. Sony's pressing records. I'm sure they got four plants going right now repressing all his records. I'm sorry. I'm just, I'll let Cory take the floor here, I'm devastated by this. I'm sad. I've been very emotional and I'm going to go to my farmhouse this weekend where Cory, I have all the original vinyl and I'm pulling them all out. Someone has got to talk about what this man contributed and cut the crap."

CY: A lot of people say that maybe he wasn't the same after the second trial in 2005 and things kind of went downhill, went through all these personal issues and of course there were the rumored health issues in the recent years. Any thoughts or any knowledge of those situations?

CR: "I know for a fact he had health issues. That's number one. Michael Jackson had other health issues that never were discussed like what is called dancer's feet. Dancer's feet is when your feet over years of dancing, a dancer wraps their feet to dance. You wrap them in tape and things like that. But of course because you don't get enough oxygen skin dries up. Your skin starts to crack and splint, almost like paper cuts and Michael suffered bad with that.

What would happen is sometimes it be so bad he'd have to wrap his feet in a cast. That's why sometimes you would see him with a cast on. The pains of that was excruciating. And yeah, was he on the painkillers for that? Yeah. I'm sure he was. I never physically seen him take a pill or a painkiller, but I've definitely spoken to him about it. Now whatever the autopsy shows, whatever the true factor on how this man has gone from here becomes it's all still a result of what this business has done to him period. It's all a result of what the business did to him."

CY: Fair to say that the business because he had all the financial issues that he was kind of pushed into a corner? He said he wanted to do 10 shows, but then it became 50 for this thing in London that was supposed to happen next month. Did he feel like he was backed in a corner because he had to fulfill financial issues?

CA: "Listen, I'm sure he decided to do this comeback tour and net a bunch of cash, which he honestly deserves to have. I still think that like Cory said, he was pushed to the brink by people that were extremely powerful and he was not treated fairly. We always started in this business and someone Cory and I knew very well said, 'You can't do anything in this business without the artist even if the artist are what you considered to be the worst thing in the world and stuff like that. You still need the artist.' Well, it seems to me the big cheeses in the business forgot that at some point where he was concerned."

CR: "This was years ago. I'm going to go back probably eight years ago and Michael told me, 'Cory, I can't tour anymore. I'm not gonna tour anymore. Ok?' I said, 'why Mike?' He said, 'Because it will kill me.' That's what he said to me. He said, 'It will kill me.' Why would you say something like that? He said, 'Well, remember when I was preparing for my concert and I passed out at the Sony Studio?' He said, 'Well, it's because when I get ready for a tour I get dehydrated. I don't eat. I don't drink. I don't sleep. I put so much of myself into preparing for a tour.'

He said, 'I'm not doing it on purpose. This is just something I don't think about anymore. You understand? I've just become so driven that I can't even think about these things anymore. They made me walk around with an IV last time. He said, 'So I just decided, my doctors decided that maybe you shouldn't do this anymore. He said he wanted to make the Invincible album work to the point where that was it. He's done with the tour. He's gonna do this Invincible album. He wanted to continue to put out albums. He said, 'I'll do albums till I can't do it anymore, but I just can't tour.'"

CY: Is it fair to say the downfall of Michael Jackson were people who were greedy and obviously wanted the 85 million dollars that the ticket sales had sold for the thing over in London for example? Is it fair to say that greed got the best of him and other people that were forced into a situation?

CR: "I wouldn't call it greed. I just don't think he had a choice. I think financially, sometimes we all do what we have to do. It's the same reason that a boxer like Joe Lewis would go in after he was long into retirement. Joe Lewis still got in the ring and had to fight cause he had no money. I'm not saying Michael didn't have any money."

CY: But he owed 400 million dollars.

CR: "But he did have debt. He definitely had debt. Ok, when you got debt and you got people hawking you down and doing all this stuff, ok Michael, one more tour and let's clean up this debt. Ok, well you know what? The person that he is, the entertainer he is, well let's get to work."

CY: It's a surprise to many, but at the same time is it one of these great tragedies we're gonna look back upon and say he had all the highs but he had all the lows also?

CR: "I would say my deepest prayer to ask God to just give this man peace and hope that his legacy lives on and it's untainted with all the bullshit if I can say. But I'm afraid that forever it's always going to be a problem. Just like there is always all kinds of crazy things said about whatever, Elvis Presley."

CY: How he died.

CR: "How he died."

CY: The conspiracy theories.

CR: "A conspiracy theory. How did Bruce Lee die? How did Marilyn Monroe die? You know what I'm saying? Michael's not comparable to these people. I would say Elvis Presley is the closest you'll get to that. It had to be in Elvis Presley's career

even from Michael to stand on those shoulders and move beyond that. I'm not gonna discredit Elvis Presley, but they're two different people. Michael, as far as I'm concerned, surpassed Elvis and everything that Elvis was about a long time ago.

And he stood for something different. No one talks about when he did the Victory tour, I remember as a kid Michael being on tour with the Victory tour right? And every night on the news they would announce that Michael Jackson donated his money from every city that he did, he donated it to a new charity. He donated his money from the Victory tour to charities. I thought that was amazing. I'm like, wow! This guys donating millions of dollars every night to a new charity. Then he would stop in every city and every city he would stop at a hospital and visit kids that were burned, ill or whatever. He took the time to do all that."

CY: Chris, any thoughts?

CR: Two things. Comparing the Elvis Michael comparisons are obvious considering what they were to the American culture and actually the world culture. Differences, Elvis I believe died at 42. And Elvis, the most money he's ever made was after he died, far more than while he was alive. Go back to the highs and the lows, all artists have highs and lows. Most of the lows are generally contributed to the lack of creativity, the skill diminishes, the body goes, etc...etc. Michael had the highest of highs and if you remember the highest of highs, there's never gonna be anything like that in our life. Number one, the albums were brilliant. The performances were brilliant. He was brilliant. He was an icon, probably the most famous person in the world. I think his lows weren't totally attributed to creative decline. I think the lows were forced upon him and he was put into caves and holes and by people doing things to him. That to me is really sad. Artists get old like athletes. They change.

They go on different tours. They start playing the casinos. They start picking up the city festivals, the package tours, etc. This guy was forced, he was forced to go lower than an artist should ever have to go. It wasn't because of lack of skill.

Something about Michael that people don't realize is I would call him a musicologist. This guy knew every song, ever recording, every studio, the whole Sun Studios thing, Memphis, Motown, New York, LA, everywhere. He knew everything. The musicians. The instruments. The mics. No one talks about this. No one discusses this and it's unbelievable. And by the way, unlike Elvis, this guy was doing it still for 43 years. 43 years Chris. My God man."

CY: I think looking at this whole industry and the way things have been moving forward now and it's more about the name value as you like to call it the bonafide musical talent. Is the music industry crumbling? There's talents out there that are going to do well always, but is it crumbling in a sense that we don't have these huge identities, these larger than life figures anymore? It's just kind of one act after another.

CR: "I feel like because of the newfound independence that the internet has given us all. I think we're in kind of like in a whole new revamping stage."

CY: A transitional stage.

CR: "Well, I always say it's a transitional stage sure. But when I say revamping or I would say an incubating stage because right now we're about to witness the rebirth of real music. That's because there was a time when you can have an Earth, Wind, and Fire like or Michael Jackson like Off the Wall sounding record that someone worked their ass off for independently and it sounds good. A record company wouldn't even give it the chance because if it didn't sound like Chris Brown or Rihanna that's not what they were looking for.

Now independently when that becomes the most played thing on the internet and people have no choice but to role with it, record companies start to get behind it. We'll be back to people not being pigeon held or feeling like they have to follow suit or what's going on just going on just to get a deal."

CY: Chris, your thoughts?

CA: "It's been a longer transition than most people would expect. The industry is not dying. And if you look at certain aspects of it, Live Nation is having their biggest years now with the touring industry with the 360 deals it's obviously different for artists, labels, etc. The labels, you used to have creative people working under the executives and labels, but now you have the executives maintaining their salaries by making sure they have no staff. I went to see a group tonight in New York, a kid that's showing up all over the place. Every label was there. It was all low level people with no signing power. It's different. They can't sign bands. They can sign one band at a time.

As for the internet and stuff like that, I have an opinion about the fact that all the genius that we all profess to myself, Cory, and everyone that we worked with five to six years ago this industry suddenly decided that I liken to it like this. Trying to sell the public – remember the car the Hugo? "

CY: Yes.

CR: "Yea."

CA: "Sitting there saying, 'You know what? We've come up with this great car. It's a Hugo.' And people are like, oh wait, I've heard there is this really cool car out of Germany called a Mercedes, no...no...no, you want to have the Hugo. But wait, I hear BMW makes a pretty good car, I hear Chevrolet, Escalade is really hot, whatever. No...no....no, you want the Hugo. The industry that we worked in that came up with all these huge artists Michael included, the U2s, the Bruce Springsteen's, the Dylans suddenly decided, you know what? We're gonna give you Lindsay Lohan. We're gonna give you Paris Hilton. We're gonna give you Kelly Osbourne. And the public sat there and said, 'This is the best you have to offer? I'm not paying \$17.99 for this. To hell with this, I'll steal one song off the internet.

And the labels were slow to come to form realizing it was changing and now they're getting screwed because of it. Fans are doing it independently Chris. They're doing it differently. If you notice the live concert situation, the records that sell, if you look at the top 40 SoundScan you'll probably see five country artists, five Disney artists, two or three older artists, live people listen to Bruce Springsteen, U2. Why do you think quote on quote country Keith Urban is so popular? It's not that people like country and Keith Urban is definitely not country, it's a singer-songwriter. They want to hear songs. Talking about Michael, he made songs. The bands that last for a record, they don't have songs. They don't have staying power.

When you're 21 years old, I always ask people, name five artists under the age of 20 that were truly geniuses? And they sit there and ponder everything. I sit there and say ok, I'll give you a few, Stevie Wonder, Prince, Michael Jackson, a Mariah Carey that was truly legitimate at that time in her career and there is one or two others, but you see where I'm going with this. Now you have every band out that is 20 year olds and they can't play."

CR: "Being the producer, what you find is, see, I grew up in my household when I was a kid, the Isley Brothers would be in my living room rehearsing with my dad. My dad was a producer as well. I grew up and I couldn't wait to get in the business and kind of do it that way. And then all of a sudden I got in the business and I found well Cory, that's kinda like too much. People don't want to hear the live band thing and the live instrument thing. So all of a sudden I had to teach myself, force myself how to make music based on eight bar loops and write things repeat around, repetition."

CY: You felt like you were dumbing yourself down.

CR: "I had to dumb myself because when I first started producing, I was producing strictly to make some money to take care of my family. So I had to follow suit. I was never ever...ever happy. I got very happy when I got the chance to work with the Mariah Carey or a Michael Jackson or someone like that because I knew I could be me. There's been artists that will remain nameless that it's like I've had to just sit there and just do it basically because it's for a check and not for love."

CA: "You also grew up surrounded by monster players."

CR: "Oh absolutely."

CA: "Chris, Cory never mentions this and he'll never mention it, one of the things I'm most impressed by musically is I'll go to his house and he'll sit at the piano without the musical training and I came from the classical training. Cory can sit down and play the whole Stevie Wonder book note for note."

CR: "But you know what's crazy? When I was a kid, I remember seeing the guy walk down the street like with a base guitar on his back or I remember seeing a guy carrying like in his car like he's got his drums or this and I was fascinated like wow! This guy's a musician. Now, a guy walks out with a base on his back, walk in studio sessions and someone will laugh at him. Like, where the hell you going to? What is this? A parade? What are you doing? They don't get it. A horn player, like they don't exist anymore."

CA: "Oh, you can't make a living."

CR: "Yeah. I feel like now that the internet is what it is. It's ok to make those records because now they'll get past those gates that where people go, oh, I'm sorry. We don't allow that music here. Now it's gonna go past that right over their heads and be out there and all of a sudden you're gonna start hearing music that sounds so organic, so good, so stimulating that it's going to go right back where it needs to be."

CA: "Here is a good one for you guys. You both know Steve Lukather, the guy that played most of the guitar on all of Michael's records. He was the leader of the Toto, etc. His son is 19 years old. This kid grew up in Los Angeles four houses down from Eddie Van Halen. His father did every record from Boz Scaggs to Michael Jackson to Lionel Ritchie. You name it his dad has played on them. This kid is the most brilliant prodigy, rock and roll guitar player in the world today. He can't get arrested. He can't get arrested. I would put him up against anyone and people hear him and they're horrified, he can't get arrested."

CR: "Yeah. I know. It's disgusting."

CA: "But the players, listen it's changing yes, but fine. The industry sold 1.3 billion records last year instead of 1.5."

CR: "It's all a hoax. I just want you to know that if you really do some research and look at the statistics on the amount of records sold in the industry now versus over the last 20 years, we're only down by like a few million records. It's like 10 percent. It's nothing crazy. Nothing crazy. All of that internet nonsense is just a hoax because the record companies, the majors always felt like, 'Wait a minute. If we don't start to put the word out and keep people off the internet, we're going to lose ground here.'"

CA: "Oh I got blasted at Sony once and I'll say this. I made a suggestion once we should allow every new artist to have their first single downloaded as many times as we want, the fans want for free. 'So, well, you don't want to work here very long.' I said, no. I do. He said, 'Well, our publishing division isn't going to like that and neither are the artists.' I said, you know what? Maybe you'll get three out of five.

Maybe you'll get two out of three that love the artist, want to buy the single and do this, but this was after talking to my niece who's like 13 at the time. I said, 'What record store do you go to?' She goes, 'Record store?' Well, there is a Coconuts around there. A Sam Goody's still in that time. She goes, 'I haven't been to a record store in three years.' I said, 'You got 100 CDs in your room.' 'I get them off the computer.'

CY: Because she's buying it from Amazon.com.

CR: "That's what's happening. Amazon.com, Itunes, whatever. I'm telling you, music is going to get really good now. It's gonna get interesting. It's gonna get good and everyone is going to see because I don't know if you got a chance to see what BET tried to do the other night."

CY: It was horrible. It was a train wreck.

CR: "It was a train wreck. It was horrible. It just made no sense. Let me tell you the shame of it all. The best performance of it that night was The O'Jays and they're old guys but they just bring the truth. Everything else is just garbage."

CY: The Beatles, The Supremes, those are acts that are part of music history. And you look at the acts today and you're gonna say to yourself, how many of these acts are we really going to remember in 50 years?

CR: "No one's special right now. The O'Jays were special. The Beatles were special. Why were they special? Because they sat down and worked on being special. The combination of John Lennon and Paul McCartney writing and I don't know if you ever pay attention to the fact that they always were kind of like opposite or contrary of each other. That's what made it crazy. It was brilliant."

CY: And now everybody just wants to go make a record, collect a paycheck, and go home.

CR: "Oh yeah. Eight bars and everyone has the audacity to say that Chris Brown is the next Michael Jackson."

CY: Are you freaking kidding me?

CA: "But they're serious."

CY: I know, but I'm saying are you freaking kidding me? They might be serious, but are you freaking kidding me?

CR: "That's the way I felt about it. I really can get into this whole thing and go crazy about it, but I said to myself for years ok. There's times when I try and be different, but there's other times where I sit there in the studio and say I cannot believe that I'm working with this person and this is what it is. And they all have the nerve to have attitudes. Then you work with a guy like Michael Jackson who when he was late, he was supposed to be in the studio at twelve and he showed up about quarter to one. He felt so terrible for being late he apologized the whole session. The next day he sent a big giant basket because we're talking about movies and that how much I love movies. So he sent me this giant basket."

CY: With all these different movies in it.

CR: "Oh my goodness, it probably had 100 DVDs. It had popcorn, candy, all kinds of books and movie trivia, all kinds of stuff. Again the card said, 'I'm very sorry for not respecting your time.'"

CY: It's the thought that counts. Absolutely!

CR: "Right. I would say Mike, what time do you want to start tomorrow? He said, 'Cory, you're the boss. You tell me what time. If you want me here seven in the morning, I will be here at seven in the morning.' He said, 'You are the boss. Whatever you tell me.'"

CY: What I find interesting about those comments is the way the mainstream media projects it is that he wanted to always do things his way.

CR: "Not at all, not at all. That's what I said. It's like if the world would just stop and just really pay attention."

CA: "Stepping back a minute and talking about what's out there now is I'm horrified to think of the Michael Jackson tributes that's gonna come out. I'm horrified to think of what his family may attempt to put out. I'm horrified to think of what records the labels are gonna attempt to put together."

CR: "The one thing that I'm looking forward to coming out is Michael had been sitting on all of the footage of the Victory tour because he owns all of the footage of the Victory tour. I used to beg him all the time please. As a matter of fact, I do have a DVD unedited. It's the straight footage for you."

CA: "Maybe Cory will play it for you some time."

CY: Or he'll let me borrow it and I'll promise I'll return it later.

CR: "It's amazing. The guy did not lip synch. His voice sounded so amazing. It's ridiculous. He did all the dancing. He did all the stuff like that. It's just that he conditioned himself to be able to do that."

CA: "Only one artist that I've ever seen and it's an entirely different animal that I've ever seen two plus hours on stage and Michael usually went two and a half. At least that one concert we watched was close to two and a half in Brazil, the only one that's close to that and pulled it off single handedly and did all the work, Bruce Springsteen. He never stopped. He never leaves the stage. When Michael was leaving the stage it was for one minute to change his clothes and it was a real one minute. It wasn't the ten minutes. It was the 12 beauty police in there. He was back on. By the way, has anybody bothered speaking of dancers' feet? Has anybody bothered to look how this kid danced? Who idolized Michael Jackson? Fred Astaire. I mean come on."

CR: "It's so many stories. It's so many things. Michael, he loved to sit and tell stories. He loved to talk...talk...talk about everything. Every time he came to like a city or something I remember he wanted to go to the bookstore. They closed the bookstore down. He'd go to get books. He'd read. He'd educate me on Africa and how beautiful Africa is. He said, 'You know, people don't want you to know how beautiful Africa is because they're over there robbing it of all its riches.' But he said, 'It's the most beautiful place I've ever been in my life.' He brought me pictures. It's just amazing. Remember Chris, David Blaine buried himself alive?"

CA: "Yeah. Sure. He used to hang out on our floor at Sony. You don't remember, but he used to hang out up there around the time your friend 50 Cent was running getting us coffee."

CY: This is a very random story, but continue.

CR: "So David Blaine buried himself alive in the city over by the Trump building."

CY: Trump National Towers.

CR: "Right. When I told Michael that was going on, he was like, 'You gotta be kidding?' I said, I'm telling you. He didn't even know who David Blaine was. I started like sending for like video footage and everything because we didn't have YouTube then. I started sending for footage to explain to him who David Blaine was. He was so fascinated. We got in a van that night and we went to see David Blaine late at night. We went over there.

We jumped out the van and he like a kinda partial disguise and no one really knew it was him. He jumped out and walked right over there and we sat there and he was fascinated by it. It was funny. Then we were laughing because sometimes he said, 'You know what? Half the time someone is going to think it's an impersonator and not me anyway. Sometimes I can just jump out.'

CY: You seem to have had a lot of personal conversations with him, but did you ever talk with about the plastic surgery?

CR: "Yup."

CY: And what did he tell you?

CR: "He said, 'What's the difference in me and Sylvester Stallone and anybody else in Hollywood?' He said, 'So what?' He said, 'My skin disease, I don't want to be white.' He said, 'That's not what I'm trying to do.' He said, 'But I couldn't help my skin disease.' He said, 'I did try a surgery to even it all out and do things like that that did not turn out the way I wanted it to turn out, but that's not the reason I turned into a light skinned black man.' As far as my nose he said, 'I hated my nose just like Sylvester Stallone hated his.'"

CA: "Look what he said his father told him."

CR: "Yeah. He said, 'I hated my chin. I hated my nose.' He said, 'And so what?' He said, 'Why is it just me?' He said, 'Why is it just me?' He said, 'I can show you 20 people in Hollywood that's got nose jobs, lip jobs, botox, all kinds of stuff.'"

CY: Is there anything else you'd like to share?

CA: "The only thing I want to share, my uncle used to be real close friends with Bill Cosby. In the late 60s he handed me one of the first records I ever had. I think the first record I ever had was The Monkeys. He handed me a Michael Jackson Bill Cosby record that they did. I still have it. It's kind of like a yellow submarine with a beautiful booklet inside. One of the most cherished possessions I have and I can't wait to see it on Saturday.

On my thoughts with Michael Jackson regarding anything else, I just hope that the landslide is going to come out in the next couple of weeks. I hope that some people start discussing all the good that he did because if you weigh the good against the bad, he's the most famous person in the world. It's been on TV 24/7 for six days. That's just my hope. God bless him and let him rest in peace and we'll all see him someday later in our life and I'm sure he'll be singing and dancing his ass off."

CR: "As far as I'm concerned, actually Sunday I went to church and I spoke to my pastor at my church cause I wanted to be clear on something. I wanted to make sure that I'm not going to get attacked or get any trouble by expressing myself the way I've been expressing myself. I said, not to compare anyone to Christ because there is no comparison to Christ. If you just look at a second this world that we live in within God's world which is called the entertainment world."

CY: Yeah. Fair enough.

CR: "Michael, to me, I can only tell you to me and I'm sure I can get you dozens and dozens and dozens and hundreds of thousands of people who feel the same. Michael Jackson was like a Christ like figure for us. To know that this man over the last 15 years has been torn down, crucified, slandered, badmouthed, everyone would rather talk about something negative like he wanted to buy the elephant man's bones. So what? You know what? I would buy them too."

CA: "Me too."

CR: "I think it's cool. I would do it too. But because it was him, they always had some negative instead of positive. My heart is completely broken. My inspiration, the light of inspiration that I once had from a kid is completely dim at this point for me. I don't know because I was not one of the disciples or whatever that followed behind Christ and had to look at him being crucified and hung from a cross.

But I'm sure their hearts were just as broken as well and my heart is broken. Moving forward with this business, all I can say is that I'm happy that there is a time we live in where we can kinda do things independently and we don't have to deal with the hypocrites as much, but we are surrounded by hypocrites in this business. It's just a tragedy. I always wondered what it would be like if something God forbid happened to Michael. I don't think I ever really wanted to feel it. I just always kind of wondered like my goodness, what would happen? Well, here we are. And so far everything that's happened is pretty much exactly what I thought what was going to happen."

CA: "Cory and I speak countless times every day. We have basically for the last 20 years."

CY: I can tell.

CA: "When this happened as I was emailing Cory and at one moment I got his wife on the phone but that was it. I didn't hear from Cory for three days. Emails, phone calls, no answer. I knew that he was mourning and I was distraught about this."

CR: "Because I cried for three days."

CA: "He called me up Monday morning and I think it's a very appropriate quote here, 'Ok, it's Monday. We gotta go back to work because Michael would've gone back to work.'"

CR: "And that's the truth."

CA: "Very poignant to me."

CR: "Michael would've gone back to work. Like I said, he took his bumps, he took his bruises. He was one of the toughest men I ever met, and that's the truth. He was a rugged tough guy. There was nothing timid about Michael Jackson."

CY: You've told me a different story that the mainstream media is totally not focused on. What you're saying to me is the industry is not totally focusing on really how important this guy was as a whole?

CR: "Nope."

CA: "Nope. Not even close."

CR: "They're not even scratching the surface."

CY: As you know in this 24 hour news cycle, it's about what I put out, how quickly do I put it out and who's listening.

CR: "I think they go off the fact like everything else in the world. This news, it's the very reason National Enquirer exists."

CY: Still exists. I'm not sure if either of you heard, but Vibe Magazine for example folded today. With the tabloid outlets online, I would not be surprised if the National Enquirer would join that list. I don't know if you guys know this, but they've been having financial issues in the last six months also. Regardless, it's all going online.

CR: "Well, I believe that anyway and that's what I said. You know what? It gives the freedom to people like yourself to be able do something right."

CY: Yeah. Sure, on the record.

CR: "Instead of trying to follow suit to say the Enquirer, Star Magazine, they position them right like at that cash register when you go in and it says some crazy shit on the title on the cover. Michael Jackson sleeps in the hyperbaric chamber."

CA: "No. It's Obama's gay last week."

CR: "That's what I'm saying, enough of that. I think they're always going to opt for the lowest form instead of saying let's do a head count and see how many children Michael Jackson changed their life or did anything. Here's a last fact that no one ever touched on. Both the boys that allegedly accused Michael were both kids that were involved in or their parents were in prior scams or something like that."

CY: I remember the recent one, she tried to get her kids to fall over like in JCPenney and sue for harmful injury or

something like that.

CR: "Yeah and then they tried to do something with George Lopez. They tried to say that he stole their money out of the comedy store when they were at the comedy stores. He said they robbed one of their wallets and stole from them." CY: Looking back on that, it was mentioned for 10 seconds and that was mentioned once.

CR: "Because it's not important to the public."

CY: Cause it's not somebody important to the public because they're not somebody prominent who anyone's going to care about. Who is the person again?

CA: "The media started this media frenzy, it started with OJ Simpson. It sagged into Bill Clinton. They basically beat the heck out of Bill Clinton. They went after George Bush who I did not like who I didn't support, but they did a really good job on him. Now they'll go after Michael Jackson and don't kid yourself, in a year or two they're going to go after my president also."

CR: "Well, they went after Michael Jordan with the gambling."

CY: He had gambling and infidelity and that's nothing surprising, honestly anyways for the world of sports and entertainment. That's their business.

CR: "They do stupid things. Kobe Bryant really fuck** up. He really fuck** up. You understand? But it destroyed him. Right away they ushered in, oh here comes king Lebron James."