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Cirque du Soleil Makes Michael Jackson "Immortal"

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If you're Cirque du Soleil and going to pay tribute to Michael Jackson, you're going to do it in a big, Bad way. The show visits Los Angeles this weekend.



Blame it on the boogie, chalk it up to Jackson dying too soon, or Cirque du Soleil's wild interpretation of all things — whatever the case, THE IMMORTAL World Tour came together Tuesday night at the Honda Center as the entertainment spectacle hit Orange County.

The almost sold-out show got a standing ovation from the 9,000 people in attendance. One look around and you could almost see fans' mental flashbacks of their Michael memories: roller skating to "Billie Jean" with the disco ball spinning, dancing at a concert, practicing the moonwalk and so on. That nostalgia and missing of MJ made the show what it was: almost therapeutic perhaps, as showgoers celebrated the only way they knew how.

With two hours of all the best of MJ – no hint of Wacko Jacko, Dr. Conrad Murray mess or any other heavy – it was pure Michael magic. And, really, who better to pay tribute than Cirque du Soleil, whose performers' bodies move in inexplicable ways. It was a pretty brilliant

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The show opened with a poetic salute to the King with a sequined solo dancer who moved in a tick-tock rock fashion to "Remember the Time." Then, fire exploded on stage and a cinematic montage of Michael filled the massive backdrop LED screen, which rocked throughout the show with MJ hits and funky imagery.

The crowd cheered as The Jackson 5 and their Afros flashed on screen with "ABC." Random "We love you, Michael!" screams came from the audience. And Cirque's wild ways were unleashed.

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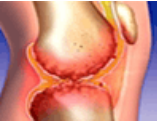
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The songs weren't reenactments of Michael's videos; Cirque had their own interpretation of elements. But there were definite nods to Michael's masterfulness. And, make no mistake, the music stole the show—as it certainly was intended. This was more rock concert than Cirque acrobatics. "Michael is our narrator, leading us on a journey through his lyrics, his poetry, his visuals, his moves and, of course, how he dressed," explained Director Jamie King. The show featured more than 60 dancers, musicians, acrobats and clever animatronic puppetry and props.

Many of MJ's top hits played, 32 to be exact. Examples were "Dancing Machine" that rocked as overhead artists flew by a wire—twisting, spinning, jumping—with all their stunts synced to time with the beat. A fantastically oversized "Beat It" sequin glove that moonwalked across the stage sent the audience going crazy. And a pair of surreal giant penny loafers with white socks appeared and danced as "Bad" blasted. "Scream" was something to see; acrobatics flung themselves in the air, bellyflopping onto the stage as Ninja-style aerial dancers suspended above to the "stop pressurin' me" lyrics, as flashes of Michael, Janet and the live dancers raged together.

An audience favorite was the group of human Lite-Brite-like dancers who dangled over the stage to "Human Nature." The costumes were over the top, as one might expect, with funky elephant-romping costumes (inspired by Baba and Gypsy given to Michael by Elizabeth Taylor) during "Ben." Gangster to ghoulish, the outfits, over 252 in total, were quite imaginative. And sets like Neverland were eye-catching.



All the songs were visually very different, which made for much variety in the show. Acts ranged from the bad-girl rock violinist to the more lyrical high-wire duo who performed to "I Just Can't Stop Loving

You.”

The opening solo sequin dancer really rocked the show with his classic Michael moves. He appeared throughout the two hours and wrapped the night dancing to “Man in the Mirror,” celebrating the legacy of an immortal. The dancer MJ-tipped his fedora, put on a single glove and raised it to the sky. The lights came up, and all were on their feet, clapping, cheering.

The show gave the people a taste of what might have been on the tour that would never be.

You can catch the IMMORTAL Tour in L.A. Friday through Sunday. Tickets are \$50 to \$250 each. From there, the show continues to tour through 2012 to almost 40 cities.

Michael Jackson: the IMMORTAL World Tour || Cirque du Soleil

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Debbie Lavdas is a Southern California freelance writer, who remembers when video killed the radio star and “Thriller” debuted on MTV. She may have also secretly tried to moonwalk. You can keep up with her and her writings at DebbieintheOC.com.

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