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Scene

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mainline

The Jackson 1

Pop-funk-dance queen Janet Jackson
opens up an already promising Bowl season





Courtesy photo

IN CONCERT

JANET JACKSON

When: 7 p.m. Saturday and Sunday**Where:** Santa Barbara Bowl, 1112 Milpas St.**Cost:** \$47 to \$137**Information:** 962-7411, sbbowl.com

Number Ones for Bowl Show Number One

The famed Janet Jackson arrives at Santa Barbara Bowl for a two-night stand this weekend, doubling as a kick-off to the new concert season at the Bowl

BY JOSEF WOODARD

NEWS-PRESS CORRESPONDENT

In and of itself, this weekend's two-night stand from the bonafide and rightfully lauded superstar Janet Jackson, her Santa Barbara debut, is cause enough for an extra-special pleasure principle. To that piece of significance we can add a localized, venue-centric attribute, as the show marks the season-opener in what looks to be the best concert season at the Santa Barbara Bowl in years. This venue and city is one of only 31 tour stops for Jackson, chosen by popular vote among her fans.

For her current tour, timed with the logically named best-of album "Number Ones," Jackson is scaling down and keeping it simple, at least by her often elaborate production standards. Expect plenty of taut dance moves, a set list chock full of hooks we know and love, and a relatively up-close and personal encounter with one of the world's greatest pop-funk-dance queens.

Born in Gary, Indiana in 1966, this youngest sibling of the famed Jackson brood has danced in and out of the public spotlight for nearly 30 years now, going back to her 1982 debut album and leaping into a much higher plane of fame with 1986's classic "Control." That album, on the heels of Michael Jackson's record-breaking feats in his solo career, embodied the full-scale arrival of another quiet-yet-commanding Jackson in the musical world. It was also underscored by the idea of her wresting "control" in her life and music, in a family notorious for stage parental influence and guidance.

As a vocalist, she keeps things clean, cool and tight, gaining energy through her economical means — not unlike her late brother Michael — rather than busting out with R&B vocal gymnastics. It's that understated touch that energizes hits such as "Control," "What Have You Done for Me Lately" and "Nasty."

Of course, this Jackson also made the term "wardrobe malfunction" a popular code word for publicly flashed flesh, after a breast-revealing mishap in her halftime routine with Justin Timberlake at the 2004 Super Bowl. But, irrelevant trivia aside, Jackson is a considerable cul-

tural force and deemed one of the most powerful women in the popular arts. She also tends to retire from the spotlight while also naturally seizing it.

Aside from her musical life, she continues acting — most recently in the film "For Colored Girls" — and she recently published an autobiography, titled "True You." Before heading out on her "Number Ones, Up Close" tour already in progress, Jackson agreed to a select number of interviews, and the gracious interviewee had a few things to say about her life in and beyond the spotlight.

You haven't performed in Santa Barbara before, have you? And how did you come to choose the Bowl as one of the select locales for this tour?

No, I have not but I am very excited to get to Santa Barbara and perform for all my fans there. I was in Europe last year and there were fans camped outside my hotel. Every time that I would go out, they would ask me when I was going to be performing in their city. I would be asked this question wherever I went. That is what gave me the idea to involve the fans in selecting the cities that I will go to.



Sandra Rose Photo

Janet Jackson made an appearance at Paris Fashion Week 2011 this past week.

It has been a lot of fun to see where everyone wants me to go. I am getting to see many cities around the world that I have not gone to before.

This tour is an intriguing concept, something different from the usual. Can you tell me what inspired the tour concept, and how you view it differently from a typical tour/show?

I was in New York for a private date at Radio City Music Hall. I was having a great time. I could see everyone's face and we were all having such a great time. That was what inspired me to pick venues that will allow me to be up close and personal with the fans. This is also the first time that I will be singing songs that are only from my number ones.

You are venturing into film more, and have put yourself and your story into the public sphere with your book "True You." Do you see these as alternative forms of self-expression, to move beyond what music enables you to do? Will music always be at the heart of your creative persona?

People don't often remember that I actually started my career with acting. I was Penny on (TV's) "Good Times." Acting has always been my first passion and what I always thought I would do with my life... that or being a horse jockey. Then my father told me that I should sing and I appreciate the success that my music has had.

I love creating — a role, a book, a new CD or a concert tour. It is all fun for me and a creative expression. I have never been great at multitasking but I am working on that now. I want to do it all.

We in Santa Barbara feel a special connection to your brother Michael, in that he lived in Santa Barbara County for years. Some of us also feel a kind of shame and anger for the nasty circumstances which drove him away from here. Having seen how strong he was in the documentary "This is It," it seemed that he really was poised for a next chapter. Do you have a sense of his importance to the world and to culture, now that a little time has gone by since his passing?

Michael is iconic. He has made an amazing, powerful, lasting impact on the world. People will remember that and I am happy about that, but to me, he was my brother. There is not a day that goes by that I don't think of him. Not a single day.

In your time in music so far, you have really imagined to work across supposed boundaries of racial, social and economic nature. Your fans cut across all areas of life and musical tastes and in an era which can be so format-driven. Does that give you a particular kind of satisfaction?

Yes it does. I never think of barriers, racial, economic, sexual, or any other kind. I hope that my music can be enjoyed by anyone. It is always inspired by what I am going through in my life and emotions are not tied to those types of boundaries. I hope that people can relate to it.

You were very moved and even influenced by Lena Horne, who passed away last year. Do you see her as being as much an influence and guiding light as more modern legends?

I think that without what people like Lena Horne, Dorothy Dandridge and people like them have done, I would not be able to do what I do today. I hope that I am able to make a difference for future generations as well. I am also very inspired by Elizabeth Taylor, Audrey Hepburn and many others. All of these women not only achieved excellence in their professions but they went on to make a positive impact in the world. That is what I am inspired by.

Somehow, you have managed to be very much in the glaring public eye, but also somewhat detached, preserving your dignity in the midst of it all. Is it always important for you to keep that balance?

Yes, it is. I love meeting my fans and getting to know them, but I am a very private person. I know that media is part of the job, but it's not my favorite part. I really haven't known anything different though. It has always been a part of my life.



Charles Sykes Photos

Janet Jackson attends a signing for her book "True You: A Journey to Finding and Loving Yourself," last week in New York City.