

SOMETHING ELSE / JOEL SELVIN

Sales Are Hot for Jackson's 'Dangerous'

With Michael Jackson, the question apparently is not quality but quantity.

Nobody can discuss the latest album by the world's No. 1 pop music superstar without getting right to the point: How many copies will it sell? After moving 25 million copies of his previous album, "Bad," and a world-record 39 million copies of the 1982 album, "Thriller," will his new album, "Dangerous," be seen as a success if it sells a paltry 10 million?

"It's flying," said Tower Records store manager Bob Olsen. "I think as long as you don't play the 'We Are the World' rip-off, it's OK and it'll do great. It's right up there with U2."

Olsen, a retail realist, knows that if he sells 500 copies of "Dangerous" this week, he'll be doing great. Multiply that figure by the number of record stores in the country and it's a helluva week, even for someone measured by Michael Jackson standards.

As for the quality of the 77-minute "Dangerous," it's OK.

Jackson knows enough to dump producer Quincy Jones, old hat by now, in favor of Teddy Riley, who invented New Jack Swing with his own group, Guy. On the cuts with Riley, Jackson takes advantage of a fresh, spare sound, grafting his own pop sensibilities on top of Riley's modernist instincts — a cunning move to keep abreast of changing times. After all, the earth has cooled somewhat since the release of "Bad" four years ago.



Michael Jackson hired Teddy Riley to produce 'Dangerous'

Remember, Jackson is a menial mentality with considerable musical talent, all-too-often squandered on questionable taste and misguided philosophical concerns. His artistic reputation was founded on two tracks off "Thriller" — "Beat It" and "Billie Jean" — and the attendant videos, one of which was directed by a man best known by his commercials for McDonald's. That and a few backward dance steps on a televised Motown trib-

ute accounted for him turning from a former child singing star with one modest hit solo album as an adult into a phenomenon.

His weird, reclusive behavior and penchant for the bizarre publicity touch — the hyperbaric chamber, the remains of the Elephant Man — made him perfect fodder for avaricious media which evaluated not one whit his work as a musician. Actually, Jackson is more entertainer than musician. He is a craftsman more than an artist and his work is considerably less interesting than many people far less well known. Like, for instance, Teddy Riley.

Highwaymen Shows

The Highwaymen meet the Heroes tonight, when Johnny Cash, Willie Nelson, Waylon Jennings and Kris Kristofferson attend a special reception for 100 heroes of the Oakland fire — and their families — before two special concerts tonight at Oakland's Paramount Theater (tickets still available). Outside the fund-raiser for BASS/Ticketmaster's program to disburse tickets to the needy, ropers and cowboys in carriages will cavort, while a string quartet in the lobby will play Vivaldi. Vivaldi? Yup.

Cohen Lovers

In a salute to possibly the most underappreciated songwriter in the business, a bunch of modern rockers teamed for "I'm Your Fan; The Songs of Leonard Cohen," released this week by Atlantic. In addition to names from the underground recognizable only by college radio fans, John Cale takes a crack at "Hallelujah," Lloyd Cole tackles "Chelsea Hotel," the Pixies try "I Can't Forget" and R.E.M. leads off the tribute with a marvelously whimsical "First We Take Manhattan." Wacky record, but it won't sell 500 copies this week at Tower.

Tubes at Benefit

In a rare local appearance, The Tubes top a benefit bill on December 11 at the I-Beam, along with Pieces of Lisa, Soma Holiday and Midnight Voices. The Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador will produce this benefit to raise funds for a caravan scheduled to leave next February, transporting educational material, machine shop equipment and computers to the war-torn Central American country.

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