

At that moment, Germany seemed the place to be.

The final piece of news I received from home was that Michael Jackson's arrival was colossal. BBC Radio 1, the national pop station, was branding itself the 'Action Jackson Station' or possibly the 'Jackson Action Station'! Hysteria reached Beatles proportions, with the network even covering the arrival of his plane into the country.

It was an aircraft. It landed on the runway. It happens every day. You are so far back that there is no way that you can see anything, let alone Jackson. You can hear screams – people turning up probably not even on the *off* chance that they might catch a glimpse. Pupils who should have been at school, with or without their parents who were meant to be at work.

The biggest popstars can have this effect. For all those who turned up and walked away with their only memory being commotion, crucially millions more would see it beamed around the world on TV news images. There was actually nothing to see. Just like a honeymooning royal couple in Gibraltar.

A man was getting off a plane.

Except, the bar was high.

The *Thriller* album had changed everything. As a piece of production and music, there was nothing like it at the time and a complete personality makeover from all those songs in the previous era when the family comprised The Jacksons. The video was clearly unforgettable and so specifically designed for the MTV generation, directed by the film director John Landis, who was acutely aware that there was now a platform that would air such content in full and on multiple occasions. Then there was the moonwalk, performed in the hit *Billie Jean*. Jackson was definitely not the first to adopt that sliding dance, but he certainly became the person to own it. Across the world, you weren't normal if you didn't attempt to copy or parody it.

The tour would comprise 123 dates. These were his first solo concerts. It was that massive before it had even started that Pepsi threw money at it to sponsor it. In Japan alone, where the whole thing began, 300 journalists and photographers greeted him at Tokyo International Airport. By the time he arrived in Europe, he had already been on the road on and off for eight months. In Vienna alone, 130 women fainted at the gig!

Then it was on to Germany. When major acts tour, they don't always treat the European venues with the same emphasis as the UK or the USA. You might get one or two gigs in the capital before they pack up and move on again. This was different and should help you understand the scale of it.

Jackson was ripping up Germany.

He began with one night in West Berlin at the Platz der Republik opposite the Reichstag. He then hopped into France for two gigs before Hamburg, Cologne, Munich and Hockenheim, from where he headed to London for five shows at Wembley Stadium. Eventually coming back to Germany for two more nights. For him to have performed seven concerts in Germany was unprecedented, and yet tickets were still like gold dust.

Of course, one of the perks of my job was that we never had to pay to see anybody live. Record companies just handed them on a plate to radio stations. It had always been that way, as gratitude for supporting the act, and of course so that you would go on the air the next day and tell everybody how amazing it was. And importantly, *continue* to champion the King of Pop. In other words, it was a bribe!

Jane and I were not complaining and nor was Germany. Expectation was fever pitch. He had never toured the *Thriller* album which was that game-changer in the music industry and now he was back with a new Quincy Jones-produced album which promised to deliver similar with hit singles *I Just Can't Stop Loving You*, *Dirty Diana* (which I believe he didn't play at Wembley in front of Charles and Di) *Man In The Mirror* and *The Way You Make Me Feel*.

In various stages nine singles – which is unprecedented – were released from the album, leaving little else left! He would play to over 4 million fans and then there was still the *Moonwalker* film to follow. Plus, that *Thriller* album was close to five years old – and some people still hadn't heard it! Then others bought it on vinyl, cassette for their Walkman, and then compact disc.

That ability to create anticipation alongside the quality of the act was second to none. When he rocked up at the RheinEnergieSTADION on 3 July, Jackson was the hottest ticket on the planet. Sometimes you only realise these moments after, but it was clear that this was off the scale. At the top of his game, with nobody catching him up.

Michael Jackson wasn't just good.

He was *Bad*.