

# Long live the King of Pop

Michael Jackson's passing makes us remember what made him a legend

By Malou Liwanag-Aguilar / AJPress

**T**HE whole world was shocked when it was announced that Michael Jackson, the King of Pop, died of a cardiac arrest in Los Angeles last June 25. Just as we were reeling from the death of famed *Charlie's Angels* Farrah Fawcett, hearing Jackson's death sent text messages and twitters flying trying to confirm whether there was any truth to it.

But there it was on the news. The man who changed the way we see music videos, who won the most Grammys and did the "moonwalk" has left this earth.

Being a teen of the eighties, flashbacks came pouring in—I was 12 years old when *Thriller* came out, and it became the world's largest selling album of all time. When it was released, we immediately begged our Dad to buy us the album, and spent most of our free time playing the record while trying to copy the dance moves in the video.

*Thriller* produced seven hit singles, breaking yet again more records, and went on to sell over

50 million copies worldwide. Keen to use music video or short films to promote his singles from the album, Jackson worked with the best directors and producers, using the latest technology and special effects for the hit song, *Billie Jean*.

*Thriller*, however, was almost a short film, using the latest make-up, artists and technology combined with fantastic dancing and choreography. The 14-minute video had a beginning, middle and an ending and was so successful that its accompanying video, *The Making of Michael Jackson's Thriller* became the world's largest home video combined with soaring album sales.



In 1983, Jackson performed his legendary moonwalk for the first time on the Motown 25 Years anniversary show and this has undoubtedly marked his place as a pop superstar. In 1984, he won a record breaking eight Grammy awards in one night. *Thriller*, became album of the year, in spite of tough competition from other famous artists and albums like *Synchronicity* by The Police, Billy Joel's *An Innocent Man* and *Let's Dance* by David Bowie.

The King of Pop's music and style has influenced and inspired a lot of artists here and abroad. In the Philippines, Mr. Pure Energy, Gary V. is a self-confessed Michael Jackson fan, as well as singer Billy Crawford, who during his *That's Entertainment* years, had mostly performed to his idol's songs. His one and only concert in Manila in December 1996 drew an estimated 50,000 people and further proved his popularity with the Filipinos.

However, with fame, came controversies and scandals—and Jackson, no matter how popular he is with his fans was not spared. Allegations of child molestations, his facial surgeries that altered his looks dramatically and his reclusive, bizaare lifestyle gave people a different perception of the pop star's image, prompting them to call him 'Wacko Jacko.'

Still, for all his foibles in recent years, Jackson was a music revolutionary who transcended racial boundaries and pioneered the use of music video clips. Also despite his woes his hardcore fans had stuck by him and believed he was capable of a successful comeback, which was planned through a series of sold out concerts in London's O2 Arena.

Instinctively, people react to his music straight away. He is probably in pretty much every record collection, no matter what age or era. And growing



up in the second half of the 20th century, his songs had been the core music. It is no surprise therefore, that even now that he's gone, the King of Pop—and his music—will live on. ■



## Filipino-American artists salute Ryan Cayabyab on August 8

The Music of Life is part of the Ford Amphitheatre's Summer Season



both English and Filipino under the stars. Cayabyab himself will be present as honorary guest to witness that his work not only brings pride to Filipinos, but also brings Fil-Am artists in touch with their heritage.

*The Music of Life* demonstrates the breadth of Cayabyab's work while illustrating Philippine contemporary life. Songs are taken in their original context and from the sheer volume and variety of his catalog a storyline is derived. The dramatization and English narration is meant to aid a non-Filipino viewer as well as veer away from the typical Filipino concert style. The songs' situations are enacted by singers Lara Avengoza, Erwin Andaya and Edsel Godwin Sotiangco, featuring Joaquin Francisco, pop vocal trio Three of a Kind, and guest artist Jasmine Trias.

This musical revue is meant to introduce the uninitiated to Cayabyab's work, while drawing those familiar with his music. Conversely, fans of Cayabyab's hit songs may be unaware of this man's contribution to the Philippine choral repertoire. A diverse sampling shall be performed by the Philippine Chamber Singers-LA and the Harana Men's Chorus. Rounding out the roster of talents is dance troupe Kultura Philippine Folk Arts and flutist Robert Shroder. The evening's six-

piece band shall also demonstrate the Filipino musician's versatility as they accompany the varied genres of the repertoire. Creative direction is by members of Three of a Kind: Gelo Francisco for stage, Ed Nepomuceno for music and script by Annie Nepomuceno. Media sponsors are The Filipino Channel, *Asian Journal* and LA18.

The universal appeal of Cayabyab's music has made him the only Asian winner of the Onassis International Cultural Competition, a guest artist at New York's Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall and a member of the judges panel in the Philippine version of the *Idol* franchise. He has reached the Fil-Am community through his TFC shows *World Musikahan* and *Pinoy Dream Academy*. Reruns of *Ryan Ryan Musikahan* has proven he is at home with any music genre, featuring guests from rock stars to opera divas. His 30-year career has produced a vast catalog of songs, hit albums, musicals, ballets, masses, and more: a feat accomplished by few.

Cayabyab has also made recordings ranging from three one-man acapella albums he performed himself to CDs with philharmonic orchestras that resulted in seven award-winning best sellers. Cayabyab has published choral works and songbooks that contain

excerpts from his stage musicals and his best-loved hits.

*Music of Life* is an opportunity to hear Fil-Ams perform music from the land of their heritage. Proceeds will benefit the Learn Filipino Program of Bahay Kubo Center for Philippine Culture and Arts, a non-profit 501(c)3 organization based in the San Fernando Valley. For more information visit [www.bahay-kubo.org](http://www.bahay-kubo.org). This event is also sponsored by The Filipino Channel (TFC), *Asian Journal* and LA18.

For tickets, log on to [www.fordtheatres.org](http://www.fordtheatres.org) or call the Ford Box Office at 323 461-3673. Purchase now to take advantage of the Early Buyer Incentive price of \$45 before August 1. Full price tickets are \$50, and \$12 for children. The show is at 8pm.

The Ford Amphitheatre is located at 2580 Cahuenga Blvd. East, Hollywood, CA 90068, just off the 101 Hollywood Freeway across from the Hollywood Bowl and south of Universal Studios.

Artists appear courtesy of Kultura Philippines, Philippine Patrons of the Arts, Music Management International and The Filipino American Symphony Orchestra.

**More on The Ford Amphitheatre**  
The Ford Amphitheatre is located at 2580 Cahuenga Blvd. East,

Hollywood, CA 90068, just off the 101 Hollywood Freeway across from the Hollywood Blvd. and south of Universal Studios.

The grounds open two hours before showtime for picnicking. The Ford offers a number of dining options: a variety of food and beverages is available on site and box dinners for evening events may be ordered in advance. Patrons are welcome to bring their own food and drink. The Ford is disabled accessible. Portable wireless listening devices are available upon request.

On-site, stacked parking costs \$5 per vehicle. For evening shows only, FREE non-stacked parking serviced by a FREE shuttle to the Ford, for evening amphitheatre performances only, is available at the Universal City Metro Station lot at Lankershim Blvd. and Campo de Cahuenga. The shuttle, which cycles every 15-20 minutes, stops in the "kiss and ride" area.

This event is part of the Ford Amphitheatre 2009 Season, a multi-disciplinary arts series produced by the Los Angeles County Arts Commission in cooperation with Los Angeles County based arts organizations. For a complete season schedule, directions and parking information, log on to [www.FordTheatres.org](http://www.FordTheatres.org). ■

## 'Fernando Zobel in the 1950s' at Ayala Museum

AYALA Museum presents *Fernando Zobel in the 1950s: The Formative Years* on view until Jan. 17, 2010 at the Third Floor Galleries.

The 1950s or the mid-twentieth century was a time of discovery for Fernando Zobel. After completing his studies at Harvard University in 1949, the start of his career as an artist was a significant turning point in his life. It was a heady period when he juggled different worlds: the responsibilities of the family business, an intellectual and stimulating academic life at Harvard University, the Rhode Island School of Design and at the Ateneo de Manila University, where he taught art

history; and the beginnings of his creative work in the company of artists, from the select group of friends in Boston and Providence and in Manila at the start of modernism in Philippine art. He would be involved in the growth of the Art Association of the Philippines and the Philippine Art Gallery, two institutions that nurtured modern artists in the postwar years. Within the decade, he would also begin research and study in Philippine colonial imagery and architecture, archaeology and



In the 1950s, a significant figure, along with Arturo Luz and Lee Aguinondo, in the development of non-objective art in the Philippines. Towards the end of the decade, he had



pre-colonial ceramics, Chinese calligraphy, and Japanese art. he would become

attained pure abstraction in the Saeta and Serie Negra paintings.

The exhibition focuses on Zobel's semi-figurative works of the formative years that eventually metamorphose into non-objectivism. Zobel sought to distinguish and understand Filipino expression or identity through his research in history and culture, as well as in his experimentations and explorations on canvas and paper. Colonial santos, a main research area for Zobel, will be exhibited along with his paintings. The juxtaposition will form a visual study of the creative, intellectual, and expressive toil and quest of one of the influential figures in Philippine art in the 20th century.

For inquiries, call 757-7117 to 21 local non-visit [www.ayalamuseum.org](http://www.ayalamuseum.org). ■