



My best friend

Miko Brando tells the Sun of being with the King of Pop the night before he died



Marie-Joelle
Parent
IN LOS ANGELES

LOS ANGELES — He was with Michael Jackson the night before his death and is godfather to his children.

For Miko Brando, son of the actor Marlon Brando, the pop superstar's passing also means the loss of his best friend for the past 27 years.

Only last Wednesday, the two men parted ways at midnight after a long day of rehearsing at the Staples Center.

"Hey, Miko!" Jackson called to Brando before leaving for his house in Bel-Air.

"He did his full routine with his dancers," Brando remembered. "At age 50, he hadn't lost a move."

That even includes his world-famous moonwalk.

"He could still do it perfectly," 48-year-old Brando said in Hollywood.

"He was smiling, he looked good. I saw him eat, drink some orange juice and some tea. Obviously, I couldn't see what was going on in his heart."

There's no doubt Brando has been hit hard by the news of Jackson's death.

"I hope it's Michael," he said when his phone rang during the interview.

Brando lives at the end of the street where Jackson died.

"I was at home and my phone started ringing non-stop. I turned on the TV and my world collapsed."

He doesn't know what killed the music legend. He said he never saw Jackson take any



MARIE-JOELLE PARENT/SUN MEDIA

Miko Brando, son of the late Marlon Brando, is seen here with his daughter Prudence, also Michael Jackson's goddaughter.

medication. The entertainer did, however, suffer from the Alpha 1 lung disorder, although Brando said that's not why Jackson was often seen wearing a mask in public.

"He felt comfortable like that," he said after a long pause. "For him it was like wearing a hat or a scarf, it was his thing."

As for the funeral arrangements, Brando said the Jackson family is talking about having a big ceremony at the Coliseum, Los Angeles' 90,000-seat football stadium.

Brando first met Jackson in 1982 when he was 22 and the pop star was 24 years old.

"Quincy Jones introduced us at the Del Coronado hotel

in San Diego," he explained. "We got along right away and he asked me for my number and we started talking every day. In 1984, when he left on the Victory Tour, he asked me to follow along."

Brando became Jackson's right-hand man, his assistant, his confidante, his bodyguard and his chauffeur.

Was he worried recently about certain people in the entourage?

"No. I heard about that Dr. (Conrad) Murray, but I never saw him. He was never at the rehearsals at the Staples Center. He was new in the Jackson circle and, God knows, I've seen doctors come and go," he said.

With photos surfacing recently of Jackson in a wheelchair, there were doubts that the 50-year-old star could deliver the 50 concert dates planned for this summer. There was also talk that he weighed a mere 112 pounds and had gone bald.

"He weighed a bit more than that, but Michael was always thin and he still had his hair," Brando said. "The wheelchair is from a few months ago. The shows were stretched out over six months, he was going to do it. Of course it was crazy because of the tight schedule. We were going to leave for London this Friday."

Jackson died four years after his trial on charges of

molesting a minor, an ordeal he apparently never recovered from.

"Yes, he thought about it, but it didn't stop him from eating or sleeping," his friend explained. "He lived the best he could."

Brando is also godfather to Jackson's three children and saw them in the past couple of days. "They play with their dogs in the yard of the family home. They don't realize what's going on. They aren't showing any emotions yet."

Miko's own daughter, Prudence, was Jackson's goddaughter. "He never forgot my birthday," the 13-year-old remembered. "I played a lot with his kids at Neverland and

at his house. He just gave me an iPod, a laptop and a scooter at the same time. He told me, 'I'm just happy to see you!' Every Christmas he would bombard us with presents. He always said, 'I love you.'"

Brando was happy to see Jackson's mother, Katherine, get temporary custody of the children. "It's their place," he said. "They know the house; it's where their dad spent his teen years."

Brando stayed silent on the subject of the father, Joe Jackson, whose bizarre behaviour in the media raised more than a few eyebrows in recent days. On two different occasions, he used the press frenzy to promote his new record label, an inappropriate plug if ever there was one.

"There will be many battles and it's going to go on for years," Brando said. "That's all I can say."

Brando's own father, Marlon, who died in 2004, was a good friend of Jackson's despite the fact that they had nothing in common.

"He replaced my father when he died. Michael took care of him right to the end. He even had a golf cart with oxygen tanks built so they could both ride in the Neverland gardens."

For his fans, Michael was an icon.

To his critics, he was a freak.

And for Miko?
"He was perfect," he said. "He was someone you wanted to be with. He was the one who pushed me to keep going. It's unbelievable. His presence was so comforting, I'll never get over it," he said, beginning to cry.

"I only hope that he and my father are having fun up there."

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