

Janet in Control

Written by Kam Williams



The "Why Did I Get Married Too" Interview

Born in Gary, Indiana on May 16, 1966, Janet Damita Jo Jackson entered show business at the tender age of 7 when she appeared onstage with her already famous elder siblings at the MGM in Las Vegas. This debut, was followed by appearances at 9 on her family's variety show "The Jacksons" which, in turn, led to starring and recurring roles on such hit sitcoms as "Good Times," "Diff'rent Strokes," and "Fame."

At 14, Janet signed her first recording deal. Placing acting on the back burner to focus on her first love, music, she went on to enjoy extraordinary success upon the release of her breakthrough album, *Control* in 1986. Over the course of her ensuing musical career, she has thus far accumulated five Grammys, multiple MTV Awards, Billboard Music Awards, and Soul Train Music Awards, to name a few. As an artist, Janet excites, enlightens, leads, and embraces her fans with insights into life's meaning while touching their deepest feelings.

The film *Poetic Justice* marked this very versatile talent's first foray into acting in feature films, and that was soon followed by a co-starring role in *Nutty Professor II*. Janet later received the NAACP Image Award in the Outstanding Supporting Actress category for her work in *Why Did I Get Married*. Furthermore, like all of her movies, *Why Did I Get Married* opened up #1 at the box office.

Privately, Janet continues to focus on speaking out and giving back, raising money for charities such as the Cities in Schools and America's Promise. She has also supported the Watts Willowbrook Boys & Girls Club of America, the Starlight Foundation, the Make-A-Wish Foundation, A Place Called Home in South Central LA, the American Foundation for AIDS Research, S.O.S. Children's Villages in South Africa, Cartier's Love Bracelet Program benefiting OCNA and she sponsored an Airlift of Food and Medical supplies to famine-stricken Rwanda. In

addition, Janet established the Rhythm Nation Scholarship with the UNCF and has assisted numerous students striving to meet their educational goals.

Most recently, Janet honored her brother Michael's legacy and supported the people of Haiti by joining over 80 artists who collaborated to record "We Are the World 25 for Haiti," the classic 1985 charity anthem re-imagined by Lionel Richie and Quincy Jones to support the earthquake relief efforts. Not surprisingly, Janet has been honored with countless humanitarian awards in response to her dedication to helping others.

Later this year, Janet plans to publish her autobiography, providing an intimate look at her life. Here, she talks about reprising the role of Pat in Tyler Perry's *Why Did I Get Married Too*, one of those rare sequels which is actually better than the original.

Kam Williams: Thanks so much for the time, Janet. I'm honored to have this opportunity to speak with you.

Janet Jackson: It's my pleasure.

KW: First of all, please allow me to express my condolences on the loss of your brother, Michael.

JJ: Thank you.

KW: Watching *Why Did I Get Married Too*, the first thing I noticed was that it afforded you an opportunity to display a much greater range of emotions. How did you enjoy that?

JJ: I loved it! I absolutely loved it. I was so thankful that Tyler had written such an amazing piece for me to explore. So, I was really excited about it. When he first gave me the script, he warned me, "When you read this, you're really going to flip out. I think it's going to be exciting for you." And it was.

KW: It's very rare that an entire ensemble cast comes back for a sequel. How was it being reunited with everybody again?

JJ: I loved being with them again. It truly is a family. There's closeness and connection. After filming the original, when we went our separate ways, I felt like I had a new group of friends. We stayed in touch and tried to see each other whenever we were in town or in between projects. So, the minute we heard there was going to be a sequel, all of us were immediately on board, knowing we would be able to get back together again. And then, for half of it to be shot in The Bahamas made going to work feel like being on vacation with your friends. The crew members were sweethearts, too.

KW: What a refreshing difference from those nightmare shoots you sometimes hear about that sound like a clash of egos.

JJ: I credit Tyler. It's Tyler's vision. He's created a true family.

KW: What is it about Tyler that makes him special?

JJ: He's an amazing man. One of the things that I love most about him is that he has this spirituality about him, and it's a really big part of who he is. I adore Tyler, and I love that about him.

KW: All your previous films have opened up in the #1 spot at the box office. Do you feel any pressure to keep up the string?

JJ: I don't feel any pressure at all. You know what? I honestly wouldn't even have thought about it, if another journalist hadn't brought it to my attention. Would it be great if it did? Of course. If it doesn't open at #1, am I going to be bummed out? No, I've been so blessed and I'm

just thankful to be a part of the project and grateful to Tyler for giving me another opportunity to explore this character.

KW: What do you think the experience will be like for the audience?

JJ: I think more so than anything people are going to enjoy the film and they'll also walk away learning a lot from it.

KW: By the way, I love "Nothing," the film's theme which you sing on the soundtrack. I hope it lands you another Oscar nomination like the song "Again" did for you with Poetic Justice.

JJ: Thank you very much. That would be really nice.

KW: I told my readers I'd be interviewing you, and they sent me a lot of questions, so let's see how many we can get through.

JJ: Okay.

KW: Attorney Bernadette Beekman says, "My favorite album of yours is Control which spoke to me because at the time I was working in Paris and I had such a lack of control over so many things in my life. Have you ever related to a song by someone else which intimately spoke to you at a point in your life?"

JJ: Definitely! There are two things that really move me: music and acting. And I'm not talking about my music or watching myself as an actor, but listening to other people's music and watching other actors. There are so many different songs that have moved me. It all depends upon the mood that I'm in at that moment. Plus, I was raised with a ton of brothers and sisters where, obviously, the music running in and out of the house was very eclectic. So, I had a lot under my belt by the time I grew up. It all depends upon the mood that I'm in, the space that I'm in and what I'm feeling at that moment. But definitely!

KW: Children's book author Irene Smalls asks which do you enjoy doing more, acting or singing?

JJ: I enjoy them both a great deal. I have a passion for both. Maybe acting just a little bit more because it's more of a challenge for me, while music comes so easily.

KW: Marcia Evans asks, have you ever considered doing an album of duets? **JJ:** No, I have not, but that's a very good idea. Maybe someday that'll actually happen.

KW: Documentary filmmaker Hisani Dubose asks if you plan to produce movies.

JJ: I would love to. A dream of mine is to produce films, as well as to produce content for television.

KW: Hisani also wants to know what movie you'll be making next.

JJ: For Colored Girls, an adaptation of the play, which I'm sure she's familiar with. We'll start shooting that not to long from now.

KW: Laz Lyles wants to know, what's the biggest way you've grown as an actress since Poetic Justice, and whether you find that with each role you discover something new about yourself?

JJ: I always knew that I could go deep. How deep? I don't know. But it always seems that with each character I take on, I'm challenged to go deeper than the last time, and then again deeper than the last time. This is the deepest I've ever been asked to dive. And to see how deep I actually went for this, and that I wasn't afraid to go there in order to give Tyler exactly what he envisioned for the character, which was pretty deep, that's what I discovered about myself.

KW: Larry Greenberg says, he loved your video for "Miss You Much" which was directed by Dominic Sena. He's wondering, if there's any chance of you doing something new with him?

JJ: I haven't spoken with Dominic in a while, but I would love to. I actually wanted him to work on another video of mine, but he was shooting a movie at the time. Once in a blue moon, we wind up speaking to one another. I think Dominic is incredibly talented and, hopefully, we will

Janet in Control

Written by Kam Williams

work together again.

KW: Reverend Florine Thompson asks what gives the greatest meaning to your life?

JJ: It would have to be God.

KW: Varise Cooper asks, what are you doing to make a long-lasting, positive impact on the world?

JJ: I work with a lot of different charities, and by that I don't mean merely by giving money, but by really getting involved hands-on. I've always said that one of the reasons why I was put on this Earth was to help people. That's something I've always enjoyed both here in America and if I have the opportunity when I'm traveling out of the country. For example, I like to visit orphanages to spend time with the children. That's very important to me.

KW: Is there any question no one ever asks you, that you wish someone would? **JJ:** That's the question right there! [Laughs] That's a good question.

KW: Well, on that note, let me thank you again for the interview, Janet.

JJ: Thank you very much.

To hear Janet sing "Nothing," the theme song of Why Did I Get Married Too, visit: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lpAIHjH_Gs

To see a trailer for Why Did I Get Married Too, visit: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NSONVGYilHo>