

## Pop Culture: Jackson, Tyson run neck-and-neck for title of weirdest Michael

Ernest A. Jasmin; The News Tribune

Snatching slimy newborns from the delivery-room table?

Big, unfinished facial tattoos?

It's been one public relations nightmare after another for famous Mikes recently. And while Mr. Jordan hasn't driven his publicist insane, that may not be the case for Jacko and Iron Mike.

Those two guys have been running neck-and-neck for the lifetime achievement award for bizarre TV for quite a while. And just when you think one of them is about to get boring, he goes that extra mile to outdo his last meltdown.

Jacko set the bar pretty high last fall when he dangled his baby boy from a hotel balcony, just months after he used a photo of former Sony chief Tommy Mottola - complete with drawn-in devil horns - as his main prop to protest the alleged anti-Michael conspiracy at Sony.

But Jacko came through big time - twice, even - with the British documentary "Living With Michael Jackson" and the rebuttal, "Take Two: The Interview They Wouldn't Show You," which featured footage shot by Jackson's personal cameraman, sometime porn director F. Marc Schaffel.

The most priceless moment from either special: Jacko keeping a straight, albeit altered, face as he tells interviewer Martin Bashir he's had plastic surgery only twice.

Meanwhile, Iron Mike has had a pretty monumental standard to overcome himself, having already sunk his gold-trimmed incisors into two opponents and having been the star attraction at some of the scariest press conferences of all time. But going AWOL from training and calling off last Saturday's fight at the last minute - only to change his mind and show up with a tattoo on his face - came close.

"I just wanted to put something on my face," Tyson explained. "I didn't like the way my face was looking."

A pair of glasses. A nose ring. A huge tattoo. What's the big difference?

But even though I poke fun at the sheer spectacle both of these guys generate, there is a serious undertone, several actually, when you factor in alleged legal misconduct.

In both cases, these appear to be guys whom no one says no to - or perhaps intervenes on behalf of - because of who they are. I wondered what effect that kind of existence could have in the long run.

When asked about Jackson, Los Angeles psychiatrist Reef Karim - an occasional fill-in host on the talk show "Love Line" - declined to comment about his specific circumstances. But he did point to a potential pitfall of mega stardom:

"In general, those individuals, rich or poor, who have not developed the coping mechanisms in their childhood to deal with stressful situations ... will find their own mechanisms for dealing with things," Karim said. "For those who tend to have more money, there's more of a chance for people buying into their artificial way of dealing with things."

Problems arise when strange behavior is illegal or is actually a sign of mental illness, he said. "There may be more of a chance for them to go unchecked. In many cases (eccentric celebrities) can live perfectly normal lives. But others don't get the treatment they need. ... Other people will get into trouble, either from a legal perspective or a moral perspective."

Tyson talked about stepping out of the ring to get his life together after last Saturday's debacle. For his kids' sake I hope he's telling the truth.

And as for the prospect of Jacko laying low for a while? "Living With Michael Jackson" will air again at 9 p.m. Saturday on VH-1.

There's no word on whether "Take Three: The Interview Fox and ABC Didn't Want You to See" is in the works. But a USA Network biopic on Jackson reportedly is.

That's for the three of you out there who haven't had enough.

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