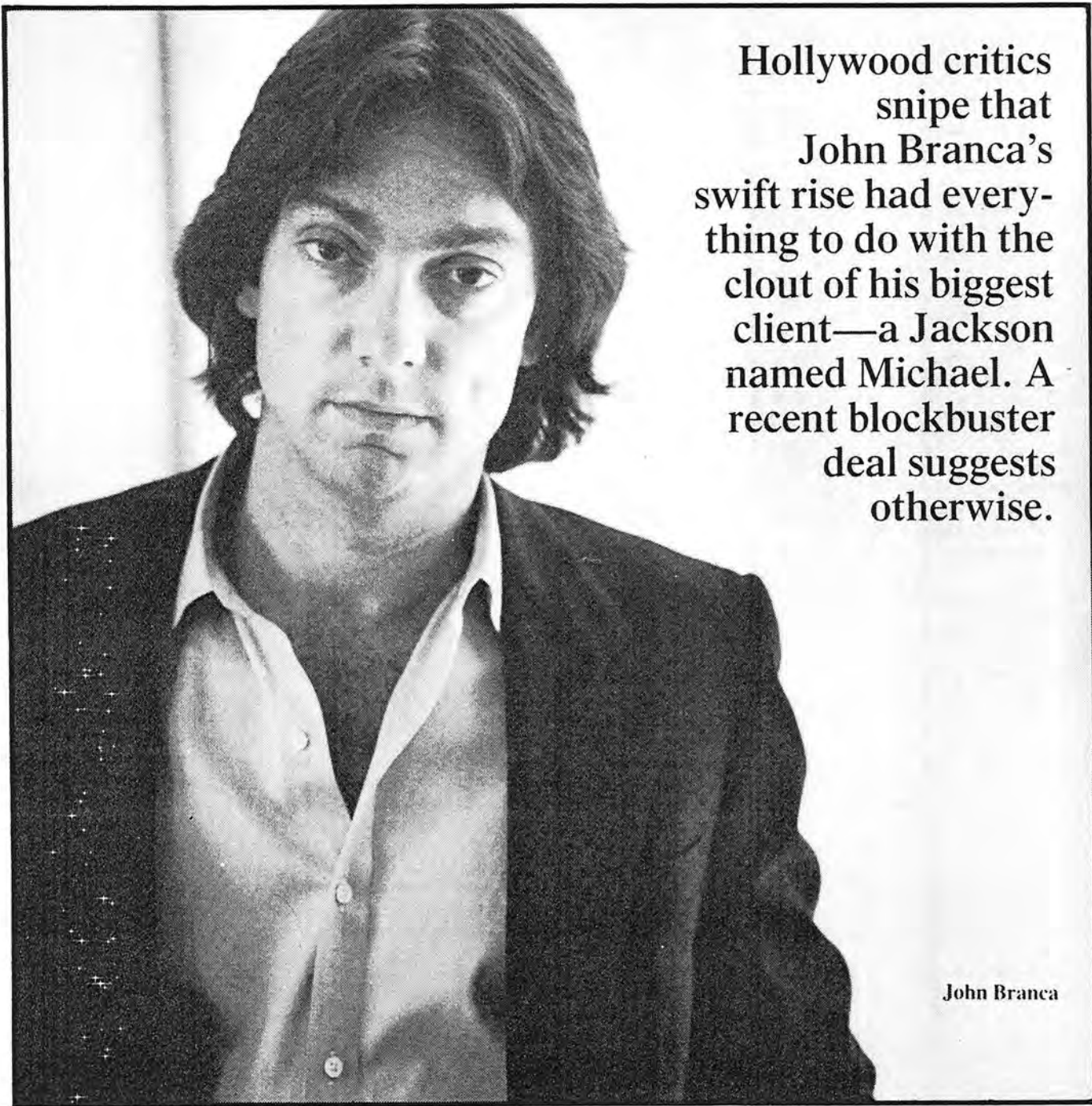


# Michael's Main Man

by Ellen Joan Pollock



Hollywood critics snipe that John Branca's swift rise had everything to do with the clout of his biggest client—a Jackson named Michael. A recent blockbuster deal suggests otherwise.

John Branca

Nobody paid a whole lot of attention to John Branca when he was an associate at the now-defunct Beverly Hills, California, office of Hardee Barovick Konecky & Braun in the late 1970s. But in October 1980, name partner David Braun—then widely recognized as the world's most successful music lawyer—left to become president of Polygram Records, Inc. Branca inherited two of Braun's clients, the Beach Boys and Michael Jackson. Two years later, Jackson's album *Thriller* broke industry sales records. John Branca became a star.

At 34, Branca reigns among the handful of lawyers at the top of the music business. It is a peculiar specialty; a lawyer's relationships with record company titans typically play a greater role in his success than legal prowess.

Branca's client roster includes important pop artists, such as Stevie Nicks of Fleetwood Mac and Tommy Shaw of Styx. But the centerpiece of his practice at Los Angeles's 12-lawyer Ziffren, Brittenham & Branca—the Branca was added in October—continues to be Jackson. And it is from his representation of Jackson that he draws much of his clout. Branca is known for his easy access to the industry's top recording executives and is close to the presidents of MCA Records and Music Group and CBS Records Group, two companies that have warred furiously over Branca-related business. Both agree on one thing: Branca has reached the pinnacle of his profession.

This year Branca completed the biggest deal of his career, Jackson's \$47.5-million acquisition of ATV Music, owner of a music publishing catalogue of well over 4,000 titles, including 251 Beatles songs. It was the kind of transaction that would test the mettle of any accomplished deal maker. Branca negotiated against the company's chairman, the notoriously difficult Australian mogul Robert Holmes a Court, and closed the deal even though competing bidders offered to pay more (see sidebar).

But even this deal hasn't convinced Branca's detractors of his maturity as a lawyer. The close-knit mu-

Branca's income has soared from about \$125,000 in 1981 to approximately \$775,000, according to sources familiar with the firm's finances.

music community is divided over whether Branca's ascent is due primarily to luck or skill and whether in several difficult situations involving Jackson he performed up to standards.

#### UNCLE RALPH, THE STAR

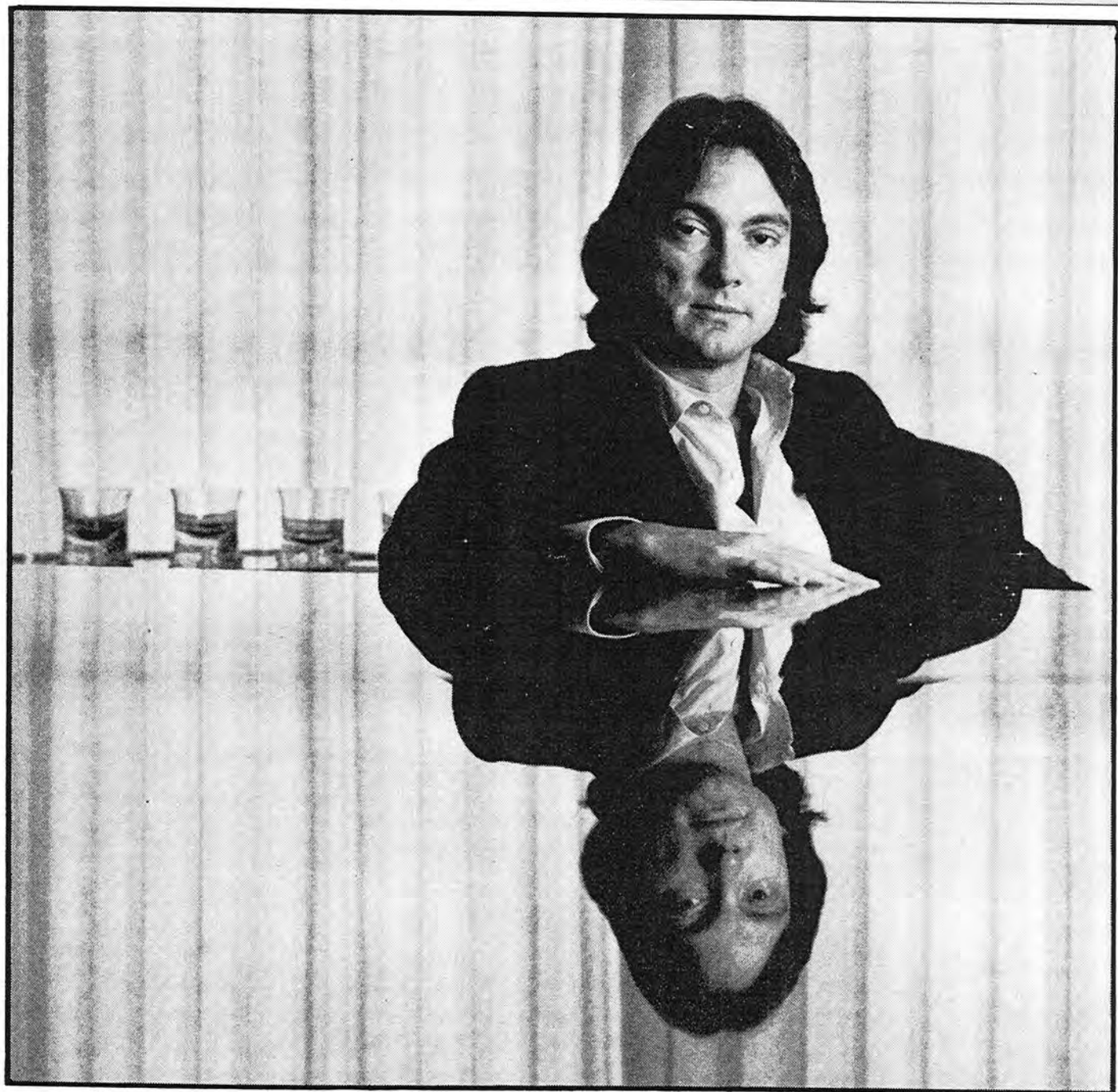
Branca's family introduced him to the limelight early on. Uncle Ralph Branca pitched for the Brooklyn Dodgers in the 1951 play-offs. His father also played pro baseball. His mother was a dancer and an actress. In high school Branca played keyboards in a band that made two records. "I got a little frustrated so I decided not to be a musician for a living," he says. He turned to law because "I'm very pragmatic. I thought I'd be something that would give me a sure return on the investment."

Branca began his career as a corporate and tax associate at Los Angeles's Kindel & Anderson. He says that after a year he was bored, so he contacted the top music firms in Los Angeles. He was hired by Hardee Barovick.

For a music lawyer, Hardee Barovick was the center of the universe in the late 1970s. Partner Braun represented Neil Diamond, Bob Dylan, and former Beatle George Harrison. Michael Rosenfeld, another partner, represented Irving Azoff, then the most successful manager in the business, now president of MCA Records and a confidant of Branca's. But second-year associate Branca had been hired to handle business, not music, matters. Again he became frustrated. "The power is in representing the entertainer, it's not being ancillary or doing corporate work," he explains. "I started taking extra time to learn [recording] contracts."

Branca became obsessed. "I wanted to know everything I was doing backwards and forwards," he says. He worried that the lawyers launching their careers in record companies would pass him by. Branca claims that a management consulting firm called him the most productive associate in the office and that he billed more hours than the rest of his West Coast peers. "I used to check at the end of the year. I'm very compulsive," he says. "I wanted to be the best. I was very competitive."

Even now Branca keeps a detailed record in his desk of his hours, even though he bills only about half of his time on an hourly basis. In 1982, according to the compilation, he logged 2,314.9 hours. He logged about 2,800 in 1984.



Branca: "Not an aggressive, pound-your-fist-on-the-desk type," says Beach Boys manager Tom Hulett.

Branca impressed his fellow associates with his ambition and long hours. "The associates at Hardee Barovick worked very hard but John was a very, very, very hardworking person. He really paid his dues to learn his craft," recalls fellow Hardee Barovick alumnus Lance Grode, now vice-president for business and legal affairs at MCA. "John always wanted a lot of things and wanted money. John wanted to be somebody in the industry," recalls another former colleague.

But he hardly stood out in an office described by one former associate as "a mini encounter group." Remembers Braun: "John had a tendency to stay on his own and drift away. He's not an ebullient personality even now. He was a competent lawyer. He did good associate work."

"He did not work incredible hours for me," Braun recalls. "He may have been working hard. I just don't know what he was working hard on."

Braun and Grode agree that back then, if they had to pick a Hardee Barovick associate who would succeed, it would not have been Branca. Braun, of Los Angeles's Braun, Margolis, Burrill & Besser, says that when he left Hardee Barovick for Polygram, he was given a silver-framed picture of his lawyers.

"John is there in the corner looking shy and withdrawn," he says. "Life

is ironic."

Or, as some suggest, a matter of luck. In 1980 Michael Jackson was developing a solo career, and he wanted separate counsel from the other five Jackson brothers. According to Branca, Jackson intended to interview three firms, but stopped after visiting the first, Hardee Barovick, where he met Braun and Branca.

Three months later Braun and Branca represented Jackson in separate contract negotiations with CBS Records and the music-publishing arm of Warner Communications. Braun left for Polygram during the course of these talks. Jackson chose to stay with Branca. It was enough to convince the Hardee Barovick partnership to make Branca, at 29, their youngest partner.

Braun's departure was only one symptom of Hardee Barovick's internal turmoil. Four months after he left, partner Jeffrey Ingber, who had inherited Neil Diamond and Bob Dylan from Braun, made a deal to join Los Angeles's Ziffren, Brittenham & Gullen, one of Hollywood's youngest and most successful firms. He brought Branca along.

Shortly thereafter, Braun ended his short and unsuccessful tenure at Polygram and began to rebuild the practice he'd abandoned one year earlier. He succeeded in winning part

of Bob Dylan's work away from Ingber, but he couldn't wrench Jackson from Branca, although music-industry lawyers say he tried.

"There seems to be a consensus in the industry that John was just lucky [with Jackson]," says MCA's Grode. "That's a moronic point of view. A lot of people took shots at Michael Jackson—tried to get him as a client. John held it together. I think he did a phenomenal job."

Jackson would not be interviewed for this article. But members of the music-business community who know Jackson and Branca talk of their closeness. "Michael liked [Branca] for the very reasons that people don't understand why John is successful," says Grode. "Michael is a very shy and retiring person, which is sort of the way John is. They're very similar in personality. I think there is a bond between them. Michael felt he could talk with him."

#### THE ERA OF MASS HYSTERIA

Jackson was in between managers when *Thriller* took off in 1983, selling a record-breaking 35 million copies and turning around the floundering music industry in the process. Branca temporarily filled the void during what he calls "an era of mass hysteria."

"It was crazy," he remembers. "Everybody in the world—and I



mean the world—was calling because they wanted some connection with Michael Jackson.” Branca fielded calls from the White House, as well as requests for interviews, money, and visits to hospitals. Says Branca: “[Jackson] just became a megabusiness. Normally during that period an artist has a press agent, film agent, concert agent, a manager, and a lawyer. Michael had only a lawyer.”

Among the calls were inquiries from companies wanting to exploit the Jackson name with merchandising agreements. Branca made deals for Michael Jackson puzzles, dolls, clothes, clocks, watches, bubble-gum cards, record players, and View-masters.

Branca also helped Jackson make an innovative and lucrative video called *The Making of Michael Jackson's Thriller*. When the production ran \$500,000 over budget, Branca recruited videocassette distributor Vestron Video, Inc., (a Ziffren, Brittenham client), MTV, and pay-television company Showtime to put up the money to finish it.

“John figured out a way to have the project financed without risk to Michael,” says Vestron chairman Austin Furst, Jr., adding that Jackson made millions of dollars as a result of Branca’s deal.

While these merchandising deals were unusual in number and sometimes scope, they weren’t all difficult to make. The terms, says Ziffren, Brittenham partner Gary Stiffelman, “were almost nonnegotiable. It was a heady time.” He says that 25 deals were made, but that at least 1,000 others were rejected.

Branca began picking up lots of new business after *Thriller* and its lucrative spin-off deals. “Other acts said that if Michael Jackson uses him maybe I should switch to him,” explains Tom Hulett, manager for the Beach Boys.

Branca’s client roster now includes a number of entertainers: Brian Wilson of the Beach Boys; Giorgio Moroder, who scored *Flashdance*; Bernie Taupin, Elton John’s songwriter; The Doors; Jackson Browne; and Don Johnson of *Miami Vice*, who is beginning a singing career. The jazz group Weather Report; Cavallo, Ruffalo & Fagnoli, managers of Prince; and Lorimar, the television studio, have also retained him. He has worked on assignments for the Rolling Stones, Rod Stewart, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, and Motown Productions.

None supplies as much work as Jackson, but Branca’s practice keeps him and two other Ziffren, Brittenham music department lawyers busy full time. Branca says he spends as much as 40 percent of his time on Jackson-related work but insists that a peer’s estimate that the star accounts for over half of his billings is inflated by at least 10 percent. Branca’s income has soared from about \$125,000 in 1981 to approximately \$775,000 last year, according to sources familiar with the firm’s finances.

Largely because of his representation of Jackson, Branca has developed extremely cordial relationships with record company executives, especially those at CBS. “He does have access to the key people in the company,” says CBS Records senior

vice-president Marvin Cohn.

Clients feel that Branca’s good relationships with record companies give them an edge. Beach Boy Al Jardine recently used Branca on a deal with MCA to market an anthology of the music of Bill Haley and the Comets. “He’s well respected and I feel that gave me a certain advantage that I might not have had with somebody else,” Jardine says. “Part of the reason I’m able to move so quickly is because of John and his firm.”

Branca uses his relationships to close deals the way some lawyers use tough negotiating ploys. He is far less confrontational than many of his top-notch peers. “He’s not a yellor or screamer. He’s not an aggressive, pound-your-fist-on-the-desk type,” says Beach Boys manager Hulett. Branca makes deals “without alienating the record companies,” says CBS vice-president Robert Biniaz. “He’s a nice person.”

Walter Yetnikoff, president of CBS Records, says Branca “has an understanding of the creative process which enables him to relate to his clients [and] their wishes. I think he’s able to read the people he represents well.” Adds Michael Stewart, president of the company’s music-publishing arm, CBS Songs: “He knows music and has taste and feeling for it, which is not necessarily common among lawyers.”

#### CASHING IN ON JACKSON

Branca’s success, however, does not engender admiration from his competitors. They feel his work for Jackson has earned him too much publicity. “I stand on a record of fifteen or twenty years,” says one competitor. “When I hear that a client went to John because he represents Michael Jackson, that’s very frustrating; that’s very unfortunate.”

Competitors are also resentful of Branca’s cordial relationships with record companies, especially CBS. They fault him for relying more on his relationships than on tough negotiating skills. “CBS loves John Branca” because he is “easy,” snipes a competitor. Branca’s philosophy, says another, is “Controversy is bad. It loses you clients.” . . . He wants to settle things.

“If you want a tough guy, John Branca is the last person [to choose],” says this source.

Part of this response can be attributed to sour grapes. But Branca’s critics point to his handling of two rough spots in Jackson’s career that they say illustrate his inability to take control of difficult situations and stage a show of strength when it counts.

The first of these episodes was a confrontation between MCA and CBS over a pet project of Jackson’s: a Christmas album for MCA based on Steven Spielberg’s film *E.T.* The second was the mammoth 1984 Jackson Brothers *Victory* tour, a yearlong battle between constantly shifting factions. Both projects were thorny—maybe even no-win. What is clear, though, is that in both instances Branca failed to effectively marshal the clout of the world’s most successful recording artist.

At the end of 1982, MCA was preparing to release the *E.T.* Christmas album that Jackson narrated and to which he contributed one song. But Jackson’s participation required a re-

lease from CBS, with whom he had an exclusive recording contract.

The parties had agreed that Jackson’s representatives—Branca and Ronald Weisner, Jackson’s manager at the time—would help procure the release. Three days before the *E.T.* album was to be launched, CBS, which was about to release *Thriller*, informed MCA that permission had not been granted and CBS got an injunction in state court in New York to prevent the album’s distribution.

“It’s more the inaction, allowing the situation to develop, that John bears the burden for,” says a source aligned with MCA. “An artist, especially one of [Jackson’s] stature, has an enormous amount of clout and he didn’t use it.”

Weisner says that at one point Jackson had CBS’s permission, but he declines to discuss the incident in greater detail. Branca claims that the

judge who issued the injunction placed responsibility for obtaining the release with MCA. He suggests that MCA’s management at the time was negligent and “attempted to shift the blame to others.”

Still, given the strained relationship MCA had with CBS, says a lawyer involved in the deal, Branca should have known there’d be trouble. “It was very predictable,” says this source, “[Branca] played into the hands of both CBS and MCA by not insisting that they deal directly with each other.”

According to an executive in the MCA camp, the matter was settled when MCA agreed to pay CBS several hundred thousand dollars. A portion of the settlement, say sources involved in the deal, came out of Jackson’s royalties. The album won a Grammy, but was a commercial failure.

## BRANCA’S COUP DE GRACE

Michael Jackson’s purchase last August of ATV Music, a music-publishing company owned by ACC of The Bell Group, the Australian conglomerate, was the first major acquisition in which John Branca led a team of lawyers against a sophisticated opponent outside the music arena. He was under considerable pressure from the start. Jackson wanted the catalogue, with its treasure of Beatles songs, very badly. Competition was intense and Branca had to convince Robert Holmes a Court, The Bell Group’s wealthy chairman, that he was a serious bidder.

Most of the negotiations at ATV’s London headquarters were handled by Gary Stiffelman, Branca’s partner at Ziffren, Brittenham & Gullen, and tax expert Charles Lubar of the London office of Morgan, Lewis & Bockius. “It was decided that John would remain in hiding as our ace card, more or less, as they were keeping Holmes a Court in hiding as their ace card,” says Stiffelman. For three solid months Stiffelman thrashed out the details. Finally, Branca and Holmes a Court came out of hiding and met in New York. “At the end of that week he and Holmes a Court shook hands on the deal, which was basically what we had drafted with a few minor changes,” says Stiffelman.

But when Stiffelman flew to London to hammer out the final details, he found a \$7-million gap between what Branca was willing to pay and what Holmes a Court expected to receive. Branca called Stiffelman back to Los Angeles and halted the negotiations. For two months Jackson’s much-desired deal hung in the balance while his team played it cool, refusing to talk with Holmes a Court’s representatives. Branca soon learned that Holmes a Court was talking seriously to others, including Koppelman/Bandier Music, a New York entertainment company.

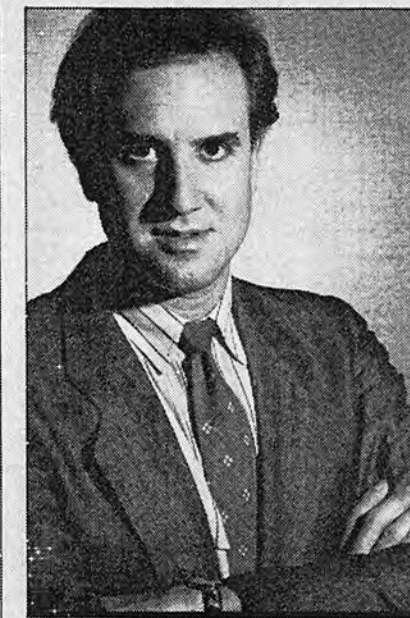
Branca had trouble convincing Jackson that holding back was the right strategy. Long before the hiatus in negotiations Jackson wrote Branca a note as he watched Branca plot the deal on the phone. The note read: “John, please let’s not bargain. I don’t want to lose the deal.”

During the eight-week break in negotiations, says Lubar, “John knew who the other potential players were and I think he monitored that fairly carefully.” Branca knew that Koppelman/Bandier, the other leading contender, would have to hire a publishing company to administer the catalogue and that the publishing company would have to put up \$12 million toward the purchase price. Branca neutralized the major publishing companies. He told Warner Communications’s music-publishing division, where Jackson published, that he would consider it a conflict if it made a deal with Koppelman/Bandier. He also talked with Michael Stewart, president of CBS Songs. When he was approached by Koppelman/Bandier, Stewart recalls, “I said I couldn’t, I was committed to Michael.”

The ploys worked. At the end of eight weeks ATV called again and said its period of exclusive conversations with Kop-

pelman/Bandier was drawing to a close. Branca said he would fly to London only if Holmes a Court promised to pay his expenses if no deal was consummated.

“The negotiations had reached a stage where someone had to have big balls,” says Stewart. “[Branca] did, and if he hadn’t that particular deal wouldn’t have happened.”



Gary Stiffelman

Branca and Stiffelman arrived in London only to find that Charles Koppelman was in town, still trying to close the deal. To hasten the action, Branca told Holmes a Court that his power of attorney for Jackson expired at midnight. In fact it expired at the end of the month.

“With John Branca we knew we could say, ‘Yes, done,’ and it would happen tomorrow,” says Simon Carrel, who negotiated on behalf of Holmes a Court. He says that Branca’s ability to convince his opponents that he did indeed speak for Jackson was of paramount importance. The final price was \$47.5 million, several million less than Koppelman’s offer.

“The deal would not have been done without John Branca,” says Holmes a Court, himself a lawyer. “We were not very willing fellows. We were quite prepared to keep the copyrights.”

“John Branca was particularly diplomatic. I think he was very clever in understanding me. . . . I got to like him and I was comfortable dealing with him,” he continues. “That was very important for his client, because when there was strong competition from other purchasers who were prepared to offer a higher price, I dealt with Branca.”

Shortly after the deal closed, Jackson presented Branca with a Rolls Royce in appreciation for getting him the catalogue. □

## GUARANTEED TROUBLE

The Jacksons' *Victory* tour, another venture which Branca's detractors criticize, almost guaranteed trouble. It was the largest outdoor tour ever, according to Charles Sullivan, a partner in the New York office of Los Angeles's O'Melveny & Myers who promoted the tour and guaranteed the brothers \$40 million. Twenty thousand people were employed to pull the tour off.

Since the brothers had last performed, Michael had far eclipsed the others. Immediately there were clashes among family members and their myriad advisors. Alliances—among Don King, the flamboyant promoter who was brought in by the Jackson parents; O'Melveny partner Sullivan, the promoter brought in by the brothers; the parents; five of the brothers; and Michael—changed from issue to issue.

The Jackson Entertainment Corporation, which is the six brothers' corporate entity, used L. Lee Phillips and Peter Paterno of Manatt, Phelps, Rothenberg, Tunney & Phillips. Throughout most of the tour, however, Phillips and Paterno principally represented the interests of four of the Jackson brothers. A fifth brother, Jermaine, was represented by Joel Katz of Atlanta's Katz, Weissman & Cherry. Michael relied on Branca and Stiffelman.

Some of the controversy arose because Branca frequently ended up negotiating for all the brothers. Not only did he represent the most visible Jackson, but he was also retained by the brothers as a group on certain matters. Branca billed and received about \$100,000 for his efforts on their behalf.

"It's very difficult to effectively represent members of the same group when they have different objectives and each lawyer has responsibilities to his own client," explains Branca's partner Gary Stiffelman. As an example he cites the desire of Michael's brothers to maximize their financial returns from the tour. In contrast, he maintains, Michael was more concerned "that the fans be happy." (Michael was donating all his profits from the tour to charity.)

"Everybody," says a source close to Michael's brothers, "had a different agenda."

The main complaint of this source and others is that Branca was not hard enough on O'Melveny's Sullivan. Sullivan had trouble meeting tour expenses and frequently asked for assistance from the Jacksons. Branca regularly flew to the tour sites to renegotiate with Sullivan, who eventually won a relaxation in the amount he had to prepay on his \$40-million guarantee.

Near the end of the tour, Sullivan failed to make a payment for the Jacksons' Vancouver appearance, and the brothers threatened not to play the last dates, in Los Angeles. Michael was extremely concerned that the fans would be disappointed. After negotiations broke down Branca called Mickey Rudin, a name partner in Los Angeles's Rudin, Richman & Appel who had been hired by Sullivan to straighten out the mess. He invited Rudin to Michael's Encino home to hammer out a settlement with Don King and himself that would ensure that the brothers would play the Los Angeles dates. The law-

yers from Manatt, Phelps who represented Jackson Entertainment were not involved.

As part of the settlement, the overall payment the brothers received was reduced and about \$800,000 in disputed funds was put in escrow, Michael's brothers—under pressure from their parents, Michael, King, Sullivan, and Branca—reluctantly agreed to sign the settlement.

Branca accomplished Michael's goal—the final concerts were played. "If not for John considering his client" and "putting aside questions of money," says Rudin, "we may never have resolved the differences." He adds, "I thought everyone connected with the matter should thank him."

Today, a year after the last concert date was played, the \$800,000 in escrow has yet to be distributed. The Jacksons believe they are still owed money. "Somebody has to accept that responsibility," says a source who blames Branca. Apparently the brothers think that somebody should be Branca, who concedes that the brothers have withheld payment of his \$25,000 bill for the final negotiations.

In response to the criticism that's been leveled against him for going too easy on Sullivan, Branca says, "No one was soft on Chuck Sullivan. I've been told that Sullivan may have lost seven million dollars on the tour. Under whose definition is that being soft?"

He calls the initial deal with Sullivan "the best deal ever made for an artist in the history of the personal appearance business." But, he adds, "When the guy's taking a bath, you've got to help him out."

Branca also downplays the significance of the escrow fund: "Fifty million dollars changed hands, and at this point there is an escrow fund relating to the disposition of expenses. The Jacksons netted more from this tour than any entertainer or entertainers in history."

Still, Branca's critics say some of the problems could have been avoided had Branca not been so preoccupied with making side deals during the *Victory* tour. They insist he was soft on Sullivan because, at the beginning of the tour, he had sold Sullivan an \$18-million license to market Michael Jackson clothing, but hadn't collected the entire payment. As a result, one tour source suggests, Branca didn't want to push Sullivan too hard. Replies Branca: "Hogwash. . . I don't view a contract as necessarily putting two people in an adversary position."

For his part, Sullivan has only praise for the way Branca handled the tour. "In effect," says Sullivan, "there was a leadership vacuum and John was recognized as the only person who could effectively represent the views of the family and have the confidence of the promoters."

## A TRADER OF FAVORS?

The impression persists among Branca's critics that he trades favors in a potentially compromising way. Early in the *Victory* tour, Braun's critics point out, MCA Records president Azoff was hired as a consultant, reportedly for a \$500,000 fee to MCA Inc. Sources involved in the tour and others in the music business point out that during this period Azoff, who is a part owner of a management busi-



Branca refuses to think about losing Jackson as a client. "Do you think about what would happen if you were hit by a bus?" he asks.

Michael Jackson:  
On the *Victory* tour  
in Kansas City last year

ness, sent three key clients to Branca—Stevie Nicks, Dan Fogelberg, and Tommy Shaw. Some music lawyers speculate that Azoff forwarded the business simply to curry favor with Branca and Jackson, whom Azoff would likely want to manage should he decide to manage artists full time once again.

"There's no secret there's a record company president around that feeds John constantly. Whether he's looking for future favors, I don't know. But he's pumping him real good," says David Braun.

In response to those who say Azoff's contribution to the tour was minimal, Branca insists that hiring Azoff was "the best insurance policy we ever bought," due to Azoff's knowledge of the concert business.

"I have been accused, rightfully, of trying to steer business to John," Azoff says. But he insists that he does so because "John's very capable, competent, one of the best." Linking his work on the tour and his referral of clients, says Azoff, is unfair. "John's near the top of the hill. A lot of these guys are trying to knock him off."

The second instance that suggests that Branca is, as one critic calls him, a "trader" concerns a flattering and in-depth *Los Angeles Times* article about the ATV deal that appeared in September. Robert Hilburn, its author, was working on a book with Jackson, a fact which Hilburn noted at the end of his article. What wasn't mentioned, however, is the fact that Branca has done legal work for Hilburn, who says he has asked to pay for the work but has yet to receive any bills.

Hilburn sees no conflict of interest. He says he thinks the note explaining his book project with Jackson was enough. "It just seems like that [note] was like warning a reader that it wasn't like a normal kind of

story," he says. William Thomas, executive vice-president of the *Los Angeles Times*, calls Hilburn a "model of rectitude and integrity" and says he knows nothing about the article. "The general policy is that if there's any connection between the writer and subject it should be mentioned in the story," he says. "There are all kinds of relationships that don't merit full explanations. . . . I see this as a very borderline case that could go either way." Hilburn, adds Branca, "wrote a news story that was endorsed by Michael. I'd hardly call that trading favors."

## BUILDING ON A CORNERSTONE

Branca talks of the "building blocks" of his career and of his desire to represent the moneyed and corporate interests in the entertainment business, as well as entertainers. "One of the keys to success is having goals and managing your career properly," he says. "Making the ATV deal was important to me and representing . . . Lorimar . . . is important to me." Handling the ATV business, he adds, is almost like representing a new client.

But obviously ATV is still just another facet of representing Michael Jackson. Long ago Branca had to decide whether he wanted to risk his career primarily on one client. As Jackson's net worth soared from \$6 million to more than \$60 million, Branca felt more comfortable with his gamble. "On reflection, when you have the biggest and most important client in the world, why are you going to fight the inevitable growth of that client?" he reasons.

What would happen if someday Jackson was no longer on Branca's client roll? "I don't think about things like that," he says. "Do you think about what would happen if you were hit by a bus?" □