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Michael Jackson turned to old friend and entertainment lawyer John Branca in times of trouble

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However many needle marks his body may or may not have, however many drugs he may or may not have been taking, [Michael Jackson](#) sure seems to have chosen the right lawyer to handle his will and serve as executor.

If lawyer [John Branca](#)'s surname is familiar, that is because he is the nephew of [Brooklyn](#) Dodger pitcher [Ralph Branca](#), who entered baseball history when he allowed the home run known as the Shot Heard 'Round the World and cost Dem Bums the 1951 pennant.

Entertainment lawyer John Branca entered the history of the music business 30 years later with a pitch of another kind, one that cemented him in Jackson's regard and helped generate the very fortune he will likely administer.

The pitch also helped change popular culture in [America](#) and much more of the world than ever heard of the [Brooklyn Dodgers](#).

That other kind of pitch came as Michael Jackson was making the music video for "Thriller." Such projects back then cost about \$50,000. Jackson was letting his inspiration run free to the tune of \$1 million. That raised the question of how he was going to pay for it. Branca had an inspiration of his own.

"He suggested we make a separate video filmed by somebody else about the making of the 'Thriller' video," Jackson recalled in his autobiography. "It seemed odd that no one had ever thought of this before."

Branca pitched the idea to [MTV](#) and Showtime. He came back with \$1.2 million in financing.

The deal still might have fallen apart because Jackson's mother was a Jehovah's Witness and some of her fellow congregants suggested he was supporting evil by appearing as a werewolf.

Jackson was reportedly poised to scratch both the video and the video about the video when Branca pitched another idea, this one to the star. Branca noted that [Bela Lugosi](#) had resolved religious misgivings about portraying Dracula by insisting on a note at the start of the film saying he was in no way pro-vampire.

Jackson added a similar note regarding werewolves. The project went ahead, and "The Making of Thriller" video sold more than a million copies. Album sales spiked by 14 million, bringing the total to more than 40 million, the biggest of all time.

"The success of 'The Making of Thriller' was a bit of a shock to all of us," Jackson wrote. "A dream come true."

The success is credited with elevating music video production to another level, along the way indelibly imprinting images of Jackson on the national psyche.

Of course, any deal would have been worthless without Jackson's talent, but Branca did play a part in changing music history, which is more than he might have expected when he was a 16 year-old in a rock band opening for the Doors.

He accepted he was not destined for rock stardom and went to law school. He was practicing estate law when he read an article about [Elton John](#) and a kind of lawyer then little known to the public.

Branca joined law and music, not to mention moolah, as he became a big-time entertainment lawyer. Jackson was best man at his wedding, with the [Rev. Little Richard](#) presiding.

Star and lawyer drifted apart at times, but the 2002 will names Branca as an executor. And, several weeks ago, Jackson rehired Branca, almost as if he sensed another turning point were coming.

Wednesday, Branca filed what might be called the Will Heard 'Round the World. The fortune that he had helped Jackson build still stood at more than \$200 million and could easily double.

Anybody who doubted that needed only to stroll from the courthouse over to the [Grammy Museum](#), which happened to have been taking down a Michael Jackson exhibit on the day he died.

The exhibit went back up along with some video. Fans were crowding in and one artifact that got everybody's attention was the white suit that Jackson wore for the "Thriller" album. "You could say that's the suit that basically started his career," museum spokeswoman [Katie Dunham](#) said.

With just a little help from that other guy in a suit, his lawyer Branca, from the family of [New York](#) pitchers.