

STRANGE HOLLYWOOD

## “Bubbles Burst”

What happens when you combine five of the strangest celebrities from past and present: Michael Jackson, Bubbles the chimp, Les Claypool, Sean Lennon, and Noel Fielding? You get...“Bubbles Burst.” This sad, psychedelic pop song appeared on the 2016 album *Monolith of Phobos* by the Claypool Lennon Delirium. Written by Les Claypool of Primus with Sean Lennon (the only son of John Lennon and Yoko Ono) providing the lyrics, “Burst” tells the true story of the strange bond between Jackson and his beloved chimp...along with Lennon’s own experiences at Neverland Ranch (Jackson’s sprawling estate). The song begins: “In 1983 / In a Texas facility / He was just a few months old when they / Told him he was sold.” Lennon goes on to sing about how the baby chimp flew in a private jet “off to Neverland where he / Met the impish man.”

Once there, Jackson and Bubbles “feast on candy” and are “transported to a planet made of toys, bananas, and games.” Then Lennon sings about his own experience with Bubbles and laments that, “We didn’t understand / dancing with Peter Pan,” that “childhoods end” and “bubbles burst.” (He was singing about how Jackson would discard both of them when they grew up.)

Adding to the song’s strangeness is its music video: British surrealist comic Noel Fielding portrays Jackson

(with Elvis sideburns for some reason), and Fielding's younger brother Mike portrays Bubbles in one of the creepiest music video performances ever.

And Jackson fans noticed. Many were outraged by the apparent lack of respect for the late singer. (One of their beefs: Noel Fielding is a terrible dancer.) Lennon defended the song in an interview with NPR: "I'm not trying to take [Jackson] out or anything, or put him down. I was just trying to have fun and talk about an odd situation in a way that makes it art." Lennon reminded his critics that he was at Neverland Ranch, and he witnessed firsthand the bond between the man and his chimpanzee. Add to that Lennon's own childhood as the son of a legend growing up in a world he didn't understand, and it gave him a unique insight into Bubbles's experiences. "It's like a parallel dimension," Lennon says of the video, "and it's a dark, comedic manifestation that comes more out of the song and not out of real life. It's like a reflection of a reflection."