By Joseph Vogel, foreword by Anthony DeCurtis

There was no way you were sitting down.

As soon as you heard those four notes – just four beats – your feet were itching to move. You were up and on the dance floor quick, not caring that you didn’t have a partner. With songs like that, you’d dance alone but not for long as other people’s feet were itching too and you knew you wouldn’t be by yourself but for a minute.

Remember the first time you heard Michael Jackson sing? No matter what your age, whether it was “I Want You Back” or clips from “This Is It,” your musical tastes changed right there. In the new book “Man in the Music: The Creative Life and Work of Michael Jackson” by Joseph Vogel, you’ll read about what went into those songs and everything in between.

Even in his early years as a performer, friends could see the drive that young Michael Jackson possessed. At age eight, he studied the moves of James Brown and Elvis Presley. At Motown, he was heavily influenced by Marvin Gaye, Smokey Robinson, and Diana Ross. Stevie Wonder recalled that Jackson had a deep curiosity about how the blind singer “worked.”

Jackson, they said, watched everything “like a hawk.”

Aside from the guidance he got from contemporary singers and songwriters, Jackson was also inspired by actors, classical music, other dancers, and by books. Michael Jackson, says Vogel, was a voracious reader and owned a massive library.

In the studio, Jackson was a perfectionist – a habit he said he’d learned from Barry Gordie, Jr. – and often astounded fellow musicians by singing, bar by bar, the entire arrangement of a song. He was self-conscious, often danced as he sang, and sometimes sang with the lights off. Working with Jackson was fun, said one musician, like musical freedom.

In this book, you’ll learn the stories behind each individual album that Jackson released in his adult career. You’ll read about how he met Quincy Jones and Lisa Marie Presley, his (possible) inspiration for “She’s Out of My Life,” why “Thriller” almost wasn’t released, and lots more.

Much has been written about Michael Jackson over the years and, if you’ve watched any TV lately, you might have heard things about him that you wish you didn’t know. But reading “Man in the Music” will pull your focus back on the legacy and away from the lunacy.

In this book, author Joseph Vogel gives readers more insight and less emotion about Michael Jackson. Vogel shows that Jackson was driven and cunning and that nearly everything he did was with precision, including the births of his children and his planned comeback.

Though it would have been nice if Vogel had included more downfalls, I found this book, overall, to be interesting, eye-opening, and relatively well-balanced.

I think that, if you’re a fan of MJ’s music or if you just want to know more about the man behind the headlines, then this book will be a thriller. For you, “Man in the Music” is one to sit down with.

Reviewed by Terri Schlichenmeyer