

Always defying sex-pectations

Both exhibitionist & enigma

MAUREEN CALLAHAN



OF all the tributes paid to Prince, from the president to the Empire State Building lit up in purple, one point can't be stressed enough: Prince made the world come to him.

He was an exquisite freak who began on the margins, a tiny, androgynous, ethnically ambiguous being who seemed to alight from the same home planet as David Bowie. But unlike Bowie, who projected performance-art aloofness, Prince was aggressively, joyously carnal, and for a long time, it freaked America out. Deeply.

In 1980, he released his third studio album. He called it "Dirty Mind" and posed for the cover naked but for an open Renaissance waistcoat, neckerchief and black bikini bottoms. It was a declaration and a challenge to the conventional culture, and according to those who knew him in the early days, Prince always had a vision.

"Don't make me black," he told Warner Bros. VP Larry Waronker upon signing with the label in 1978. "My idols are all over the place."

He was 18 years old.

That inner fortitude, so rare among performers and regular people alike, served him well. In 1985, when Tipper Gore and a bunch of other Washington housewives formed the Parents Music Resource Center, then went to Capitol Hill to complain about the corruptive powers of Prince, he never said a thing. Instead, he went to work on "The Black Album," a highly erotic record that became legendary after Prince pulled it right before its scheduled release in 1987.

He never said why, but those in his circle later said a bad Ecstasy trip caused Prince to have second thoughts. It was finally released in 1994 and is considered a classic.

"I don't really care so much what people say about me," Prince told Tavis Smiley in 2004, "because it usually is a reflection of who they are."

He did what he wanted and never explained. In 1985, at the height of celebrity sing-alongs for Africa, Prince was the lone major artist to refuse recording "We Are the World." It was read as arrogance and selfishness, but as his protégée Wendy Melvoin later explained, for Prince, it was all about quality control.

"He felt like the song was horrible," she told author Alan Light for his book "Let's Go Crazy: Prince and the Making of Purple Rain." "And he didn't want to be around 'all those muthaf—kas.'"

Let it be said: Prince wasn't wrong!

Instead, he gave his money to charity quietly and often, donating \$1 million to the Harlem Children's Zone in 2011. "I want to thank Prince — I am touched and blown away by his generosity,"



CEO Geoffrey Canada said at the time. "This is unprecedented in my lifetime to see an artist come forward and invest in today's children."

Even before social media, Prince understood the value of mystery. Most of his fans don't know that he was epileptic, or that his flamboyance was overcompensation for childhood bullying. Most don't know that he was a news junkie who had intellectuals to dinner, or that he most identified with the black boxer Jack Johnson, or that in 1996, he and his then-wife Mayte Garcia lost their infant son, Boy Gregory, to a rare genetic disorder at one week old, and another baby to a miscarriage.

As the culture became increasingly confessional and other artists eclipsed him, Prince never sought attention or validation for anything other than his music. He was so supremely gifted — a self-taught virtuoso who could play 27 instruments, a prolific songwriter and magnetic performer — that he likely didn't need it.

He had the confidence to know he was a true original, sui generis. In many ways, we're mourning the loss of that kind of artist — pure, private, one who spoke to the inner freak in everyone. Prince himself would probably be surprised by this outpouring.

In later years, though, as the culture came around to Prince — sex tapes and crotch flashes now so boring, so common — Prince became more available to us.

"I try to stay in the now and live in the now. I think it keeps you young," he told CNN in 1999.

More recently, he spoke of the culture catching up with his uncompromised vision: "Cursing was cool when nobody was doin' it. If everybody wears the same clothes, it ain't cool no more," he told Smiley. "You're trying to be different. One can't be different by being racy today. It's not interesting anymore."

How ironic that we have Prince to thank for that.

A visit to the



Mark Kreusch/Splash News

HIS ROYAL PAD-NESS: Fans (below) pay respects Friday at Paisley Park, Prince's 65,000-square-foot home (above) and recording facility in Chanhassen, Minn. At right, His Royal Badness adjusts playback levels during a music-making session.



Getty Images

LET'S

HARDEEP PHULL



MOST people who drive past Paisley Park on State Highway 5 in Chanhassen, Minn., would never guess that it was where Prince lived and worked.

There's no giant neon Prince sign, it's white rather than purple, and there aren't girls lining up outside waiting to get in. It actually looks like a standard, industrial-looking office space — somewhere that maybe housed the regional Staples HQ.

When I arrived there last August to hear Prince's new album, "HitnRUN Phase One," (and, hopefully, to interview the man himself), the non-descript site initially felt like a let down.

But once inside, I started to realize that Paisley Park was designed to look like a factory because it essentially was one. Much of the 65,000-square-foot building is geared towards productivity. There are several studios and live rooms, designed to ensure that Prince, or someone in his network of collaborators, always has room to write and record. "If I didn't make music, I'd die," Prince once said of his creative urge. The way that Paisley Park was set up was a testament to that belief.

After his producer Josh Welton played me the new album, the phone rang. "Hi, it's Prince," said the unmistakable voice at the other end of the line. The weird thing was, he was just a few yards away in another studio — working of course.

Minn. manse fit for a Prince



PacificCoastNews

GO PAISLEY!

Prince doesn't suffer fools gladly. His publicist had approved my visit, but he wanted to review me himself, before bothering to interrupt his creative process and gracing me with his presence.

The phone call was a test and evidently, I passed. A few minutes later, he appeared in the studio, looking rail-thin but healthy, sporting wispy yet well-manicured facial hair, and topped with the afro that became an iconic part of his latter-day look.

We chatted about the new album, the lack of daring modern songwriters, his famed vault of unreleased music located in the complex, and I even had the privilege of hearing some new music that he was working on with his band 3rdEyeGirl. As good as "HitnRUN Phase One"

genuinely was, it struck me that he was already on to the next thing.

As is typical of Prince, he didn't allow me to record the interview or even take notes.

After a 20-minute conversation, my time was up, but before I left the premises, Welton showed me the Paisley Park I'd really come to see — the one that showed off Prince's taste, flair and fabulousness.

Prince's love of pingpong was evident from the table that stood in one of the live rooms, as well as the well-worn paddle (which nobody was allowed to touch). And for the times that anyone needed to retreat, there was the so-called "Galaxy Room" — decorated with the images of planets and bathed in ultra-violet light, designed for meditation and reflection.

On the way out, I got a glimpse of a hallway that was the nearest thing to a Prince museum as could be imagined. It was decked with his many Grammys and American Music Awards, as well as images of himself through the years.

Just before I reached one of the Paisley Park exits, Welton pointed out the customized Honda motorcycle from the "Purple Rain" movie — perhaps the most iconic Prince artifact in existence.

But all of this was kept out of the way, separate from the studios and live rooms where Prince was crafting his next moves.

These reminders of the past were for tourists like me who happened to pass through, but the man himself was more interested in the future. He was

famous for often ignoring questions about the past in interviews, and reiterated that during our conversation. "I'm not interested in what happened yesterday," he told me.

Even though I went in thinking (maybe even secretly hoping) Paisley Park would be an ornate ode to himself, and where I might see Prince lounging around and serving up pancakes like in the famous "Chappelle's Show" sketch.

But it turned out that Paisley Park was a place where Prince continually strived to be better, and sought a road he hadn't previously travelled.

It was a visit that peeled away some of Prince's superhuman magic, but made me respect, understand and admire him even more than I thought was possible.

He was hooked on pills: dooper

Prince was hooked for decades on powerful opioid painkillers, spending as much as \$40,000 at a time on black-market Dilaudid pills and Fentanyl patches, according to a report.

The "majorly addicted" star secretly took the drugs to combat anxiety and stage fright, a man who identified himself as Prince's dealer from 1984 until 2008 told the Daily Mail.

"He'd buy large supplies of both drugs — I think the most he ever spent was around \$40,000 at one time" for a six-month supply, said the self-described LA-based drug dealer, calling himself "Doctor D."

The singer-songwriter's drug use would increase during times of stress, including when he was filming the 1984 hit "Purple Rain" and right before his performances at the Miami Super Bowl in 2007 and his 2008 appearance at Coachella, Doctor D. said.

"He was always a pill man — that's why nobody ever saw him do drugs," the dealer said.

"He wasn't really a party guy either; he was doing these drugs so he could feel at ease around people.

"When I knew him he didn't have any health problems that I knew about — he was taking the drugs because he needed them to cope, not because he was in pain."

Prince, 57, was found dead Thursday at his Minnesota home reportedly from an overdose of the opiate Percocet, prescribed to combat the pain in his hips and ankles — joints he damaged during a career of performing in high heels, his pals have said.

The doctors who prescribed the Percocet may not have known about his addiction to other meds, increasing his risk of overdose, the dealer said.

Police sources told the London Mirror that they will question the star's doctors and members of the entourage who flew home with him from a performance in Atlanta last week. The flight ended with an emergency landing in Moline, Ill., so he could get an emergency "save shot." *Laura Italiano*

Private cremation

The remains of Prince have been cremated, the star's publicist said Saturday, adding that "their final storage will remain private."

The singer, who died Thursday, was honored at a "private, beautiful ceremony," said Yvette Noel-Schure. A "musical celebration" will be held at a future date, she said. *Post Staff*