

Call him "funky,"  
call him "bad,"  
but don't call him "Prince."  
A rare conversation with ✠ —  
visionary composer and one  
of the best guitarists of  
this generation.




# *the.* Guitarist *formerly known as* Prince


**T**he room is small and cave-like, maybe five feet long, with a low, rounded, gold ceiling that slopes gradually down to a floor covered with a snow white, shag pile carpet. The space has a slightly claustrophobic feel and smells vaguely of perspiration and Lord knows what else. If there were a whorehouse in Disneyland, it might look something like this. At the big end of the cave, right behind a red velvet curtain, stands a huge mixing console. Down at the smaller end there's a mirrored dressing table and a throne-like chair upholstered in leopard skin. ★ Welcome to the Endorphin Machine—the on-stage inner sanctum of The Artist Formerly Known As Prince.

*by alan di perna*  
*photograph by nicole nodland*







Who else but —as he now wishes to be identified—would design a stage set that includes a place where the artist can hide from his audience? Elusive and withdrawn,  is a man of mystery. Ticket holders will never see behind the red velvet curtain. Perhaps they are meant to imagine scenes of deliciously unutterable decadence unfolding in that lair every time  retreats inside. But now the truth can be revealed: he goes back there to primp and mix the show.

The mirror and mixing board are fitting symbols for the boundless ego encased within the 5-foot, 3-inch frame of the Artist Formerly Known As Prince. If it weren't for the incredible, genre-bending, funkier-than-God music created by that Artist, the ego might be totally unbearable. You'd think that (1) singing his heart out, (2) making his  guitar wail like St. Theresa on ecstasy, (3) leading his awe-inspiring band and (4) being the all-around focal point of the whole damn show would give the guy enough to do. He's gotta be the soundman *too*? Everybody in the music business knows you can't mix house sound from the stage.


Or can't you?

"It's been a real trial-and-error process, but it's getting a lot better," says Michael Bland, the drummer for 's current band, the New Power Generation. "Right now  doesn't trust any soundman—and rightfully so. Back in 1990, during my first tour with Prince, as he was called then, he would go into his guitar solo on 'Purple Rain,' and sometimes it would be like four bars before the soundman would boost the signal and the guitar would finally kick in. Now, where's that at? The whole solo would be shot.  is a very hands-on person. His attitude is, 'If you can't give it to me, I'll get it myself.'"


It certainly sounds good inside 's Glam Slam club in Minneapolis, where the man is leading his mighty New Power Generation through a set that comes on as hard, strong and relentless as a lubed-up loco-



motive. The whole crowd is dancing three feet above the ground—elated at seeing their hometown hero at such close quarters, in the intimate confines of his own night club. Chalk up another one for . If anyone can mix house sound from the stage, it's this slender enigma, who can get utterly slammin' funk out of everything—from a "cloud" guitar to an SSL mixing computer.

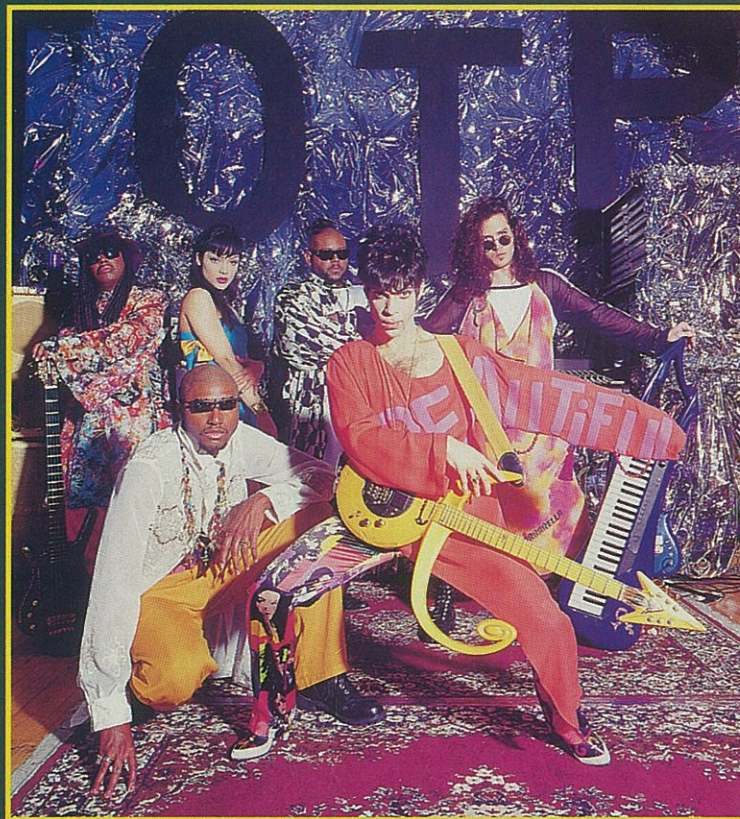
He's never been afraid to expose himself to potential ridicule. And he has consistently been vindicated by the superlative quality and imaginative intensity of his music.

Speaking of imagination,  designed the entrance and interior of his onstage mixing cave as a stylized replica of the female sex organ—complete with a two-foot high, faux gold clitoris. This may seem shock-

ingly sexist, but it should be remembered that his stage set also includes a massive gold tower that in no small way suggests the main anatomical peculiarity of males. The fact is,  has never been one to discriminate. His bands have always included musicians of all genders and races. His music spans a wide spread of styles, from rock to funk to bop. The man has always delighted in taking what appear to be irreconcilable opposites and demonstrating that they're all really part of the same cosmic Love Vibe. Typical is the new name he's taken on: , a combination of the symbols for male and female. Even the design of the form-fitting bodysuit he wears at the Glam Slam—one black trouser leg, one white, and a bold interweaving of the two colors up and down the garment—reflects his obsession with the true harmony of apparent opposites.

But there is a down side to all this. With one foot squarely in funk and the other firmly planted in rock,  has never gotten his full props in either field. And his talents as a songwriter, singer, multi-instrumentalist, producer and all-around image maker have tended to obscure the fact that he is one kick-ass guitar player.

But he certainly isn't hiding his mastery from his Glam Slam audience.  opens his show with several thunderous hard rock numbers, tearing up the fretboard of his eponymous "love symbol" guitar. The set is heavy on brand new material, mostly from albums the public may never get to hear (see below). Never one to pander to audience expectations,  isn't performing any of his old hits tonight. (They were, in any case, recorded by a forgettable someone named Prince.) His one



*"I always wanted  
to be thought of as a  
Guitarist"*

He has, in fact, made a lifelong career of breaking all known showbiz rules. At the tender age of 17, Prince, as he was known, was signed to Warner Bros. and given complete artistic control over his music—the youngest artist in the company's history ever to be so privileged. Since then he has resolutely refused to conform to anything resembling a safe or predictable career path, always taking chances that many would deem reckless, if not downright foolish.





concession to commercialism is his performance of his newest single, "The Most Beautiful Girl In The World." Not surprisingly, the concert is compelling from beginning to end. It's clear is that ♀ is currently going through one of his most rock-guitar-intensive phases since the glory days of *Purple Rain*. He even closes his set with a medley of classic Santana guitar moments, deftly evoking Carlos's hot phrasing while adding something of his own unique tone and style.

"I always wanted to be thought of as a guitarist," ♀ quietly admits. "But you have a hit and you know what happens...."

The interviewer must content himself

with such tantalizingly brief pronouncements when dealing with The Artist Formerly Known As Prince. Just as he disdains showbiz conventions for concerts or albums, he ignores the rules when it comes to playing the interview game. Journalists are forbidden to even use the word "interview" in his presence, use a tape recorder, refer to a written question sheet or take any form of notes during their "conversation" with ♀. (Of course, the "P-word" is *verboten*.) Reporters are simply supposed to remember everything he says. This seems a daunting task—until you realize how little he *does* say: ♀'s responses are monosyllabic and often deliberately evasive. The man seems to harbor a deep mistrust of the written or spoken word. Even his new name

is a symbol that cannot be expressed verbally or represented in the alphabet of any language. Knowingly or otherwise, ♀ has allied himself with those post-modernist intellectuals who feel that language is inherently deceitful—a tool of oppression wielded by those in power.

On the other hand, the possibility does exist that ♀ is something of an idiot savant. (Who ever said that musical genius has anything to do with intelligence?) Or perhaps his longtime friend and current bassist, Sonny Thompson, has the best take: "He'd just rather say it through his music. His thing is, 'I'll put out as much music as I can and express myself that way.'"

In any case, inquiring reporters are given little opportunity to learn whether the Man Who Calls Himself ♀'s mind is like Albert Einstein's—or more like Forrest Gump's. Audiences with ♀ are typically brief. Journalists are generally kept waiting for hours and hours, typically till two or three in the morning. It should be noted that the press aren't the only ones ♀ singles out for this kind of treatment. On the evening of my own appointment with him in Minneapolis, he also had Barbara Streisand's lighting director flown in all the way from New York, presumably to discuss hiring him for the big upcoming ♀ tour. This poor fellow was kept cooling his heels for five hours before being ushered into ♀'s presence, where he was told, "My work is my love. My love is my work. We'll talk."

My own first meeting with the Man Whose Name You're Not Supposed To Say comes a few hours after the Glam Slam gig, at an after-show party held upstairs at the club. Two of his functionaries lead me with due reverence up to a spot next to the DJ's console where ♀ is standing, holding court. Despite the strenuous set he's just played, he looks quite fresh. He's changed into a striped polo shirt and flares—the sailor boy look. (The Hendrix-cum-Little Richard bouffant seems to have gone out with the P-name.) His pencil-line-sideburns and mustache are connected in a single sinuous line. My research on ♀ has prepared me for his slight stature and the quarter-inch thick layer of makeup on his face. But the real surprise is his everyday speaking voice. He sounds so *normal*, like a regular guy from the Midwest. This comes across with particular force over the telephone, where his carefully-preened physical presence can't serve as a decoy.

As the crowd around him thickens, ♀ abandons his post and scoots up onto a brick window ledge behind the DJ booth. He's said to be sensitive about his height, and from this vantage point he's able to look over the heads of most of the other people in the room. ♀ was purportedly eager for an interview that would deal with music and guitar playing instead of focusing on issues like his sexuality or what Kim Basinger was like. So I start by inquiring

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whether he considers the guitar to be his main instrument. He replies, reasonably enough, that he doesn't consider any instrument his "main" one. He just reaches for whatever seems necessary to bring a song into being.

"I start with the city. Then I choose the street," he adds somewhat cryptically.

**GUITAR WORLD:** And what instrument did you start on?

**♫:** Piano. I went to guitar later on, when I was about 13.

**GW:** What is your idea of the ultimate guitar tone?

**♫:** A woman in climax.

**GW:** Do you plan out your solos on record,

or are they spontaneous?

**♫:** Spontaneous.

**GW:** Which solo or guitar track of yours is your favorite?

**♫:** All are different.

**GW:** What was the genesis of the Santana medley you performed tonight?

**♫:** It was Sonny's [Thompson] idea.

**GW:** Is Carlos a particular favorite guitarist of yours? Have you two ever met?

**♫:** I would consider Carlos a friend.

**GW:** Who are your all-time favorite guitarists? Your biggest guitar influences?

**♫:** I listened to everybody. My favorite of all time is Sonny T.

The influence question is a sticky one with **♫**—there's no making him cite any

name players who've affected his guitar style. Not that he doesn't wear many of his musical antecedents on his sleeve. Whether it's because he grew up black in whiter-than-white Minnesota, or because of the man's own voracious musical appetites, the young Prince cut his teeth on a mixture of r&b and early-Seventies FM radio rock: Sly And The Family Stone and Earth Wind And Fire, along with vigorous helpings of the likes of Grand Funk Railroad and Chicago. According to one account, the ability to play the solo from Chicago's album rock hit "25 Or Six To Four" was the acid test for aspiring guitarists in Prince's high school. And an early band of his was named Grand Central, in homage to Michigan's own Seventies power trio, Grand Funk Railroad. Also, as the son of a working jazz pianist, John Nelson, the young Prince must surely have picked up on that side of the African-American musical tradition.

But today there's no getting him to acknowledge any of this. It's as though he wants to create the impression that he was created *ex nihilo*—from nothing, like Venus springing fully formed from the forehead of Zeus. So he won't play the name game when asked about his influences. Perhaps he's afraid of leaving someone out, or naming someone who might be considered unhip. The more he is pressed to identify role models on the guitar, the more he returns to Sonny Thompson, the bass player in his own band. Thompson played guitar with several Minneapolis groups before joining the New Power Generation.

"I thought Sonny was God," says the man many speak of in similarly exalted terms. "Sonny was my hero. A lot of what I do on guitar, I learned from him. I'd go over to his house and we'd play records and he'd show me things on guitar."

Thompson seems agreeably surprised when informed of his boss's high praise: "Oh, man! He said that? Wow!" Sonny has known **♫** since childhood. "We grew up together," the bassist narrates. "I met him on the south side of Minneapolis. I was carrying my guitar somewhere and he was carrying a guitar too."

Sonny remembers what he and the young **♫** listened to during their formative stages as guitarists: "At that particular time, I was about 13 or 14. I was listening to a lot of Hendrix and Grand Funk Railroad. I had a band I was playing guitar in then. Chick Corea and them were around and I was just starting to get into them. A whole bunch of wild stuff."

Sonny adds that **♫** was a fast learner.

"Oh, man! Photographic memory. Anything you played for him, he could repeat it. I've never seen anything like it. He's definitely got perfect pitch. Anything he hears, he can play."

It's hardly surprising that **♫** and Sonny worked out on Hendrix riffs during the ear-

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ly Seventies; what guitarist who grew up in that era didn't? At times, especially during the 1984-85 *Purple Rain* phase, ♀ seemed intent on turning himself into Jimi Hendrix. The lace neck cloths and spangly frock coats were a defiantly blatant rip from the cover of Hendrix' *Are You Experienced?* album. Many of the stage moves ♀ adopted for his lengthy in-concert guitar solos during this period also seemed carefully copied from Hendrix film clips. One wonders whether the whole thing was just another costume change for him—another disguise, something new to wear, like his *Sign O' The Times* terrycloth miniskirt or the Zorro getup on the front cover of ♀. But in donning Jimi's stage weeds, ♀ seems to have taken the man's music deeply to heart as well. Even his latest album, *Come*, concludes with a free-form solo guitar track called "Orgasm," which finds ♀ erupting on the fretboard in a manner that bears no small resemblance to Jimi's Woodstock rendition of "The Star Spangled Banner." Only, ♀ has added his own inimitable touch to the proceedings. The only other sound on the track is that of an unidentified female experiencing a prolonged, and rather vocal, sexual climax.

**GW:** You've often been compared to Jimi Hendrix. How do you feel about that?

♂: People make the world go 'round.  
**GW:** Was your guitar solo on "Orgasm" directly inspired by the track's title/subject matter?

♂: Yes.

**GW:** So many people think of the guitar as a phallic symbol. Do you?

♂: People make the world go 'round.

Sonny Thompson has his own perspective: "A lot of people say he sounds like Hendrix; but to me, he doesn't really. His vibrato is different. Just the way he attacks the guitar is different. I think his guitar sound is coming into its own at this point. I think he incorporates whatever he hears into his guitar playing, like from different instruments and all. It's just like he's absorbing all this stuff and spitting it back out."

One reason why it's difficult to get a fix on ♀ the musician is that he's so incredibly prolific. In addition to his own prodigious output—roughly an album a year since 1978 plus a slew of singles, remixes and non-album B-sides—he's said to have some 500 songs in the can that have never been released, not counting bootleg material. And let's not forget his activities as a film and video actor/director/screenwriter. Or the hits he's written and/or produced for other artists, including Sheila E., the Bangles, Sheena Easton, The Time, even Kenny Rogers. He's all over the just-released 1-800-New-Funk album, which includes his

duet with Nona Gaye (daughter of Marvin), "Love Sign." Beyond this, ♀ songs are always turning up on film soundtracks and he even finds time to play keyboards on recordings by the jazzy instrumental group Madhouse. The man is almost perpetually writing and recording. His whole existence is apparently set up so he can do as much as possible.

The Paisley Park headquarters is located near ♀'s house out in Chanhassen, Minnesota, a suburb of Minneapolis. It's a sanitary, corporate-looking building that could easily be the headquarters of a prosperous Midwestern insurance company. Not a rococo gold phallus in sight.

"People are always disappointed that there aren't women in bondage gear hanging from the rafters," deadpans Paisley Park's house publicist. Instead, the place is staffed by clean-cut, efficient-looking young women and men—again, racially mixed—all of whom seem to be able say "The Artist Formerly Known As Prince" with an entirely straight face. "Hope you have a good conversation with the Artist Formerly Known As Prince," one told me, beaming. Or, "Have you seen this new photo of The Artist Formerly Known As Prince?" Among themselves, though, they usually just refer to him as "The Boss."

The top floor at Paisley Park houses ♀'s many business operations. This includes his newly created NPG records, headed by



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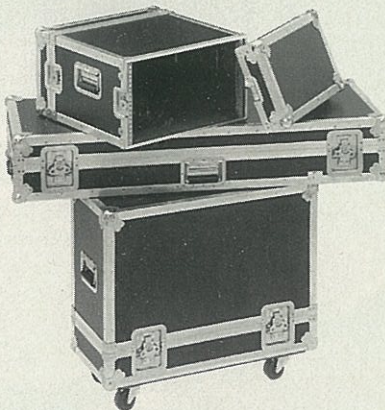
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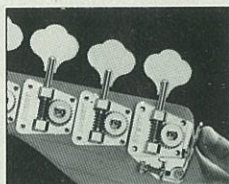
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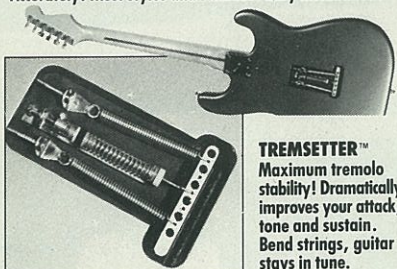
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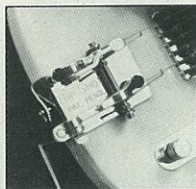
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Levi Seacer, Jr., who left his post as the New Power Generation's consummately funky second guitarist to concentrate on the biz. On the main floor, there's the justly famous Paisley Park recording studio which houses, among other things, one of the slickest SSL consoles on the planet, and certainly the only one that bears a ♪ symbol in place of the manufacturer's logo. Down a level is a massive sound stage which is used for everything from video shoots to full-scale tour rehearsals and impromptu jams.

Basically, whenever the inspiration strikes him, ♪ will slip down from his house and futz around with any of these state-of-the-art facilities. People at Paisley will tell you that their Boss "is very hands on" with the business, and that he's in his upstairs office by 10 or 11 every morning. But far more of his time is spent in the studio. Apparently, ♪ sleeps very little. It's not unusual for his band members to be awakened at three or four in the morning and summoned to a recording session.

"It's like being a fireman," Michael Bland suggests. "If there's a fire, you get up, you put your rubber pants on and you slide down the pole. The turnover rate, in terms of writing material and recording it, is incredible. ♪ works quicker than anyone could imagine. He has a tendency to walk around with this notebook that has words in it—just lyrics looking for a song. And if he hears something he likes while we're jamming, he'll pull [the book] right open and we'll be working on a new song. Other times, he'll come into the studio with a completed song that he'll have finished at his house, at his grand piano and a cheap little cassette deck."

♪ himself doesn't like to talk about song-writing; "childbearing," he calls it. "Those questions are too personal. Thank you for not asking." But if you talk to the people around ♪ you learn things. From the guys in his band, you'll learn that ♪ is a virtual antenna for song ideas. He's perpetually in receive mode, ever ready to snatch a new song idea from the air around him.

"A lot of ideas for songs come from our soundchecks," says Levi Seacer. "I mean our soundchecks are sometimes longer than our shows! We just start jamming. If someone has a good idea, we put it on a cassette and we may go in the studio after the show and cut the song. Like *Diamonds And Pearls*—the basic tracks for that album came together in like a week and a half. I remember one night we cut three songs: 'Money Don't Matter,' 'Willing And Able' and [the non-lp B-Side] 'Horny Pony.' All three of those in one evening!"

♪ tends to go for spontaneous, first-take, live-in-the-studio tracks—even when he's cutting a complex, episodic

piece like "Three Chains Of Gold," from the ♪ album. "That's one of many that we had to do in one take," Michael Bland remembers. "We had to cut that all in one big hunk, and it was *murder*, man. All ♪ had was all these little sections that he'd written while he was in Paris. We had to piece it all together and then play it."

Another artist ♪ has been compared to is Frank Zappa—for the staggering amount of high quality work he's released, for his ability to play many instruments, and for his obsessive, workaholic perfectionism. And like Zappa, he meticulously composes and arranges some of his records in advance, while on other discs, like *Come*, he trusts more to improvisation.

"The *Come* album really evolved from boredom during Christmas vacation," Michael Bland laughs. "Sonny and I were the only two cats in the band who hung around Minneapolis during Christmas vacation. And ♪ got bored, as he usually does. Because when he's not creating, he's not alive, you know. So he went down to the soundstage where we were set up for rehearsal before vacation began. And he just played by himself all day; they say he stayed in there for like eight, 10 hours, just messing around with ideas. And then the second day he got up the courage to call us up and ask, 'You guys bored too?' So we came out and worked on a good half-dozen tunes. And we went in the studio and started cutting them—we cut the rhythm tracks for 'Dark,' 'Come,' 'Papa' and a few other things like that."

As his band members returned to town, ♪ did quite a bit more work on these basic tracks, and *Come* ultimately turned out to be a pretty slick album. But the idea of working in a trio context with just Sonny and Michael triggered in ♪ the idea for another kind of record. In the midst of work on *Come*, the three of them set up together on the soundstage at Paisley Park, their amps cranked up full, and did some bluesy jamming. The result is an album called *The Undertaker*.

"Picture this," says Michael: "A DAT machine, a 32-channel board, two techs and three players. It was about three o'clock in the morning. We got our sounds together and just let the DAT roll. We took about an hour to make that record, from start to finish, playing straight through with no overdubs. The sequence of songs on the record is exactly the way we played it. The guitar segues from one song to the next, like when we do live stuff."

There'd been talk for a while of a straight-up blues album from the Artist They Used To Call Prince, but *The Undertaker*, says ♪, is not that album. "It starts off in a blues vein," he admits, "but then quickly goes to funk. But because of the first song, people tend to want to put it in that [blues] glass of water."



In his early days, the Artist Formerly Known As Prince was essentially a Telecaster man. He dug both the original Fender and Hohner's version of this classic instrument, and for that matter, he still does.

"When he wants that twangy, clean sound, he'll still grab for a Tele," says Zeke Clark, ♣'s guitar technician extraordinaire. Having worked for the likes of Edward Van Halen, Sammy Hagar, Richie Kotzen, Michael Schenker and even Jimmy Page, Zeke knows a thing or two about guitar heroes. And in his estimation, ♣ is "a musical genius. The Boss just has it in his blood. He won't sit and rehearse a lot. He'll just pick that guitar up and it's like magic."

♣'s early adventures in Teledom have left him with an enduring fondness for maple. His "cloud" guitars—those big-horned fellows which came into prominence around the time of *Purple Rain*—are made of that noble wood, as is his latest "love symbol" axe. [See *Collector's Choice*, page 99.]

"He's been pretty much sticking to the symbol guitar in the studio," Zeke reports. "Although he does like to play Warwick basses. Outside of that, he'll use an Epiphone hollow-body here and there. For acoustics, he'll often play Gibsons or Takamines, although he's got a selection of Taylors and Guilds as well."

"He's probably got about 65 to 70 guitars in all," Zeke reckons, "anything from vintage Telecasters to vintage Gibsons. He's got a piece of everything, really. Some are at his house, some are in various studios and some are on display in his [*Glam Slam*] clubs and retail shops. [♣ fan merchandise is for sale in special ♣ shops in Minneapolis and other select cities—GW Ed.]

Among the more interesting guitars on the rack at Paisley Park is a custom-made, reddish-pink electric sitar, which may be heard on the mighty "7" and on other tracks down through the years. Zeke estimates that there are "less than 20 'cloud' guitars in existence." And some of those are basses. In addition to the original German "love symbol" guitar, there are two replica "love symbols" made by Zeke and luthier Andy Beach. Also fashioned from choice maple, these instruments have 22 frets (vs. 24 on the original), and Tele-style bridges in place

of the original's Tune-O-Matic-style bridge. The guitars made by Zeke and Beach also feature slightly different neck shapes. "It's a kind of custom shape made for his feel," Zeke explains. "Kind of a cross between a Les Paul and ♣'s 'cloud' guitar feel. One neck is a little fatter, to add a little more character."

Onstage—and frequently in the studio—♣ plugs into a custom rack system designed by Zeke. The system strikes an ideal balance between simplicity and pow-

Uptown Flash rack mixers, in conjunction with any of the following rack effects: an Alesis Quadraverb used mainly for reverb; a Roland GP-16, which is mainly used for pitch-bend effects (♣ also has a Roland VCA expression pedal underfoot which is assigned to the GP-16, enabling him to control pitch variations in real time); and two customized Zoom 9030's which ♣ uses for a wide variety of effects. ♣ writes his own programs for the Zooms. His names for them include "Pillow Talk" and "Twin

Reverb." He uses an eight-switch Roland pedalboard to select programs on the Zooms and GP-16. The pedalboard works in tandem with a Digital Music Corp. MXC-8 MIDI Switcher.

As for cabinets, Zeke explains: "I take the power stage right off the 100-watt [*Soldano*] head. That runs four cabinets: two onstage for ♣ and two off-stage in a pit that I mic, one out of phase with the other." The preamps also feed two Mesa/Boogie Strategy 500 stereo power amps. "There's one cabinet per channel," Zeke adds. "Basically we're using Marshall slant cabinets with vintage [*Celestion*] 30's for the clean stuff and [*Peavey*] 5150's for the dirty stuff." For extra control, the clean signal is also direct-injected into ♣'s big Paragon house mixing console via Countryman D.I. boxes.

The system also includes a Crown power amp which is used to drive extra onstage cabinets on larger and/or trickier stages. A combination of dbx, Rocktron Hush and Guitar Silencer equipment keeps hiss at bay throughout the system. Sony wireless equipment is used for large venues and there's a Samson rig for smaller clubs.

Some guitar icons wouldn't know how to turn on their own rack. But that stereotype hardly applies to ♣, according to Zeke: "No matter what equipment he likes, he's always thinking ahead. 'Can we make this unit do such and such? Let's change this particular envelope in this unit—I want those delays in reverse.' So we spend a lot of research and development time going inside of units and modifying things. And that's on every component. We get all the latest gear, and ♣ is still not satisfied. He's always looking for ways to produce different wave forms, different sounds. He's always one step ahead of everybody." ●



A look inside ♣'s ever-evolving rig.

# SEX machines

by alan di perna  
photograph by nicole nodland

er. First the guitar signal goes through a chain of Boss stomp boxes that ♣ has used from time immemorial. His main pedalboard features, from left to right, a Metal Zone, which is the latest addition to his collection, a Vibrato, a Digital Delay, an Octave, a Flanger and a Turbo Distortion. Also within easy reach of ♣'s high-heeled boot is a customized Colorsound wah.

From there it's on to the rack, where ♣ can switch between a Soldano Caswell preamp for clean tones or a rackmount 100-watt Soldano head for dirty sounds. The stomp boxes can be run in front of either amp. And either amp can be used, via two



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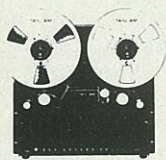
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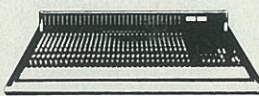
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I take a seat behind the SSL board in the control room at Paisley Park's big studio. An engineer cues up a tape and a lean, powerful three-chord blues called "The Ride" flows from the speakers. The song is squarely in the classic automotive double-entendre tradition: "If you got the time, baby, I've got the ride." But **✿**'s guitar solos (and there are many of them) fling themselves violently outside the confines of traditional blues riffing. The first solo is fluid and slippery, with a tone that combines honking wah and the envelope filter sound from a Zoom 9030 effects processor. (Apparently, **✿** has become infatuated with the Zoom. He's currently using it heavily, much in the same way he used a harmonizer on the *Diamonds And Pearls* album.) And with the second guitar solo, all hell breaks loose—mega-distorted, dissonant madness which, in its own guitaristic way, is the most excessive thing yet from an artist noted for always going over the top.

"He tends to really start opening up and playing a lot of different things when me and Michael do a trio thing with him," says Sonny Thompson. "There's no key-boards there—no nothing. So he can venture out and play what he wants to play."

As for **✿**, he says he's really pleased with *The Undertaker*: "It's real garage, you know? But Warners won't release it...."

Which brings us to a real sore point for this Artist Formerly Known As Prince. To the essence of his dispute with Warner Bros. To put it as simply and neutrally as possible, **✿** produces more music per year than the label feels it can profitably release. So they don't.

"Don't you think that's restraint of trade?" demands **✿**, who has avidly followed singer George Michael's lawsuit with Sony Records over artistic freedom. His own impasse with Warners has been building to a crisis over the past several years. The public's first awareness of the struggle came circa 1988, with the notorious *Black Album*—a scathing disc full of gangsta rap material that The Artist Then Known As Prince was originally going to release through Warners, but then decided to pull. The reason generally cited for the record's withdrawal was its "dark subject matter," but there were also gripes from the Princely camp about "scheduling conflicts" with Warners. Meanwhile, the *Lovesexy* album appeared so quickly that the *Black Album* was soon forgotten—by all but the bootleggers and collectors, that is.

Cut to 1994. After losing money for some time, the former Prince's Paisley Park Records label (distributed by Warners) finally folds. Meanwhile, the Artist

*continued on page 196*





Implied chord voicings, funky diads and quartal harmony: the inimitable guitar stylings of ♪ examined.

# Diamonds and Pearls

One day not too long ago, a skinny kid from Minneapolis with a basement demo tape convinced Warner Bros. Records to give him total creative control over his music: material, production, recording—the works. And that, in turn, changed the course of r&b and funk music as we know it today.

The kid, of course, was Prince, now known as ♪. He was soon to become the chief exponent and disseminator of the “Minneapolis sound”: slick, cleanly recorded funk with an emphasis on a fat bottom end; sparse, almost demo-like production; nasty lyrics tempered with a hint of naiveté; and a feeling that musically, anything goes.

What has always been unique about ♪ is that he draws ideas from any and all musical genres, brazenly fusing them into a personal, instantly identifiable sound. And, unlike many r&b acts, he has never

FIGURE 1

Emaj9 Badd9/D# Emaj9 G#m7

Gtr.1

8va

Gtr.2 (w/ flanger)

TAB

FIGURE 2

F#7

TAB

by askold buk  
photograph by nicole nodland



## ✿ LESSON

[illegible]

G♭add9      A♭add9      B♭add9      G♭add9

The image shows a musical staff with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a 4/4 time signature. The melody consists of a single note, G-flat, held for the entire duration. Below the staff is a fretboard diagram for a guitar. The fret numbers for each string (from low E to high E) are: 2, 2, 0, 4, 4, 2.

	2	2	0	4	4	2
T	2	2	0	4	4	2
A	2	2	0	4	4	2
B	2	2	0	4	4	2

[illegible]

F#5                      B Bsus4                      (F#5) *Stra*

(w/wah-wah) full

TAB

7	7	7
6	9	9
9	9	9

TAB

17	(17)	14	17	14	17	17	14	14	14	14	14
----	------	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----

[illegible]

Bbadd9      Gm11      Fadd9      Ebadd9

TAB

1 1 1 1 1 1

0 0 0 0 0 0

0 0 0 0 0 0

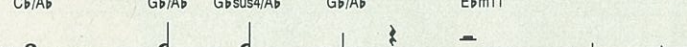
1 0 0 0 0 0

On his next album, 1981's *Controversy*, ♀ continued to demonstrate his fascination with different genres. Most notable, how-

The title cut features some of  $\mathfrak{A}$ 's most lyrical playing. The haunting chords in the verse again feature triads with added ninths, as in **FIGURE 8**. The Bbadd9 chord is a bit tricky to play. Barre the F and C notes on

[illegible][illegible]

(Abm7) (Ab9sus4) (Abm11) (Ab9sus4) Ebm11  
Cb/Ab Gb/Ab Gbsus4/Ab Gb/Ab



TAB

2 2 2 2  
4 4 4 4/6 4 6 6 4 6

E9(no 3rd)

12 12 12 12 12 12

N.C. (B13sus4) (Am11/E) (B13sus4)

8va ..... 1

Lead Synth or Gtr.

full 3 full 3 full full full

21 10 21-22 (22) 10 21 21 10 24 24-25 10 16 10-16

\*\* "hammer-on from nowhere"

The musical notation shows measures 16 through 19. Measure 16 has a treble clef, key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), and a common time signature. It contains a triplet of eighth notes (D4, E4, F#4) followed by a quarter note (G4). A bracket below the first three notes is labeled "\* Synth. 1". Measure 17 continues with a triplet of eighth notes (A4, B4, C#5) followed by a quarter note (D5). Measures 18 and 19 show a hammer-on technique where a new note is played without picking up the pick again. The notes are G4, F#4, E4, D4, C#4, and B3.

\* Synth. 1

TAB

	16	12		10									
	13	9	13	9	10	7	9	9	9 ~ 6				
			11	7		7	5	7	7 ~ 4				

Write one octave lower than you are for playing ease.

Synth 2

TAB
4 5 5 2
2 5 0 2
4 4 2



## LESSON

the top two strings with your index finger. Then grab the Bb on the 5th string with your middle finger and the Bb on the 3rd string with your pinky. Let the open D string ring out. This might be a bit awkward to execute at first, but look how easily you can shift to the Gm11 chord using this fingering. Simply hold the chord shape down while fretting the G on the low E string with your ring finger and releasing your middle finger simultaneously.

The guitar solo in “Purple Rain,” similar to **FIGURE 9**, represents  $\frac{7}{4}$  at his peak. Rather than playing in one position, he uses the whole fingerboard. In bar 5, he introduces a simple, but lovely, two-note motif that fits beautifully over the first

three chords of the progression. The reason for this is that while Bb and A are *common* to all three chords, their harmonic function within each chord changes (played against a Bb chord, A is the major seventh; against Gm, A is the ninth and Bb is the lowered third; played against an F chord, A is the third and Bb is the fourth, or eleventh).

The B-side to “Let’s Go Crazy” is a slammin’ dance tune called “Erotic City,” which despite being just a bassline and a bunch of little fills (such as speeded-up vocals and guitars, cheesy Casio-type sounds, and even the actual click track) manages to sound massive. During the chorus, ♯ again superimposes various triads over an Ab bass pedal to come up with some great extended voicings, similar to

those depicted in **FIGURE 10**.

♯'s music has always been rooted in the blues. So it's no surprise that one of his biggest hits, "Kiss," is essentially a straight I-IV-V blues. It's a testament to ♯'s talent that he could take a hackneyed harmonic form and make it sound fresh again. What masks it so effectively is the juxtaposition of various funk elements: the synth-pop groove, the falsetto vocals and the classic Jimmy Nolen-style turnaround chord, similar to the one shown in **FIGURE 11**. [*Jimmy Nolen, best known as James Brown's guitarist, is credited with creating the "scratch" rhythm guitar style that is essential to funk music—GW Ed.*]

“U Got The Look,” from *Sign ‘O’ the Times*, starts out as another blues, this time with a heavy rock groove and screaming guitar. Then, from out of nowhere, comes an intricate passage during the tag, not unlike **FIGURE 12**. It sounds as if it could be on a Herbie Hancock or Weather Report album, and yet it totally works in a pop context! Notice how  $\text{F}^\sharp$  superimposes the Amaj7 and Emaj7 arpeggios in the first bar and the A7sus4 and E7sus4 arpeggios in the second bar to create a super-hip line in descending parallel fifths and sixths.

Equally adept at a variety of styles, the harmonic sophistication suggested by  $\text{F}\sharp$ 's playing here is second to none. He has an uncanny knack for fitting hip, unexpected passages into a pop song. A good example of that can be found in the horn fills in "200 Balloons," the flip side to "Batdance." Over an implied Bb7 chord,  $\text{F}\sharp$  weaves a chromatic line, similar to **FIGURE 13**, that splits into two voices, resolving on the lowered seventh (Ab) and eleventh (Eb). You can combine the first half of the measure with the top voice of the second half to create a very cool chromatic lick over a Bb7 chord.

♯'s jazz leanings are again evident on "Sexy M.F." from ♯ *And The New Power Generation*. The horn turnaround, similar to **FIGURE 14**, uses voicings favored by Miles Davis: stacked fourths with a third on top. This is a variation of *quartal harmony* (used by jazz artists such as John Coltrane and McCoy Tyner), in which chords are built using fourths rather than thirds.

♂ let his second guitarist, Levi Seacer, Jr., loose on the solo to “Sexy M.F.,” and he responds with a rhythmically impeccable bop-flavored improvisation, similar to **FIGURE 15**, using primarily the A Dorian scale (A, B, C, D, E, F#, G). Notice how at the end of the second bar chromatic thirds are used to connect the 7th and 5th positions. This is a common move used by jazz guitarists such as George Benson and Pat Martino.

So what will **✿** come up with next? Who knows, but if last year's single, "Peach," with a groove reminiscent of T

continued from page 186

FIGURE 13

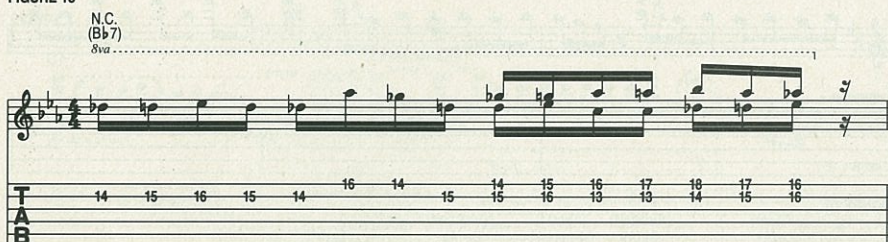


FIGURE 14

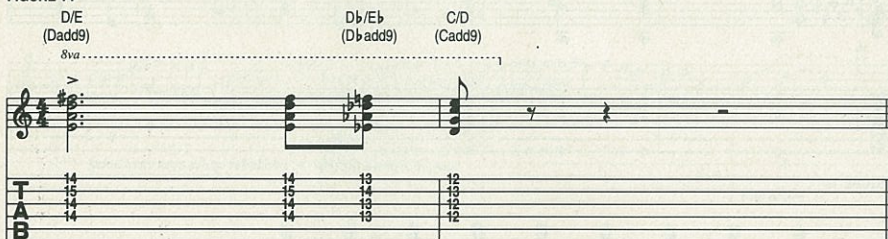
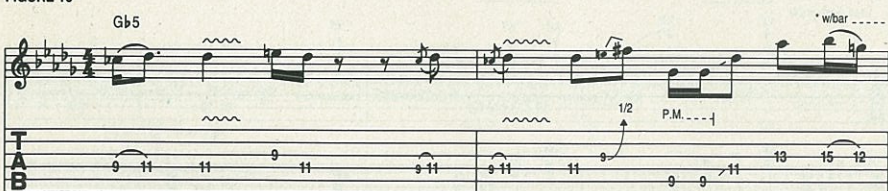


FIGURE 15



FIGURE 16





## CANDLEBOX

continued from page 43

**GW:** You'll just have to rise to the challenge.

**KLETT:** Yeah. And that's cool because we work better under pressure, anyway.

**GW:** I've also noticed some of the lunacy that accompanies having a platinum record. Like your appearance in *Playgirl* magazine...

**KLETT:** Oh, God, I wish that had never happened.

**GW:** Didn't they name you one of the Ten Most Sexy Rockers?

**KLETT:** God, it's just horrible because I have people checking me out and going, "I'm better than he is." I personally wish it had never come out. I mean, it's flattering, it feels good, but it's just something that...

**GW:** Seems kind of stupid?

**KLETT:** Yeah, that's my point, it is stupid. Then they wanted me to do the cover and I was like, "No way!" I should have said I don't even want to be in the magazine to begin with. But it was an ego boost, so I kept with it. People flip me shit all the time about it.

**GW:** Have you ever met Madonna?

**KLETT:** Yeah. She's very nice, definitely in good shape. She's got muscles, man; she'd probably kick your ass. ●

## BEAVIS & BUTT-HEAD

continued from page 49

studio and rerecord the theme using real drums and a real piano. But every time I threaten to do that, everyone says, "Oh, I like the way it sounds now."

**GW:** Are you happy with the quality of the current episodes?

**JUDGE:** I think the latest episodes are the best we've ever done. I'm actually the most proud of the current season. In fact I'd like to be remembered for our last 15 shows.

**GW:** What is your role in the show's production these days?

**JUDGE:** I wrote a lot of the episodes in the first season, but we're doing so many now that we have a staff of writers. I still write almost all of the video commentary. I have a writer that works with me a little bit, but I improvise most of it on the spot in the studio. I just watch the video we've chosen, make a few notes, then let it fly off the top of my head.

**GW:** Who is your favorite bassist?

**JUDGE:** Bootsy Collins [see story, page 18] is someone I'd like to meet. Whenever I hear his work on those old James Brown records I think, "This is the way the bass should be played." It's so cool. ●

## ♣ LESSON

continued from page 70

Rex's "Bang A Gong" and a guitar sound straight out of Billy Gibbons' bag of tricks gives any indication, it looks like ♣ has again become a serious hard-rocker; the tune features *three* guitar solos. ♣ uses the

whammy bar in the first solo, depressing it slightly to create a sick, slinky effect, as in **FIGURE 16**. The second solo has a weird effect that he most likely created via tapping and panning, and the last solo contains direct quotes from ZZ Top's "Pressure."

As happened to other rock icons such as Elvis Presley or Michael Jackson, enormous success coupled with the pressure to stay larger than life has at times led ♣ to become a caricature of himself. Vilified by some while deified by others, he continues to challenge his listeners while challenging himself. It's unfortunate that ♣'s flamboyant image has often overshadowed his contributions as a multi-instrumentalist, songwriter and producer. But when all the posturing and name-changes are put aside, no one who really *listens* to music can deny ♣'s place as an innovator and one of the few true geniuses of rock and roll. ●

## SIXTY MINUTES

continued from page 76

blues labels Duke/Peacock and Backbeat Records. One might agree that it conveniently fits into that 'what is this?' mystery category. And it will divert your attention momentarily, so it's a good inclusion."

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##### Tattoo You (Virgin)

"If your rolling bread box breaks down for any reason, this is good mental fuel."

### ZZ TOP

#### "Fuzzbox Voodoo"

##### Antenna (RCA)

"I think that everybody should include one of their own tunes on their tape. And if you're going to include one of your own, make it a good 'un. Presently, this is the one we're having the most fun with."

### HANK THOMPSON

### "One Six Pack To Go"

#### All-Time Greatest Hits (Curb)

"This one comes at the end so that you have enough motion lotion to get through your next 60-minute job." ●

## DREAM THEATER

continued from page 90

that theme has to stand out and predominate. Hopefully, we'll hear if anything is taking away from that...

**GW:** How do you work together when constructing a solo?

**MYUNG:** Well, take something like the solo coming into the outro section of "Mirror." I had this really cool rhythmic groove that I'd always wanted to use, and it seemed to fit there. It was like pulling ideas out of a hat. Over the course of rehearsing, or a whole writing period, you develop various bits and pieces of things. By the end of our last tour, we had a tape full of ideas we'd developed in soundchecks that we ended up using on this record. You have to know your inventory and pull out what best suits the situation, and let it grow from there.

**PETRUCCI:** That's the key: it has to suit the situation. John's talking about where "Lie" is stuck right in the middle of "Mirror," and the guitar solo at the end is where "Mirror" takes over again, into the thrash part and the ending solo. I remember thinking it would be cool to have a breakdown based on the theme comprising some other section, and then once that theme is over, exploding into this *train-wreck* solo. And John's theme did that. But it's not like he would just pull anything out randomly. Everything has to kind of work with the mood we're trying to evoke.

**GW:** Dissect that solo for us.

**PETRUCCI:** That was done on the 7-string guitar, and I wanted to get the feeling of a weaving solo. The whole run at the beginning is legato, starting on the low b-string, as low as you can go. It's only being picked when I'm changing to the next highest string. And after the legato run and a flurry of right-hand taps, it kicks into a series of unison bends with the wah pedal. Then the band picks up into this double-time thing, and I play a barrage of notes, lines that go rhythmically between triplets and 16th notes to get that weaving quality. Some blues notes at the beginning of the line move into diatonic, then chromatic passing notes.

**GW:** Do you improvise your solos?

**PETRUCCI:** For the most part I write the solos, but then, seven times out of 10, they end up changing a little bit. But I don't generally write them on paper. I mostly like just playing along and improvising—stumbling across things, making mistakes. There might be a tinge of a conscious analysis, like [in *official tones*] "I hear this mode here!" But that almost happens as I'm playing, as opposed to my going in with a preconception.

continued on page 194