

A close-up portrait of Prince, looking directly at the camera. He has dark, wavy hair and is wearing a red jacket. The lighting is a strong teal/cyan color, creating a dramatic and moody atmosphere. The background is a solid teal color.

PRINCE

ICON

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INTRODUCTION

STACIA LANG

Prince is my forever muse.

I know I'm not the only one who feels this way. To the many creatives who were lucky enough to work with him, Prince Rogers Nelson was the most brilliant and thrilling collaborator imaginable. He was a powerhouse who pushed us to the outer limits of our abilities, asking us to give no more than what he gave of himself – the very best. He led by example and, as a result, those of us on the inside of his vision pushed ourselves to go beyond our own perceived limits to create a body of work worthy of our muse. Prince's style shined through every concert tour, television appearance, music video, photo shoot, private show and awards ceremony. Lucky for us, the photographers were there to capture it.

Leafing through this stunning volume of images, it's easy to see why Prince has inspired millions of people worldwide. Through every creative outlet available to him, he expressed himself with abandon. These photos collectively illustrate a lush landscape of artistic choices that changed music, fashion, and performance irrevocably. Having been his costume and clothing designer, I feel incredibly fortunate to be a small part of this resplendent legacy.

When I began working for Prince in the spring of 1990, Paisley Park, Prince's multi-purpose production facility near Minneapolis, Minnesota, was a whirlwind of creative activity: major musical acts were recording in every studio, films were in production on the big soundstage, Paisley Park Records was thriving, and both the art and wardrobe departments were overflowing with work for Prince's upcoming Nude Tour.

Initially hired as a patternmaker and sketch artist, I worked in that capacity until several months in, when I was invited to show Prince some of my own designs. Exhilarated by this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, I produced an array of inspired sketches that included staple elements – bright colours, appliqué, tailored suits, heavy laces, and pant detailing – which would go on to become part of his new look. To my relief, he loved them – I was hired as his exclusive costume and clothing designer, a tenure that spanned both the *Diamonds and Pearls* and *Love Symbol* eras.



Stacia's "million button jacket", which Prince wore on tour and in videos. It was made in several different colourways. The black with white buttons was worn in the 'Sexy M.F.' video.

Prince
Diamonds and
Pearls Tour '91

Purple 4 ply
Silk Suit
w/ yellow
Buttons
- Applique
Detailing
at Cuffs



ROBERT WHITMAN

The story began in Minneapolis in 1977, when a local musician named Prince Rogers Nelson came to the attention of Minneapolis music agent/manager Owen Husney and his partner Gary Levinson. I was close friends with both Owen and Gary, and just starting my career as a photographer. They needed some professional shots to create a press kit and propose Prince for an audition. To entice me into photographing Prince, Levinson came by my apartment and played me one song on his car stereo, an early demo of 'Soft and Wet'. I was instantly gripped. Soon I was photographing the young artist on the street, in the studio, and capturing, on the rarest of occasions, Prince actually smiling.

1977 was quite the year if you were living in Minneapolis and looking to have a good time creatively. I was, and I did. Ever since seeing Michelangelo Antonioni's 1966 movie *Blow Up*, I knew the photographer's life was the one for me. No nine-to-five. No coat and tie. And no one telling me to cut my hair or beard. Plus I loved taking pictures, even though I was still learning how to take them while I was taking them. I was hungry: for experience, for inspiration and for the circus that came with everything happening in this town someone had called the 'Mini-Apple'. While technically we weren't New York, it sure felt like we were. On any given night on Hennepin Avenue, there were as many bands, dance clubs and parties, filled with as much sex, drugs and rock and roll, as any place below 14th street in Manhattan.

It was a wild and crazy time and I was wild and crazy enough to grab the opportunities it threw my way. Fortunately one such opportunity was collaborating with an extremely shy, but profoundly talented, young musician on his press kit. The experience was amazing both at the time and looking back on it from a distance of 40 years.

When I took these photos, Prince wasn't the icon he would become only a few years later. Yes, he was a genius musician and had an amazing presence in front of a camera. But for this shoot – one of his very first – the two of us were just a couple of guys in Minneapolis looking to make and capture magic. We were open, up for anything. Spontaneous, collaborative, shooting from the hip and having a ball through it all.

Before Prince was famous, he was still Prince. And he proved it from the first shot of the first roll of film I took, all the way to the last.

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Robert Whitman's interest in photography developed out of his love of the cinema, which drove him East from Minneapolis to New York. His pictures reflect a man who lives openly, passionately and simply. They capture a youthful and sexy energy that has become his trademark. He displays a unique talent for capturing movement, whether he is working in the controlled atmosphere of the studio for top advertising and editorial clients, or simply walking down the street with camera in hand. His photographs are the footprints of a man on the move, and it's more often than not that he looks to the street itself for his subjects. He currently lives in TriBeCa.



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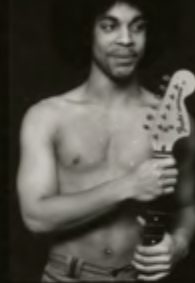
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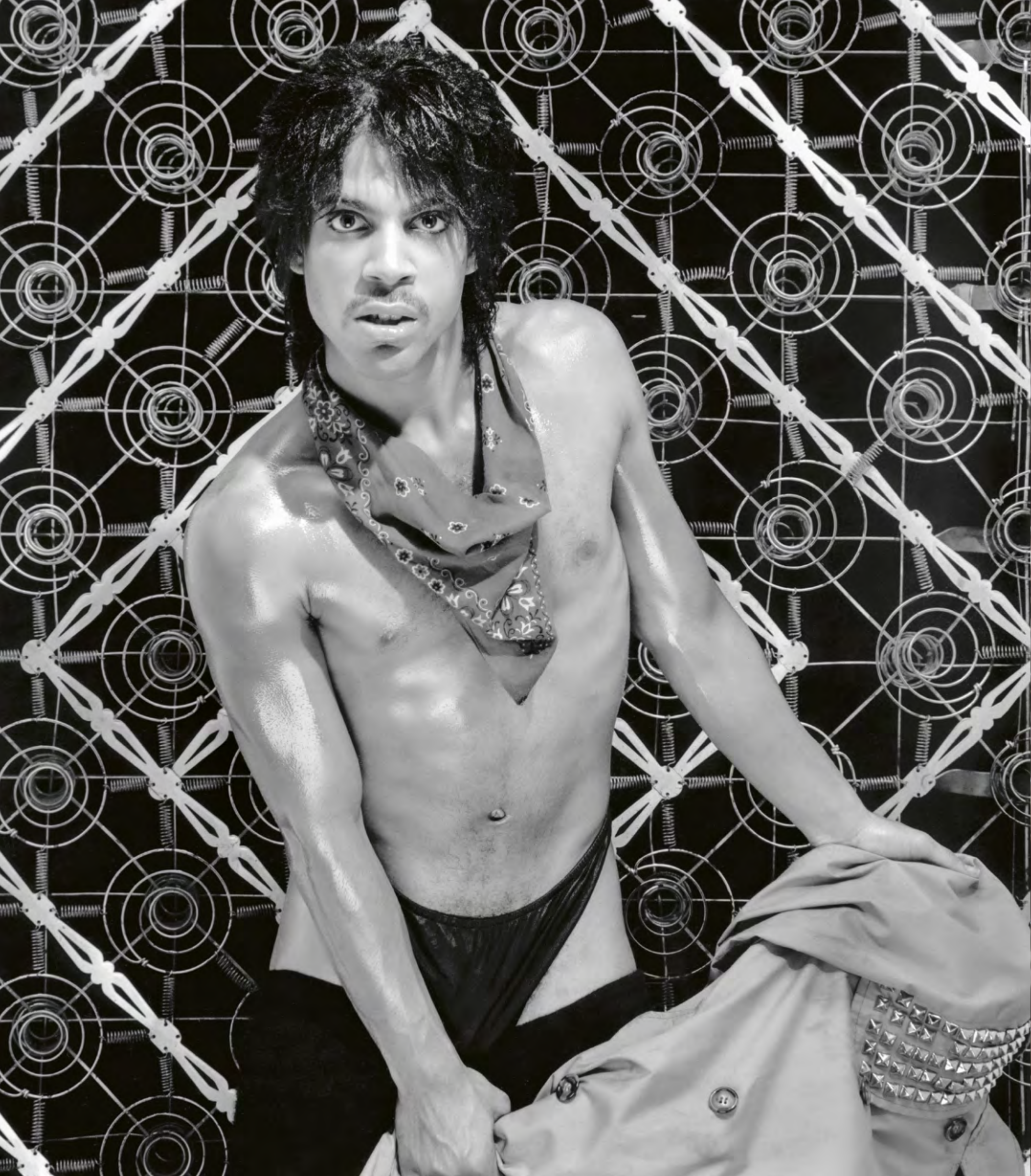


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PATRICK HARBRO

While Bruce Springsteen, Tina Turner and Michael Jackson criss-crossed North America during the summer of 1984, Prince was busy putting the finishing touches on what would be the *Purple Rain* empire. The album and eponymous movie were released in June and July, respectively, and the timing couldn't have been better. He embarked on his Purple Rain Tour in late fall.

Prince was not a new artist in '84, but there was widespread interest from magazines and newspapers who had never covered him before the success of *Purple Rain*. Getting the first images in syndication from the opening night of a big tour meant substantial photo sales, so the place was sure to be full of photographers. I had credentials, but no assignment to shoot the concert, an arrangement that meant my images would go straight into international distribution through an agency in New York; I was betting that the publication licensing would be more lucrative than a single-client guarantee.

I made the four hour drive from my home in Toronto to Detroit's Joe Louis Arena on 4 November. The day was greasy and slick. Fat, charcoal coloured clouds hung over Ambassador Bridge as I crossed the border and made my way downtown. I was told the sun occasionally shone on Detroit but I had to take that on faith – anytime I came to Motor City it was overcast. It was not the usual choice for kicking off a large tour, but Prince had a soft spot for the city after early local radio play helped launch his career.

Once inside, I was escorted to a spot along the rail on the left-hand side of the floor, and the arena quickly filled to its capacity of around 20,000. This was to be the first of seven gigs in Detroit before the tour continued. As I set up my camera rig, the buzz of anticipation could be felt vibrating through the audience.

The position for the cluster of photographers was not optimal, even with telephoto lenses. We were about half the length of the building from the stage but we had the freedom to shoot the entire show instead of the usual restriction of "first three songs only".

His band were tight, snappy and impressive, but the attention was all on Prince. The brightly lit and smoke-flooded set looked like a sordid invitation to an after hours club with a mysterious and sexy theme. Alternating between piano and guitar, the impish performer mastered every vibe, whether it was funk or dance or rock. He ripped a searing guitar solo before sliding the instrument to rest behind his back, taking on the role of ringmaster and protagonist. He danced, cajoled, purred and drew his audience in, carrying the whole performance on his shoulders. I shot only a few rolls of film despite the long set.

ONLY PRINCE'S AURA REMAINED

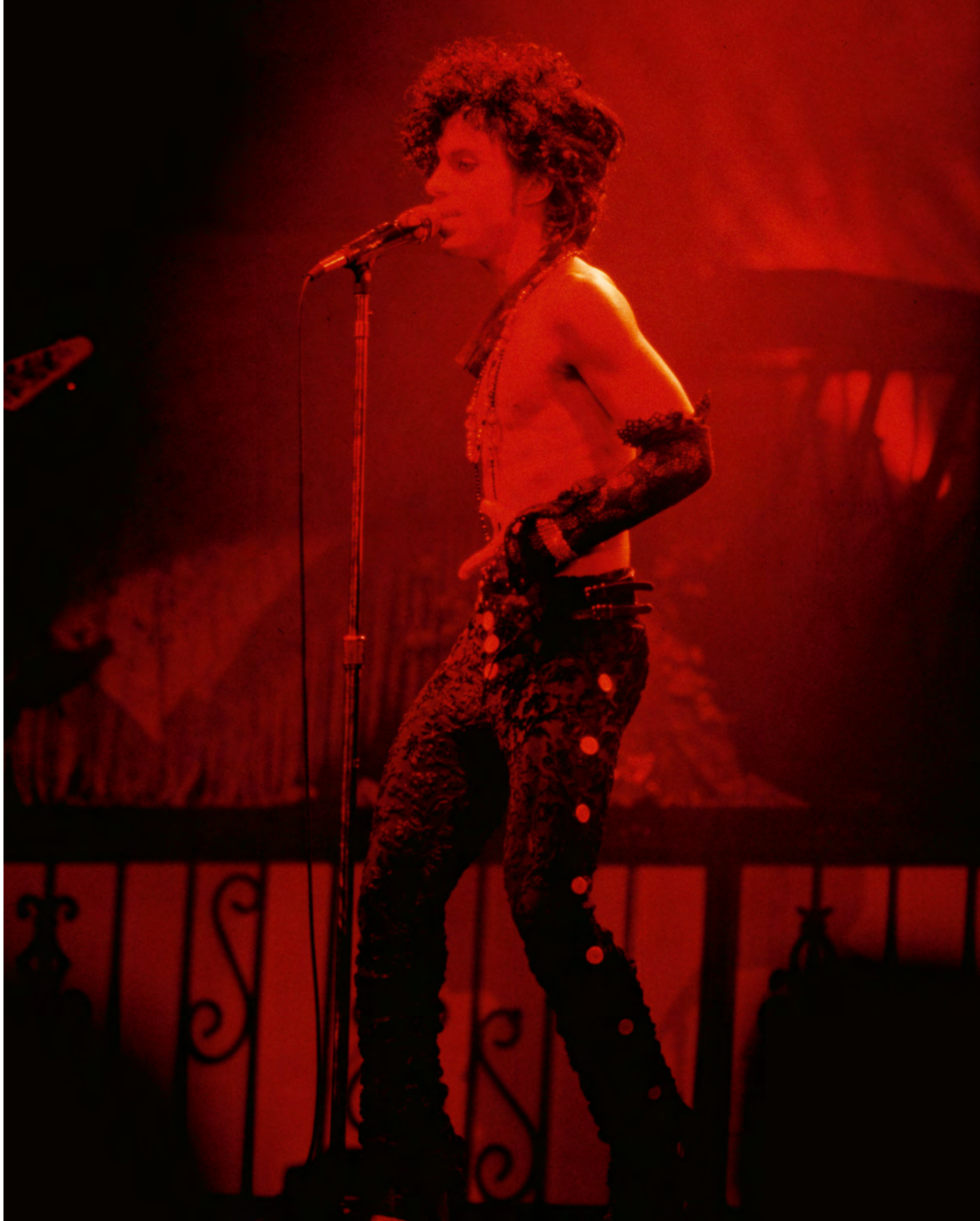
Several of the photographers from New York who had traveled in on the Time Warner jet invited me to join them on the flight back. How I would have enjoyed a spontaneous visit to Manhattan and a quick trip to the *TIME* photo lab to process my film! But I was expected to be on a movie set the next morning in Toronto, so I drove back that night.

A month later, the Purple Rain Tour made its way to Toronto for two concerts at Maple Leaf Gardens. Following the first show, the record company held a private reception at the Four Seasons. As a crowd of press and industry types waited in the hotel ballroom, the enormous doors swung open and in came Prince. There are several artists whose presence is electric, they give off a frequency you can physically feel. Prince was one of those artists. His desire for privacy and his ability to create on his own terms certainly helped build his reputation as a savant. But there was also an *aura*. You can't fake that – Prince just had it. His snowy-haired bodyguard, Chick, immediately followed behind. The man was so large that if you weren't intimidated, you weren't paying attention. He had to duck as he entered through the extra tall door frame to avoid bumping his head. At 5'2", Prince was diminutive to say the least, but next to the bodyguard, he was almost tiny. The comparison provided a moment's unintentional comic relief.

Prince's time in the room was carefully calculated; from the moment he showed up, I imagined a timer counting down inside him. His reluctance to be around people was well known, so it was no surprise when he said hello to a few carefully selected guests before he and Chick made their getaway.

Only Prince's aura remained, but it was enough.

Patrick Harbron started his career in music in the mid 1970s, photographing the greatest names in rock and roll. His photography of Bruce Springsteen, Elvis Costello, Blondie, The Who, Stevie Ray Vaughan, The Police, Queen, The Rolling Stones, and hundreds of others, has been featured on album and DVD covers and publicity, and in tour booklets, books and magazines. He was nominated twice for a JUNO award for album cover photography. His album cover work is also included in the book 1000 Record Covers.







CLAUDE GASSIAN

It was the early 1980s and the tunes on the airwaves just weren't matching up to the quality of the preceding decades. Then came the quickfire release of two Prince albums: *Controversy* and *1999*. Mixing the pioneering rock of Little Richard with budding electro-pop, Prince seemed to have invented the sound of the future by recycling the past. *Purple Rain* was released in 1984 and, since Prince had no dates in Europe, which was all too slow to recognize his genius, I had to travel to America to see him live.

The shows at Uniondale were astounding. Prince is a true stage phenomenon, with an unimaginable sensuality. The man is everywhere, all at once. Every second of that night offered me a sublime photograph; I could make a book just from what I took at those breathtaking concerts. He is one of those rare artists who can create better images performing live than posing in the studio, where the mood can feel forced and inauthentic. And his sound was amazing, assimilating everything from blues, rock, soul, funk and gospel to Sly, Hendrix, James Brown, and, on the tracks from his *Around the World in a Day* album, even the Beatles! And this creative force would last for years, with Prince producing a new album and world tour almost annually for more than a decade.

After my Uniondale awakening, I became obsessed with the prospect of meeting Prince and photographing him in a more intimate setting. He usually had his picture taken in the United States, and always refused to pose for any additional sessions. I knew the wait would be long. However, during a break on a 1985 shoot for the promotion of the film *Under the Cherry Moon*, I managed to snatch my first Prince portrait.

Prince finally came to Europe in 1986 – the beginning of his great love affair with Paris. I was in the front row for his concert in the capital, but I was so stunned by his entrance that I missed the photo opportunity. I decided I'd follow him to Brussels so I could capture it properly. He'd conquered Europe by then; most of the dates for his 1987 Sign o' the Times Tour would take place on the continent. I had already worked frequently with the Eurythmics, Iggy Pop, Patti Smith, The Clash, and The Rolling Stones, but my desire to work closely with Prince surpassed them all.

Then, in 1993, Prince told his record label that he wanted a photographer to document that year's European tour. My name was put forward, and my portfolio shown to Prince. Soon after, I was told that I could accompany him for a few days. It's a strange experience, sitting opposite such an enigmatic and famously reclusive artist in his limousine. I discovered that the myth is a reality: Prince was silent, cautious, and his staff informed me that if he wished to speak to me, he would speak first.

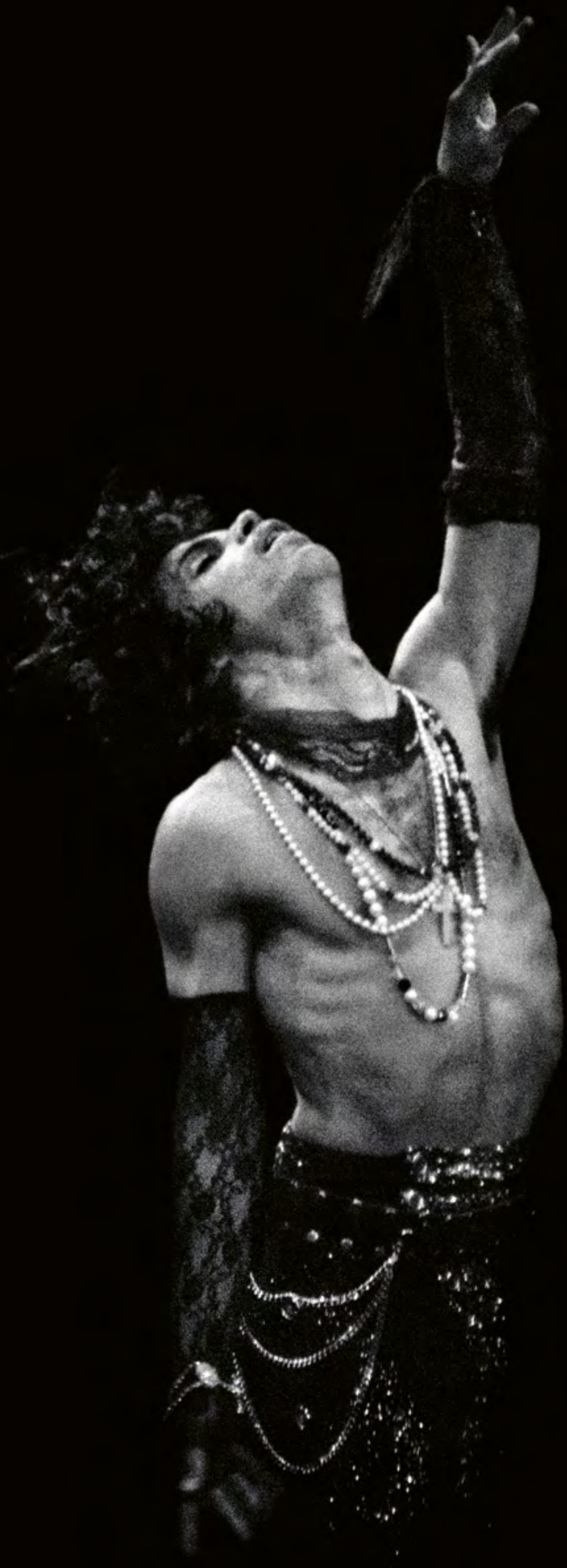
It dawned on me that he would be a difficult subject to direct. At first I was only expected to be taking photographs of his live performances — so close to my dream of an intimate shoot, yet so far! After a week, I was frustrated. I felt I didn't have an image of Prince that was truly *mine*. The artist never lets his guard down; he is Prince 24-7, dressing the same in life as he does on stage, and always supremely focused.

Then came the big concert in Brussels: my last night with Prince, and my last chance.

The after-party took place in a former cinema that had been transformed into a nightclub. It was a soulful, funky, loose affair with a feeling in the air like anything could happen. By three in the morning, Prince seemed happy and relaxed, joking backstage with his musicians. I realised it was now or never. I marched down the corridor of the building, throwing open doors, and discovered this strange, bare dressing room that seemed like it hadn't been used for years. I knew I'd found the perfect place for my picture. Breaking all the rules, I crossed back into the party and walked right up to Prince, describing what I'd found and asking him to follow me there. I received no answer, of course. But then, after a few minutes, to my amazement, he nodded and asked me to show him the way.

I showed him the chair that I wanted him to sit on. He took control of it, flipped it over and began posing astride it with supernatural grace, offering me a dozen different photographs within a few seconds. A few years later, Prince would select my image for the front cover of his album *The Vault: Old Friends 4 Sale*.

Claude Gassian began using his father's box camera just before the dawn of the '70s, to better live his two devouring passions, music and photography. Gig after gig, he honed his eye, seeing Led Zeppelin at L'Olympia in the late 1969 and Hendrix on the Isle of Wight. Gassian garnered his first publications in the music press (Rock&Folk, NME) before making his mark on the general-interest press. As the next generation of rockstars emerged, he developed a unique style: from his energetic stage photographs to his more silent portraits, he affirmed this propensity to capture what is hidden under the panoply of the musician. After The Eurythmics in 1986, The Rolling Stones and Prince took him on tour in the 1990s. His oeuvre is retraced in several books (such as Rock Images 1970/90 and Photographies 1970-2001) as well as many exhibitions (Museum in Contemporary Art in Lyon in 2003, Govinda Gallery in Washington in 2007, Rencontres d'Arles in 2010, A. Galerie in 2012, Villa Tamaris in 2021). Gassian has also explored graphic structures and urban landscapes, creating work that forms a stark counterpoint to his rock photography.







DAVID CORIO

When I first discovered Prince with *Dirty Mind* in 1980, I was immediately struck by his distinctive voice, his great songwriting ability, his amazing production and musicianship, and his funky grooves – in short, everything. I became a fan of his first three albums, but it was probably when the fourth, *Controversy*, came out that he started to build a large following in the UK and get played regularly in clubs.

I first got the chance to photograph Prince at London's Wembley Arena on 14 August 1986, commissioned by the *NME*. By then, Prince had a huge following – but he was a challenge to photograph, constantly dancing and moving non-stop across the large stage. Record companies had recently decided they didn't want their artists to be captured looking all hot and sweaty, so photographers were allowed to shoot the first three songs of a set, being swiftly ejected from the photo pit before things got into full flow. On that night, thankfully, Prince hit the ground running. He also managed to get in a costume change, which lent a sense of variety to my shots.

By the time he performed at the same venue on 28 July 1988, Prince was a megastar. One of the main challenges for the mass of photographers packed in the pit were the clouds of billowing smoke and dry ice that were being pumped from the rear and sides of the stage. I'm sure it looked great for the adoring audience, but as the smoke sank it engulfed the pit and made it difficult to take photos that weren't a mess of haze. Prince was a famously demanding, strong-willed artist who liked to do things on his own terms, so it's hard to believe he wasn't consciously toying with us photographers.

For my third encounter, he surpassed himself. Performing at the Palladium on E14th Street in New York City on 14 July 1994, "The Artist Formerly Known As Prince" banned flash-guns and only allowed photographs during the soundcheck – and only during the first verse and first chorus of the first song! I was used to working quickly but hadn't anticipated that when Prince came onstage wielding his iconic Auerswald symbol guitar, he would be totally bathed in red light. This over-saturates everything, making it almost impossible to capture any tones or detail – be it on film (which I was shooting) or digital photography. I resorted to using a flash – something I rarely do – but after my first shot I felt a large pair of burly hands on my collar and shoulder. A security guard threw me out of the venue before the brief performance had even finished.

For my fourth commission to shoot Prince onstage – this time for the *New York Times* at Jones Beach on Long Island on 23 July 1997 – I was anticipating a tough time. Once again, Prince didn't disappoint. He

PRINCE WAS A DEMANDING ARTIST WHO LIKED TO DO THINGS ON HIS OWN TERMS

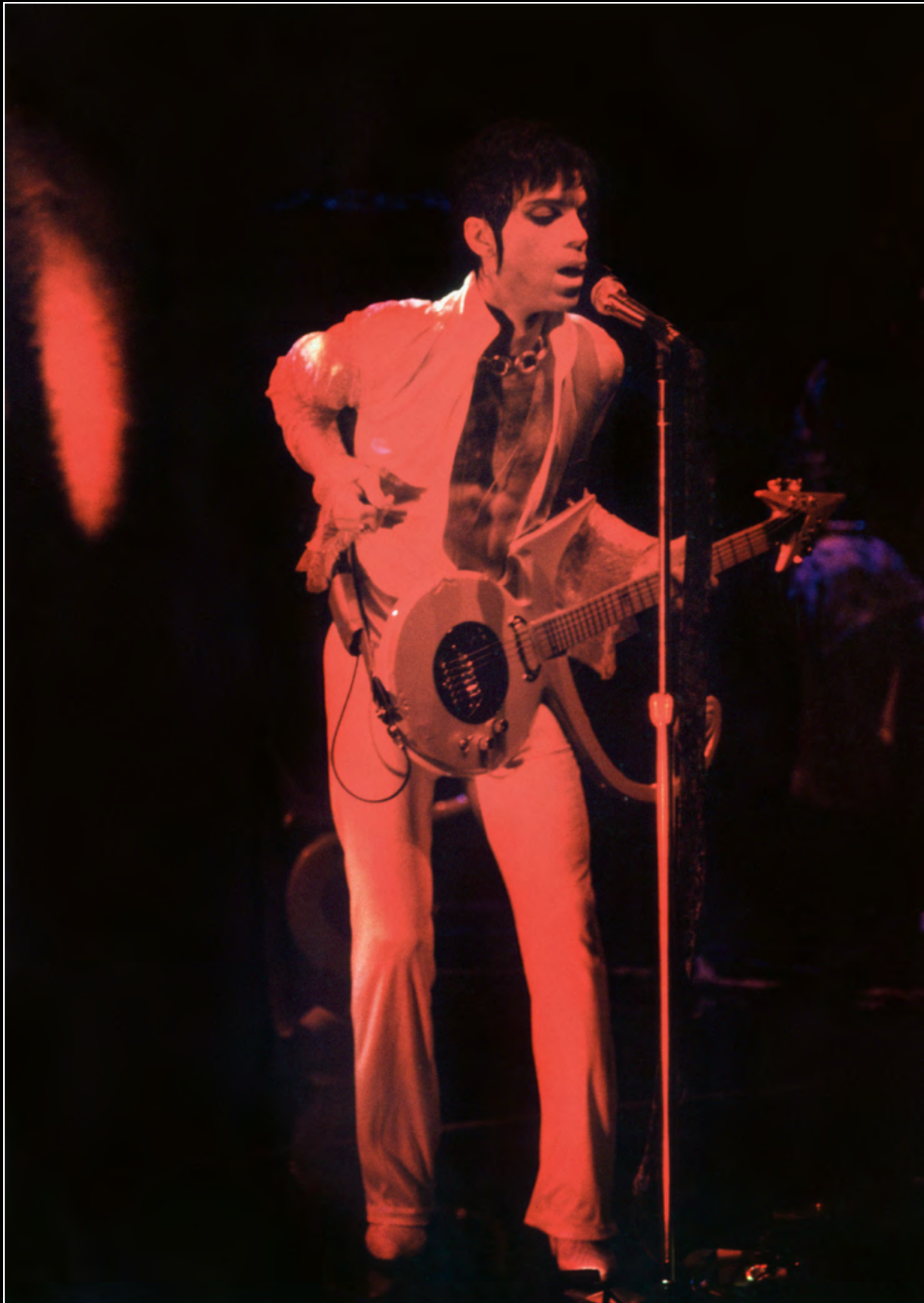
appeared onstage singing into a revolver-shaped microphone, surrounded by the requisite smoke, with blue and purple light blasting him from behind but no light on the front of the stage at all. This was great for a silhouette photo, but not much else. Near the end of the third song, there was a splash of light for just a few seconds. As the photographers were escorted out of the photo pit, all the stage lights came on to full effect, right on cue.

I would have loved to have had the opportunity to take portraits of Prince, but it was not to be. At least I got to hear and see him perform live and up close; I am grateful for that much.

The photograph of the street mural of Prince (pages 260-61) was painted by Pegasus – a Chicago-born street artist whose paintings are dotted around the UK, with many in north London. This is still on Graham Road in N15, and was taken a few days after Prince passed away, when mourning fans had left flowers and draped the image in a purple feather boa.

*David Corio has been taking photographs professionally since 1978 for a mixture of music magazines, newspapers, book publishers and record companies. His book *Megaliths*, with words by Lai Ngan Corio, was published by Random House in 2003; *The Black Chord*, featuring over 200 of his photographs of black musicians, with words by Vivien Goldman, was republished in 2024 in a new edition by Hat & Beard Press. His photographs are in the collections of the National Portrait Gallery, the Victoria & Albert Museum, the Photographers' Gallery and the ICA in London, and both the International Center of Photography, NYC and the National Museum of African American History & Culture, Washington D.C.*







I was used to working quickly but hadn't anticipated that when Prince came onstage wielding his iconic Auerwald symbol guitar, he would be totally bathed in red light. This over-saturates everything, making it almost impossible to capture any tones or detail. I resorted to using a flash – something I rarely do – but after my first shot I felt a large pair of burly hands on my collar and shoulder. A security guard threw me out of the venue before the brief performance had even finished.

PRINCE: ICON brings together the greatest photographs of one of music's most spectacular, reclusive and original artists into a single, lavish volume.

Featuring contributions from a cast of photographers as eclectic as the artist's musical catalogue, this is one of the most significant anthologies of Prince imagery ever compiled.

The result is a breathtaking visual chronicle of live theatrics, backstage parties, stunning outfits and intimate shoots.

Photography / Images by

ROBERT WHITMAN

GREG HELGESON

ALLEN BEAULIEU

VIRGINIA TURBETT

DENNIS ROSZKOWSKI

PATRICK HARBON

NANCY BUNDT

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DAVID CORIO

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GREG BRENNAN

ROBERT RISKO

and

STEVE PARKE

Introduction by

STACIA LANG



Cover photo © Steve Parke