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Doves cry, and so do I: Prince was one of a kind

By Jeff Miers, Pop Music Critic



Jeff Miers calls Prince “one of the funkier men to ever call earth his home.” (Ethan Miller/Getty Images)

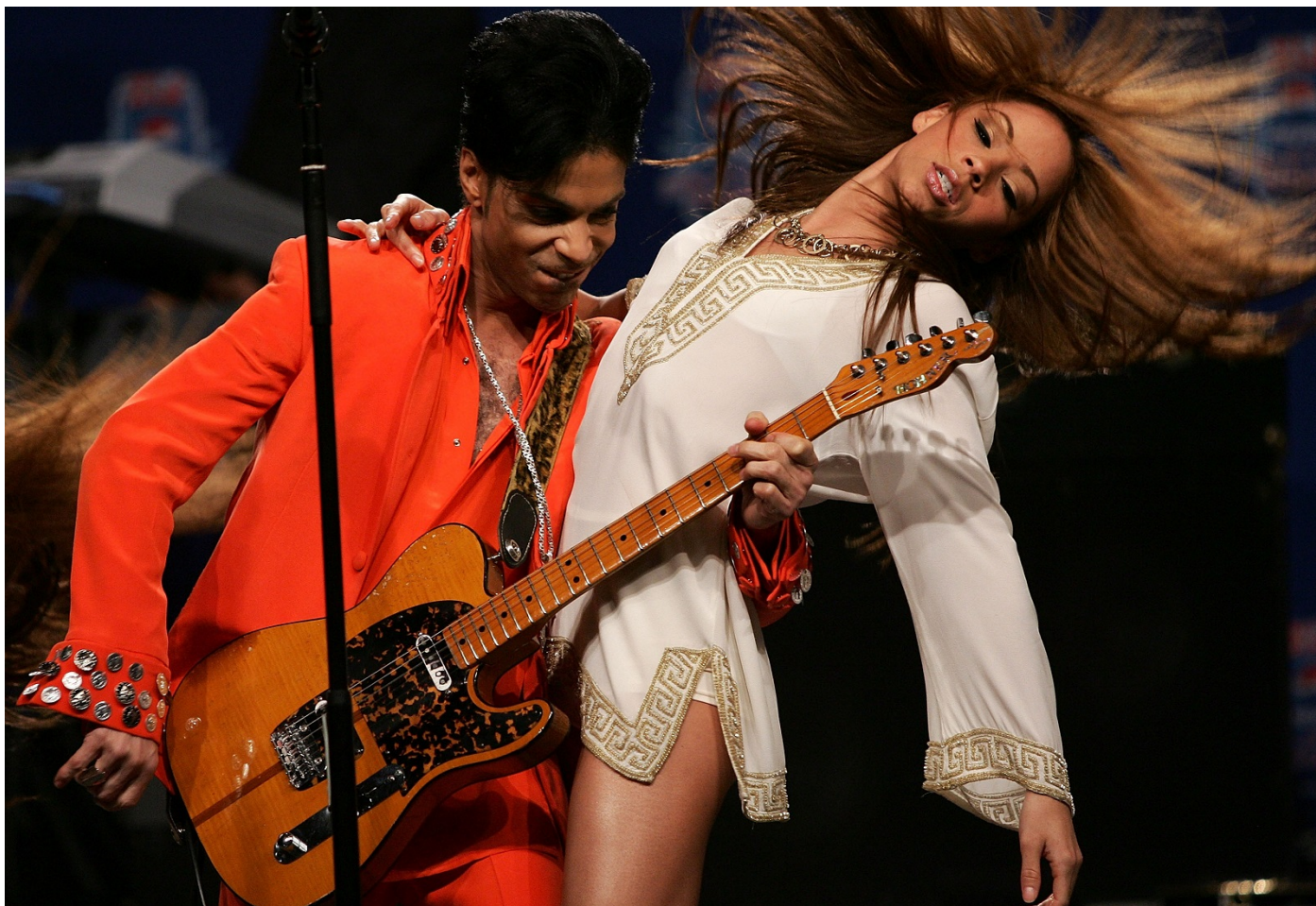
I’m crushed. And I know I’m far from alone.

The news came early Thursday afternoon that Prince, whose birth name was Prince Rogers Nelson and who was equally known for his songwriting, his musicianship and his performing style, was found unresponsive inside his home outside of Minneapolis and was declared dead soon after.

Prince seemed so ageless. He appeared eternally youthful, vibrant, in killer shape, in complete command of his immense talent, displaying no signs of losing his grasp on that gift

Available reports suggested he eschewed drug use, was a devout Jehovah's Witness and demanded from himself the same discipline and devotion to craft he commanded from every musician he worked with.

He lived for music. And he made an awful lot of it. He was that rarest of rare prolific musicians whose entire catalogue was at least good, and the majority of it simply superlative.



Prince, left, played a mesmerizing halftime performance in Super Bowl XLI. (Photo by Evan Agostini/Getty Images)

The word gets tossed around far too carelessly these days, but in the case of Prince, it's justified – the man was a genius. He has few peers in the history of popular music. He belongs in the company of such fellow masters as Stevie Wonder, James Brown, Miles Davis, Paul

McCartney, Brian Wilson, Jimi Hendrix Marvin Gaye and Todd Rundgren.

Part of what set Prince apart from the majority of pop stars was his musicianship. He was a guitarist of consummate skill and soulfulness, could easily release albums featuring himself playing all the instruments, and moved from a searing falsetto to a guttural scream with grace and seeming ease. His gifts were prodigious and vast.

The career highlights are too numerous to adequately illustrate here. In a sense, Prince's greatest work of art was himself – a self-made Renaissance man, an iconoclast, a sexually liberated activist for sexual liberation, an artist who was able to create a world within a world, one where music reigned supreme and everyone was soulful and funky.

Prince will always be associated with “Purple Rain,” the album and the related film that conspired to make him the biggest star of the first half of the '80s. That album is a unified funk-pop masterpiece, but it represents only a small portion of the man's talent. For the bigger picture, we need to look to the twin-record watershed “Sign o' the Times,” the avant-garde dance music of “Parade,” the psychedelic soul-pop gems “Around the World In A Day” and “Lovesexy,” the late-period neo-soul classic “The Rainbow Children,” and the career-defining masterwork “One Night Alone with Prince Live” box set. On these albums, Prince indulged in classy pop, buttery soul, vibrant R&B, filthy funk, frantic guitar rock, and a wholly individualized version of Hip-Hop. And he did so with the authority of a man who had all but invented each of these forms.

On the concert stage, Prince was James Brown, Michael Jackson and Hendrix rolled into one. He could out-sing, out-dance, and out-play any of his peers, and do so with a sexy smirk on his face.

Who among those lucky enough to have seen Prince offer a several-hour thrill-ride of a show at Shea's in 2002 (<http://www.buffalonews.com/article/20020308/GUSTO/303089984>), and then follow it up with three more hours of late-night jams at the Tralf, will ever forget it? Who hasn't relived his ill-attended but wholly epic last-minute appearance at Marine Midland Arena in 1997 a hundred times in their mind's eye?

Who among those blessed to be in attendance when Prince played Buffalo Memorial Auditorium during 1984's "Purple Rain" tour can help but consider that show a high-water mark in Buffalo concert history?

Prince was poet, visionary, a man who had no trouble bridging the perceived gap between mind and body through his art, and one of the funkier men to ever call this earth his home.

He leaves behind a void that won't be filled.



A press image of Prince before his 2002 show in Shea's.