

PRINCE AND
THE *PARADE*
AND *SIGN O'*
THE TIMES ERA
STUDIO SESSIONS

1985 AND 1986

Duane Tudahl

ROWMAN & LITTLEFIELD
Lanham • Boulder • New York • London

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*There's not much I want [the public] to know about me, other than the music.*¹

—Prince

Prince knew that expectations were high for his next move.

A new year and a new mountain to conquer. *Purple Rain* had not just happened, it had exploded. Although that seems obvious in retrospect, few knew how big the movie, the album, and Prince would become once it was launched. The naïve dream of success from a child who had moved from home to home was not only realized, but it was also achieved, and the days of being underestimated were in the rearview mirror. He had created an industry and with that came responsibilities to those around him.

With his career-defining album, *Purple Rain*, still holding number 1 Pop Album on the charts (and would for a total of 26 weeks), and the other three albums he produced, *Ice Cream Castle* by the Time, *The Glamorous Life* by Sheila E., and *Apollonia 6* by Apollonia 6 were at 34, 47, and 134, respectively. The movie had been released on home video (in the United States) on November 16, 1985, and reached number 1 on the *Billboard* Top Videocassette Sales chart and on the *Billboard* Top Videodisks charts and number 2 on the *Billboard* Top Videocassette rentals chart. The press was knocking at his door for interviews, information, and insights, but Prince maintained his distance and his mystery. According to those around him, Prince was physically drained and what should have been the greatest time of his life was keeping him from where he wanted to be—in the studio. He was two months into the middle of the big-

gest tour of his career, and it was taking its toll on him. “What do you do when you have the number one album, number one single, and number one movie?” questioned Revolution drummer Bobby “Bobby Z” Rivkin. “I mean there’s just nowhere to go.”²

Revolution bassist Mark Brown [aka BrownMark] agreed. “What happens is you reach the mountain peak and where do you go from there? And that’s what happened to the whole band, the Revolution with Prince. It’s like we reached this pinnacle of success where we were to a point where we were saying to ourselves, ‘Wow, what do we do now?’ And Prince, he was already two albums down the road, and we haven’t even finished the *Purple Rain* tour yet.”³

Prince had many projects planned and being on the road ultimately had to take a backseat to his studio work. According to Prince, “**If you tour too much as an artist, you will burn up all your energy.**”⁴

Although few outside of his purple bubble realized it at the time, Prince had already packed his parachute to get out of the *Purple Rain* era and was excited to move on. The music he was playing from *Purple Rain* was relatively new to his fans, but he’d been focusing on these songs for a year and a half, and his reach as an artist had expanded beyond that project. Even though his album was launched slightly more than five months earlier, he’d already completed work on the follow-up, *Around The World In A Day*, and expected it to be released in spring. He was also planning the music for his next project, the second album by percussionist Sheila E. as well as deciding on the direction of his career after *Purple Rain*, but before that, he had a tour to complete.

Music is often recorded in a vacuum with no knowledge of how it will be received by the audience. Every song is a Hail Mary thrown down the field hoping that there is someone who catches what the performer was feeling and runs with it. Studio work can be a solitary experience, especially for Prince, who generally recorded alone, so the road seems like it would be an amazing contrast filled with adulation and glory. When it goes well, it qualifies as a victory lap that allows musicians to connect with their fans, but when certain levels of success are reached, the freedoms experienced before often turn claustrophobic. It is just another week filled with security guards, the low-frequency hum of a limo or van, and a new place to sleep in a city that can’t be experienced, dictated by a strict unforgiving clock controlled by someone else. Successful artists at this point in their careers have a choice: Do they stay in the confining prison of their hotel rooms waiting for their 2 hours of loving feedback or find a way to play music without the immediate response from a crowd. Prince decided to take every opportunity to make new music, but it was always limited by a tour schedule that could not be easily altered.

“He was restless and bored by halfway through the tour,” revealed his keyboard player Matt “Dr. Fink” Fink.⁵

Prince sat us all down in the dressing room and said “Well, I’m taking two years off after this.” We all said, “Really, two years?” And he said, “Yep! And you all can do whatever you want, take a break, do solo records, take a vacation, whatever you want to do, and you’re still going to be on retainer.” We were all excited about that in a way, but I thought to myself, “Wait a minute, we’re not going to Europe to do *Purple Rain*, or Japan or Australia?” And he goes, “No.” That disappointed me. I thought, “You should be milking the hell out of this. You should be touring the world with this. And stay out for a year and do the US even more” and he just said, “No” because he hated being on the road. Six months was his limit, he burnt out after that! I said, “Take a break for a month, and then we’ll go out and do some more” and he just didn’t want to do it. I’ve never understood that to this day why he didn’t do that.

“Yeah, I think he got bored, and he would get bored on other tours too,” adds fellow Revolution keyboard player Lisa Coleman.

He would get sick of singing “I Wanna Be Your Lover” and I witnessed him go through cycles of that, like, “I never want to sing that song again,” and he just moved really quickly. It’s wild because when he did hit that success with *Purple Rain*, he was too bored to do what you needed to do. You need to do the work and sustain it, and stay on the road for a year, because it doesn’t just go away, it sort of like bubbles up and down and up and down for like the next year, and artists for the most part, they’ll stay out for a year and support that record, and each single as it comes out does its thing, but Prince was like, “I will love you forever!” or would you believe six months? [laughs]

The tour was the biggest of his career, but there were compromises that were out of his control. He’d originally envisioned the Time—his rival band from *Purple Rain*—joining him on the road, but lead singer Morris Day left the group and parted ways with Prince, causing the band to break up. Some of the remaining members had been consolidated into the Family, a new band he was grooming that had a lot of potential, but their album was not complete, and they had never played live, so they didn’t qualify as the opening spot. This created an opportunity for Sheila E., whose debut album, *The Glamorous Life*, garnered great reviews, but most people had no idea that he’d written, produced, and oversaw just about everything on her album.

By all accounts, Prince lived to make music, and *new* music was his lifeblood. Touring and playing the same music every night, although financially

rewarding, was a repetitive life that he didn't always enjoy. According to band member Lisa, the extreme highs and lows could all happen within the span of a few hours. "I can remember a couple of times standing in the wings waiting to go on and we'd hear the screaming start. And as a band, we'd look at each other contorting from the screaming and plug our ears and wonder, 'What the hell is this?' It was incredible! But then, at the end of the night, we'd be back in the 'quiet zone' and thinking about what was going on in the world. It was a very bizarre life. It was like nothing else."⁶

Regardless of the craziness of the road, there was also a certainty about it. The positive aspect of a regimented schedule that had to be kept was the daily chance to jam with his handpicked team of musicians and the opportunity to create. Prince was surrounded with a road-tested team of people who were all there to accommodate what he wanted. "It circles back to the whole idea of his work ethic," explains Robert "Cubby" Colby, who ran the soundboard during his concerts. "If he was going to work that hard every day, he certainly was going to surround himself with the people that were going to contribute, to work the hardest."

Despite appearances, Prince did things for reasons. And he surrounded himself with those he trusted, and at this moment in his life, the Revolution was his family. "It was the human, normal side of Prince that reached out to create the Revolution," explained Lisa. "Each one of us is an interesting breed of person. There's a naïve quality about us that lent itself to our loyalty to Prince. We were totally dedicated to working as hard as he did. We were like his kids. We could do right, and we could do wrong. We could make him proud or we could make him mad. It was set up for us like that psychologically."⁷

The Revolution was his first band that actually had a name known to the public, but there was likely a reason for that. Until this last album, Prince had a tight band but didn't allow them to maintain full billing with him. It would always be "Prince" at the front, but with the five people who worked with him from *Purple Rain* to *Parade*: "Bobby Z," "Dr. Fink," "BrownMark," Lisa Coleman, and Wendy Melvoin, he acknowledged something in each of them that he felt deserved to be recognized according to Coleman. "He saw each of us like a band in our own right. Like Mark was the funk band, Matt was the synth band, Wendy's the funky Joni Mitchell, I'm the 'girl' thing. . . . It was like he was in the studio with all his influences, and whether it was a girly song, a ballad, or some hot, funky, rock thing, he could deliver."⁸

"Sonically and visually, I believe Prince knew that we were all aspects of himself," agreed Wendy. "Musically, though, that translated in a singular way when playing together. I might never have been comfortable with wearing

lingerie, but I was comfortable being his female counterpart onstage. That was important to him.”⁹

“I think [we] were like the cast of the original *Star Wars* with a Han Solo, a Princess Leia, [and] someone had to be a Chewbacca,” BrownMark jokingly described the band members to *Wax Poetics* magazine. “He had us blocked and staged in his imagination.”¹⁰

Purple Rain had sold more albums than all of his previous albums combined, and the movie locked in their importance to Prince and their relationship with him. So with this new exposure, there were literally millions of new fans around the world, and to the majority of that new audience, it was—and *always* would be—“Prince *AND* the Revolution.”

TUESDAY, JANUARY 1, 1985

Venue: Reunion Arena (Dallas, Texas)
Capacity: 18,276 (sold out)

Prince was a teacher every day. He would be able to tell if that student was getting the homework from the night before, or the day before, or the show before. He just had his own way of knowing that. Either you knew what to do, or you didn't know what to do. You needed to be ahead of the game.

—Robert “Cubby” Colby

As soon as Prince and the band finished the final encore, the crew began breaking down the stage and packing it for the next city. In general, Prince wasn't patient, but when it came to the road crew, he was a little more tolerant. Regardless of Prince's demanding work ethic, he understood that there was a machine that worked behind him, and the road team wasn't following Prince; he was often following them after they had worked all night. “He knew what we were up against,” says Colby. “He knew what the lighting crew team was up against every day, how difficult it was to load in this mammoth Roy Bennett production and this mammoth sound system and get this all right. And then he'd want to rehearse at 3:00 in the afternoon. We'd have nine trucks to unload. It's only 8:00 in the morning, but we'd make it happen. We'd make it happen to the point

where he'd go in and say, 'Cubby, can I play my guitar?' 'Sorry Prince, not ready yet.' The worst thing you could do was say 'Yes' when it was not ready."

"We'd say, 'Prince, we'll take the purple piano to your dressing room, okay?' That was much safer and better. There wasn't anything to it, we had multiples of everything. It wasn't a problem. It was just proactive thinking. He'd walk in the door, he would very seldom go to his own dressing room, he just went to his playground, and that was the stage."

But the stage wasn't the only option he'd have when he felt the need to record. "What we would do is have a mobile truck in some of the biggest cities like Los Angeles, New Orleans, Dallas, and New York," explains his recording engineer Susan Rogers.

Most of the time, at least during the *Purple Rain* tour he'd come off stage and go over to a recording studio on the road. Prior to that tour, I had a big thick directory of studios around the country, so it was my job to take road cases with tapes in them on the road with us, because we were making Sheila's record and recording for Prince as well. So, I'd have to go into that directory, find local studios, and see the brief little summaries of who's recorded there, maybe what equipment they had. I'd call these folks up and say, "Do you have an opening? Can you take a special client tonight? Can you take Prince tonight?"

Who does that? Who makes a record for another artist while they are on tour? It is just an unimaginable amount of work but that is what he did.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 3, 1985

Venue: The Omni (Atlanta, Georgia)
Capacity: ±17,500 (sold out)

*We've given away a lot of money. I found out recently that money is sort of like blood. If you hoard it and keep it all tied up amongst yourself, you sooner or later get sick. So, we just try to keep it in circulation.*¹¹

—Prince

One of the most overlooked elements of Prince's career was his charity work. For the five shows at the Omni, Prince designated 482 "Purple Circle" seats for \$50, and the proceeds helped fund Marva Collins' Westside Preparatory School

in Chicago. “Without Prince’s money, there would be no institute,” explained Marva in 1986. “Multiply the first 200 teachers by 30 students each, and you get 6,000 pupils who Prince has helped us reach so far.”¹²

FRIDAY, JANUARY 4, 1985 A.M. (ESTIMATE)

“**Toy Box**” [instrumental] (basic tracking, overdubs)
 Master Sound Studios (Atlanta, Georgia) | after January 3 show
 Producer: Prince | Artist: Sheila E. | Engineers: Susan Rogers and David Tickle

*It was Prince’s record once again. He wrote the lyrics, and it was a Prince project. Although I think Sheila may have had the lyrical inspiration this time, particularly on “Toy Box,” but definitely this was another Prince record.*¹³

—Susan Rogers

Prince literally couldn’t stop working on music. Not just *his* songs but music in general. It was what fed him, even when he was on the road. Just because he’d done a 4-hour soundcheck and a 3-hour show, he would still be ready to create more music according to tour manager Alan Leeds. “He was like a funnel, it was as if somebody was pouring these songs into him and they would just continue to come out the other end like a water spigot that wouldn’t turn off, but instead of water it was songs. The machinery of a record company couldn’t digest and properly market music as quickly as he wanted. Fundamentally, his problem was simply he was more prolific than the market could bear.”¹⁴

Because of this, Prince poured his music into other projects. During the previous year, he’d recorded and released entire albums for Sheila E., the Time, and Apollonia 6 and had started working on music for the Family and Mazarati as well as full albums of his own. Once *Purple Rain* erupted, those around him shifted. The Time dissolved and Apollonia 6 would appear on stage during the tour as a special guest, but there were no solid plans to record a follow-up album. The Family and Mazarati were still in Minneapolis working on their debut albums, so the only side act on the current tour was Sheila E. Because of her immediate availability and the success of her first album, he decided to focus

on music for her as-yet-untitled second album, but working with Prince in the studio was not always a collaboration.

“Of course, Prince did play the instruments on her record, but that had a lot more to do with Prince’s personality than it had to do with Sheila’s abilities,” explains Rogers. “It was faster for him to play the bass, the guitar, or the keyboard, and he wrote the songs. But when she did record on her own, she’s incredibly talented. She doesn’t have the talent that he does, but then who does? So, just because he played on things, he didn’t mean to undercut her talent.”¹⁵

When creating the basic tracks for the song, he set the foundation with his usual mix of live drums, percussion (cabasa, bongos, and claps), and a pattern from the Linn LM-1 drum machine. He also added bass and keyboards, including the Yamaha DX7 to the track. He also included a guitar section that was adjusted to play at double speed, which sounded similar to one he’d written for Apollonia 6’s “Blue Limousine.”

At the end of the night, he’d created an instrumental version of the song, and instead of vocals, they recorded a series of moans from several members of Sheila’s band to fill in the space.

Status: An instrumental of “Toy Box” (6:20) appears to have been completed on this date. Sheila’s vocals would be added, and the track would be edited (5:36) and released on August 26, 1985, as the fourth track on her second album, *Romance 1600*.

Although members of Sheila’s band are credited on the song, it is likely that they were just for the vocal moaning and that all of the instruments were recorded by Prince and Sheila.



Because of the speed that Prince was recording on tour, the nonstop pace of their travels and the lack of sleep, proper notations were not always kept, and some of the finer details about the specifics of certain sessions have been lost to time. “I didn’t see myself in a historical context, and I really wish I had,” recalled Rogers. “I was 26 years old or something like that and too naïve to recognize what a big deal he was and how important he was, so I didn’t memorize the details of circumstance. I was focused on the details of my job.”¹⁶

The recording dates listed are as accurate as possible and every effort has been made to share all of the memories of those who were there.



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FRIDAY, JANUARY 4, 1985

Venue: The Omni (Atlanta, Georgia)
Capacity: ±17,500 (sold out)

Prince had grown as an artist, and his ego and his entourage had expanded as well. The new success also caused a change in the surroundings and the perks, but sometimes that ended up causing some distance between Prince and the band. “When we were on the *Dirty Mind* tour [in 1980–1981], we were in vans and station wagons, and we were *really* together,” reveals Lisa.

We shared a dressing room. I’d have to get naked in front of five boys, and we just knew each other, and it was a family, and then with each tour it just grew a little bit, and a little bit, and a little bit, and then we got buses and then I was, “Cool man, we got buses!” And then with *Purple Rain*, he had his own bus, and then we would go to the airport and some security people would come take him away and he’d go fly separately, and for him it was great at first. He was like, “Yeah man, I’m the shit. I’m fucking Elvis,” and we were like, “Bye, Prince.”

“It isolates you,” she continues.

You’re untouchable. All of a sudden, you’re surrounded with people who want to keep people *away* from you, and like that’s the greatest thing in the world. But it’s also like the most dangerous thing for your life, and for a guy that was already an injured child, this was terrible for him. He needed exactly the opposite, but for his career, he had to go and be this guy. He was Prince, he was the one, and he knew that there was no way out, he was already headed down this road and maybe that’s why he cut the *Purple Rain* tour short.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 5, 1985–SUNDAY, JANUARY 6, 1985 (ESTIMATE)

“**Toy Box**” (vocals, various overdubs, mix)

“**Fish Fries**” (basic tracking, mix)

“**Dear Michaelangelo**” [instrumental] (basic tracking, mix)

Master Sound Studios (Atlanta, Georgia) | after January 4 concert

Producer: Prince | Artist: Sheila E. | Engineers: Susan Rogers and David Tickle

“Toy Box” was fun because Sheila had to act really crazy. I remember we really got into it to get Sheila motivated and they were clownin’. They always had their jokes, so it was a fun atmosphere.

—Eddie M.

Additional recording took place after the Friday night concert and Sheila was brought in to sing on “Toy Box.” Despite her success, many people—including Sheila herself—underplayed her vocal abilities. “I must say I’m not a singer,” she confessed in 1987. “I’m vastly improved over what I was when I started. But you can’t compare me to the great singers. To me, somebody like Patti LaBelle is a singer.”¹⁷ Rogers also recalled how Sheila’s voice had matured since recording her debut album with Prince.

Sheila never did get comfortable with the singing. She reached a point where she was able to just go in and do it. She wasn’t entirely comfortable, but she hid it well. She never protested, she never dragged her feet when it was time to go up and do vocals. And, by the time that [her second album *Romance 1600*] came along, she did it pretty quickly. It took a while on *The Glamorous Life*, but a tour will do for your voice what no studio time or rehearsal time can do. By the time she came off the road singing every night, she was warmed up. Her voice was in shape, she was able to go in and do the vocal pretty quickly.¹⁸

Sheila was not only more comfortable with the strength of her voice, she seemed at ease around Prince, and her spirited attitude was reflected in her vocals, which included her shouting and playing around. “We were just going for it,” Sheila explained in a radio interview with Questlove in 2017. “A lot of times it wasn’t planned. We’re just playing and whatever ended up happening is what it was.”¹⁹

The lyrics for “Toy Box” bounce back and forth between the playfully innocent and blatant references to sex or a vagina.

It is likely that her sax player “Eddie M.” Mininfield added his horn to the song as well during this session.

Prince would also record a track listed as “Fish Fries,” which was a basic repetitive keyboard/bass/drum and percussion groove. It appears that no lyrics were written or recorded for the number, and it was likely just an exercise for Sheila and Prince to play in the studio, something that happened a lot during their time together. “I know I recorded over 100, 200 songs,” detailed Sheila about her years of studio work with Prince. “Him and I. Just by ourselves. No one else. That’s a lot of good music.”²⁰

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With an entire day off from the tour, Prince likely took advantage of the time to record “Dear Michaelangelo.” The basic tracks—which were either recorded during this session or the following week while recording in Houston—started with a blend of drums performed by Prince and included his keyboard work on the Oberheim OB-SX and the Yamaha DX7. His guitar work ended with feedback similar to the previous year’s “Computer Blue” as well as on the then unreleased “Rearrange” from December 1981.

The first pass of the track didn’t contain saxophone, Sheila’s percussion, or vocals.

Status: “Dear Michaelangelo” (5:53) was edited (4:37) for release on Sheila’s *Romance 1600* album. Prince’s vocal version (5:22) was issued posthumously on the *Originals* collection in 2019. Another edit (4:55) and probably an instrumental version remain unreleased.

The 7-minute instrumental “Fish Fries” remains unreleased.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 6, 1985

Venue: The Omni (Atlanta, Georgia)
Capacity: ±17,500 (sold out)

MONDAY, JANUARY 7, 1985

Venue: The Omni (Atlanta, Georgia)
Capacity: ±17,500 (sold out)

TUESDAY, JANUARY 8, 1985 (A.M.)

“**A Love Bizarre**” (basic tracking, mix)
Cheshire Studios (Atlanta, Georgia) | after January 7 show
Producer: Prince | Artist: Sheila E. | Engineer: Susan Rogers

*That second record was done during the tour. So, wherever we'd stop, if we had four hours, we'd just go into the studio. It was just a matter of, "Let's call ahead of time. We're going to this city, let's see if we can get a studio." So that was a blur, again.*²¹

—Sheila E.

Prince was recording as much as possible, and even when he had the chance to calm down in between shows he was working. Both Prince and Sheila E. reportedly maintained a small mobile recording system on their buses for any musical ideas. No full songs were completed with that set up, so when there was a longer stay in a city, Prince would settle down in one place for the duration and create music. It is unclear why Prince left Master Sound Studios and switched to Cheshire Studios, but it was probably a scheduling conflict. With Prince, he'd record on a whim, and if one studio wasn't available, he'd want to make sure that there was backup just in case.

"Cheshire is another studio that we really enjoyed," reflected Susan Rogers who was the most important person on the tour when it came to facilitating Prince's need to make music. "Prince was very particular about his studios. He didn't want them to be too fancy and sterile and clean because it feels like a hotel, but then he didn't want them to be too funky and dirty and ratty either and when we could find a place that had the right comfort factor where all the equipment worked, we were happy and we could get work done."

Rogers continues:

Prince really liked Cheshire because it works the same way that Sunset Sound [Studios] works. It's private, it's just about the right size, the proportions of it, the wood. The fact that the studio owner is not a helicopter owner. He doesn't hover over you. When looking for studios, I always had to keep Sunset Sound in mind as the target, and you could just tell in an instant if Prince will like this place or Prince is going to hate this place based on his love of Sunset with me. We went there more than once passing through the South because it was a studio he liked. I remember recording Sheila's stuff there. "A Love Bizarre" is the one that we spent the most time on at Cheshire.

"Once he started playing a little bit of the bass part, I was like, 'Oh, we got another hit, we got another hit,'" revealed Sheila. "And I remember putting on tons of shakers just to keep the movement going, and then you just start dancing like, 'Oh yeah, we're *all* going to be dancing to this one.' 'A Love Bizarre.' That was it!"²²

Sheila reportedly provided the drum intro to the song, and the rest of the track came together fairly quickly because Prince fleshed it out with the Revolution during a soundcheck the previous month, adding lyrics and creating the signature riff to the song with them. “I remember working on that,” recalls Lisa. “That was just a cool little harmony line that I played.”

“If you were playing something new at soundcheck, it was probably going to end up on someone’s record,” explains Wendy.

Eddie M. was one of several people invited to join them during his time at Cheshire while they were recording “A Love Bizarre.”

I just remember walking in the studio and it just had to be one of the funkier tracks and I was just happy to be a part of it. The cool thing about it was he wanted the group to chant in the back with the vocals. It was me, Susie Davis, Steph [Birnbaum, aka Stef Burns], and I think Jerome [Benton, formerly of the Time]. It was a group thing and it was really fun. It was really funky, and I was a fan and at that point, I kind of had gotten the whole thing down on how to please him, so I had no fear of it and he just let me have my freedom on that.

He played the track and I think we did the vocals first and then the horns. He very rarely told me what to play, unless there was a melody line that he really wanted to hear, but as far as playing because that is what is so cool. Prince was more like ‘play the melody’ and then he told me where to go and do my thing. That was pretty much it. The long version of it went on forever. Back then you could just stretch, and nobody was tripping.

I think Sheila was definitely there. I think everyone stuck around. He was in there for a couple of days, non-stop. I mean he was just burning. Jerome was hanging out with us, and [Prince’s] security people. Everybody would come in crashing at different corners of the room and it was like camping. You’d go to work when you were called on. “Don’t go to the motel, we may need you.”

Status: Additional work on “A Love Bizarre,” including Sheila’s percussion and vocals, would take place during the tour, and the track was eventually edited (3:46) and released as a single. The full version (12:18) was included on her *Romance 1600* album. The B-side of the single would include “A Love Bizarre (Part II)” (3:48), which was simply another section of the album version. A blend of the Parts I and II (7:13) was released as a 12-inch mix and backed with “Save the People,” a song that contained no input from Prince.

The single peaked at number 11 on the US *Billboard* Hot 100 Chart, and number 2 on the *Billboard* Black Chart. The highest position for the song was on the *Billboard* Hot Dance/Disco-Club Play chart, where it reached number 1.

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The song would be the only track listed as “produced, written, and arranged by Sheila E. and Prince.”



Usually, Prince didn't just do one mix of a track as he looked for the sound he wanted. Over time, there would often be close to a dozen different mixes done of a song, some of them slightly different, while others were drastically altered to the point that he rerecorded the number entirely. “A song would be on the multi-track seven or eight minutes long, and then you'd do mixes expressly for the purpose of cutting them into album-length versions, single versions and remixes,” details Rogers.

So, there'd be different iterations of a lot of songs. And then other times, maybe the arrangement just wouldn't quite come together. Then you'd redo it. And songs would frustratingly morph sometimes. It would get a little bit scary that you'd print a mix, be happy with it, it'd be a nice piece of work, and then he'd decide that he wanted to rework it and add new parts. And with him, very rarely were there free tracks available, if he had really gotten into it. So sometimes you'd start erasing sources on the multi-track. Rarely, but sometimes he would do that.

What that means is that if Prince erased elements from the original tapes to make room for more instruments or singing, there were completed mixes that contained elements that were no longer on the original source tapes, causing some confusion when comparing recordings.

While on the road, he'd sometimes wait to make the changes back in the Los Angeles studio remembers Sunset Sound engineer, “Peggy Mac” Leonard [formerly Peggy McCreary] who'd worked with him since 1981. “There were times that he would bring stuff from elsewhere mixed and ready and he would decide to add something to it, and we would remix it [at Sunset Sound]. He might finish something and then revisit it here. He liked our echo chambers and he loved our piano sound and stuff like that, so he would usually do that at some point.”



TUESDAY, JANUARY 8, 1985

Venue: The Omni (Atlanta, Georgia)
Capacity: ±17,500 (sold out)

The Atlanta leg of the tour ended well with critics raving about his performance. Bo Emerson wrote in the *Atlanta Journal*, “Prince dominated the crowd as much with his physical virtuosity as with his compelling Funk ‘n’ Roll.”²³ The crew traveled to Houston for the next seven shows, but Prince wasn’t ready to leave Georgia, as Susan remembers.

Sometimes after the show, the band and crew would take off and Prince and I would stay with the tapes and whatever musicians he needed in the city where we were. Everyone else would take off and we’d record the whole rest of the night, into the day and we’d leave just in time for him to get on a plane to make it for soundcheck. I’d have to take the next flight because I’d have to pack up all the gear and all the tapes and back things up or make rough mixes and I’d catch the next flight and I’d join them at soundcheck. We’d sleep on the plane or wherever we could. If it was bus distance, he’d get on the bus because it was easier for him to get to the next city, but no one I have ever known has worked that many hours.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 9, 1985

“**Sister Fate**” (basic tracking, vocals, various overdubs, mix)
 “**Sister Fate**” [instrumental] (probable mix)
 Cheshire Studios (Atlanta, Georgia) | after the January 8 concert
 Producer: Prince | Artist: Sheila E. | Engineers: David Tickle and Susan Rogers

*There’s a nasty rumor goin’ around.
 People think that U, U and I are going down.*²⁴

—lyrics to “Sister Fate”

The romance of *being* on the road, often led to romance *on* the road, and according to those around him, many felt that Prince had a hard time being monogamous. It is likely that he had dreams of finding that one person to share his life with, but his actions were not those of a man who put a priority on that. “While Prince and I were crazy for each other back in the day and worked together constantly, we were not a constant couple,” Sheila explained in her 2014 autobiography. “I tried to ignore the sadness I felt about not being the only woman in his life, but I learned to deal with it early on.”²⁵

During the previous year, Prince had been dating Susannah Melvoin, the twin sister of Revolution guitarist Wendy, but they'd broken up early in the *Purple Rain* tour, and he had moved on to others. According to Susannah, that was the way he was, even when they were dating. "I know that he was seeing other people at the time, although it never occurred to me to say, 'Hey, if you're gonna be coming after me, you may want to tell your friends that it's gotta be just you and me.' There's none of that. None. Right over my head. It never even occurred to me to say anything like that. But it caused some ruckus."²⁶

"He was dating all of us at one point," bluntly explains Jill Jones, a singer who'd lived with Prince and collaborated with him many times in the studio. "Everybody was really screwed up and twisted. There wasn't much solidarity among us as women because we were girls. I really wish we'd all united at some point and . . . well, he wouldn't have been the player that he was."

The list was extensive and many of the women he dated inspired his art. Every woman brought out a part of him and their influence can be heard in the songs he created. Pillow talk could easily translate into lyrics, so the music that was inspired by his romantic side didn't just hint at how he understood women, it was based on true intimacy—or at least the level of intimacy that Prince understood.

"If a woman is aware that this is what's happening, then you don't get your feelings hurt," reveals Jones. "But if you think it's true love, you're going to go down a wrong road."

"He wasn't monogamous," explains Susannah. "There was no 'being good' at it. He wasn't."

Because of Sheila's spot on the tour and their obvious chemistry, rumors were swirling around Prince and Sheila's relationship, and like everything else in his life, that would inspire his music including songs like "Sister Fate." "The story was just things that Prince and I talked about," remembered Sheila. "Our life was pretty bizarre at that time. It was crazy. Some of it was true with what we talked about."²⁷

The *Purple Rain* tour began, and so did our romantic relationship. It was as simple and as sudden as that. Thrown into close proximity with the man who'd been wooing me romantically for years, and in the high-octane environment of a world tour with all its attendant madness, my defenses were finally broken. We were working hard and playing hard, throwing ourselves into a nonstop, exhausting, and creative explosion of living, loving, performing, and recording. Plus, we were doing our best to keep our fledgling relationship a secret. There were many levels of secrecy here. We couldn't hide it from those in our inner circle, but like any relationship that begins in the workplace (however untraditional

our workplace might have been), we knew it was best to keep things private for professional reasons.²⁸

Prince had Sheila working with him on the basic recording of this track, enlisting her to add her distinct flavor on conga, timbales, cymbals, and shakers over his Yamaha DX7 riff. Prince would also add claps, bass, Linn drums, Hammond organ, and a few other elements to the track along with some guitar work, possibly from Steph Birnbaum. It is also reasonable to assume that Eddie M. recorded his signature sax (and possibly some background vocals) on this date as well. Although Sheila's keyboard players Ken Grey and Susie Davis are credited on this track, it is more likely that they played on the frantic 15-second intro that was recorded on a later date at Sunset Sound.

By the end of the session, Prince's guide vocals were probably still on the song. An instrumental version was also created.

Status: The 7-minute version of "Sister Fate" was edited (3:40) and released on *Romance 1600*. He also created an extended version (5:48), edited instrumental version (3:38), and an edited 7-inch single (3:37). The 15-second intro would be recorded and added on a later date, making the album track slightly longer (3:55).

Prince appears to have felt such a strong connection to this track that the songs he wrote for Sheila's projects would be credited as "Sister Fate Music."

THURSDAY, JANUARY 10, 1985

Venue: The Summit (Houston, Texas)
Capacity: 17,094 (sold out)

At almost every stop on the tour, records were shattered. When tickets for the first three concerts at the Summit went on sale, they all sold out in a single day, the biggest one-day-ticket sales at the time. Three more shows went on sale to accommodate the unprecedented demand.

Tonight was the first of six sold out shows at the Summit.

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FRIDAY, JANUARY 11, 1985

Venue: The Summit (Houston, Texas)
Capacity: 17,094 (sold out)

The album version of “Take Me With U” is very poppy, but when we played “Take Me With U” on tour we took it to another place.²⁹

—Matt Fink

Prince decided to shoot a promotional video for the next single from *Purple Rain*, “Take Me With U” during his residency in Houston. As he did with “I Would Die 4 U” and “Baby I’m A Star” the previous November, Prince once again enlisted director Paul Becher and his crew to document the performance. The concert video would promote the single, the album, *and* the tour.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 13, 1985

Venue: The Summit (Houston, Texas)
Capacity: 17,094 (sold out)

MONDAY, JANUARY 14, 1985 (ESTIMATE)

“Dear Michaelangelo” (sax and percussion overdubs, Prince vocals, mix)
The Summit (Houston, Texas—Le Mobile Studios) | 3:00 a.m. after January
13 show
Producer: Prince | Artist: Sheila E. | Engineer: Susan Rogers

Prince recorded that live at 3 a.m. at the arena. He did it himself. I remember he went and got his hair done at the salon, then we went back to the arena.

—Wally Safford

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After tonight's concert, he went through his usual routine of cleaning up, changing his clothes, and recording.

After getting his hair done, Prince returned to the stage of the empty arena and added his vocals to "Dear Michaelangelo." This early version contained only Prince at this point with Sheila adding her vocals and percussion the following week.

MONDAY, JANUARY 14, 1985

Venue: The Summit (Houston, Texas)

Capacity: 17,094 (attendance unknown)

We would videotape every show. Oftentimes, we'd watch it on the bus afterwards. I think Prince was just always working and he wanted to perfect himself.³⁰

—Lisa Coleman

With Prince constantly adjusting the show, he would sometimes rely on the works of his protégé acts for source material. Apollonia 6 had recently released "Blue Limousine," and Prince led the Revolution through a rehearsal to get his band familiar with the track. Apollonia, Susan Moonsie, and Brenda Bennett were asked to join the tour to create something new for the show but also to promote their album.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 15, 1985 (ESTIMATE)

"Sister Fate" (overdubs, Sheila vocals, background vocals, mix)

The Summit (Houston, Texas—Le Mobile Studios) | after January 14 show

Producer: Prince | Artist: Sheila E. | Engineer: Susan Rogers

[Prince] would consider 1 a.m.—after playing a stadium show—the point at which his day could begin. One of Jimi Hendrix's former girlfriends said Jimi would put on his

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*guitar to walk from the bed to the bathroom. Prince was the same way. Making music was his way of being in the world.*³¹

—Susan Rogers

With an epic tour like this, multiple shows were planned in the same arena, so Prince would set up camp on the stage and record with his traveling mobile unit. Any days that didn't contain a performance would be the perfect place to jam with the Revolution either looking for a new song idea or changing the show, so it wouldn't become too redundant for him. "He doesn't dial it back in rehearsal," remembers Michael Soltys, a guitar technician who witnessed many rehearsals. "He just wails on it like he's doing a live show. We would go into these jam sessions where he'd say, 'Bobby give me a beat,' and then everybody would just start improvising and seriously they could jam for two hours or more, nonstop, just mixing things up. The rehearsals can be grueling, ten hours long, twelve hours long."

On days like this, work could also take place on whatever he was recording. Prince could be social when necessary, but his priority was always on the music, according to Rogers. "The poor kid was so naturally shy; he didn't want to mingle because he didn't have anything to say—he wanted to be on stage playing."³²

It is likely that Prince continued working on "Sister Fate" on this date, including Sheila's lead and background vocals.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 16, 1985 (A.M.)

Venue: Texas Southern University, University Auditorium (Houston, Texas)
Capacity: 1,800

*Being in Prince's band was like getting in a sports car with a racing driver. Even though you felt a bit scared—why is he going so fast?—he could handle it, and it brought so much joy.*³³

—Lisa Coleman

Prince wanted to bring that joy to those who couldn't attend the regular shows, so on days like this, he paid the crew and band to perform for those who were often overlooked. At 10:30 in the morning, Prince and the band staged a free

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matinee for the MD Anderson Cancer Center and invited the children who were suffering from the disease, even pulling up several audience members to dance with Prince during “Baby I’m a Star.”

At his core, he wanted to help others and share his music with people who were truly in need. Susan Rogers recalled a multitude of times that he did this over the course of her five years with him.

We’d have a big arena show in the evening and during the day we’d take a small truck and we loaded up with extra equipment and we’d go play for sick children. He would do that on one condition: no press, no publicity. He didn’t want the fame from it. He just wanted to play to these kids who couldn’t come out to a big arena show and we’d set up the scarves and the flowers and the lights, and we’d do a full set, not just one or two songs for these kids on the condition that it be kept quiet. There are countless examples of who this man was, and because he was so quiet, there were a lot of rumors about him out there. But I’ll be damned if I’ll let his memory be one of “Oh, he was just some freak.” He was no freak. He was unusual, but he was a good man.³⁴

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 16, 1985

Venue: The Summit (Houston, Texas)
Capacity: 17,094 (attendance unknown)

*Keeping up with Prince during “Baby I’m a Star” was kind of crazy. It turned into “Simon Says” with the horn punches and the stops on the one, but the energy it created put him in another space, which took the audience and the band to another level.*³⁵

—Bobby Z

During the stay in Texas, the three members of Apollonia 6 joined him on stage multiple times.

“I was on the road a lot during the *Purple Rain* tour anyway, because I was out there with Roy,” remembers Brenda who was married to LeRoy “Roy” Bennett, the lighting director for the tour. “I was on stage a lot of the nights during the encores. Anytime Susan, I, and Apollonia happened to be there, it was like, ‘Okay, you guys are here, you’re coming on stage.’” For this performance,

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Brenda was asked by Prince to join her on stage to sing the first verse of “Blue Limousine,” which was played during the “Baby I’m a Star” jam. Prince had been recording with her for several years and was by many accounts fond of her voice. “During the active years I spent working with Prince, he had spoken to me a couple of times about doing a solo album with me,” reflected Brenda.

He thought my performances with Vanity 6 and Apollonia 6 were good, but he also realized that the music I was doing at the time wasn’t really *me* or the best for my type of voice. He has a good instinct about things like that and asked if I would be interested in doing a solo project with him outside of Apollonia 6. I thanked him and wholeheartedly agreed. But with the success of the *Purple Rain* film and then the tour, Prince’s path turned in a different direction.³⁶

A Brenda Bennett solo album produced by Prince never materialized.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 17, 1985

Venue: The Summit (Houston, Texas)
Capacity: 17,094 (attendance unknown)

*It took a handful of years for us to work up to being that completely fabulous Purple Rain band, so tight and good. I think we lived up to the flamboyant image because we worked so hard.*³⁷

—Lisa Coleman

The final show of an historic six-night stay in Houston ended on a high note. Apollonia 6 once again joined the band for the encore of “Baby I’m a Star,” and Prince left the city in awe. The Summit no longer functions as a concert hall, but this historic run for Prince was listed in the top 20 of all-time grosses for the arena.

Prince was a person who unapologetically worked hard, especially when inspired, and a day off between shows was often filled with other work, as Susan Rogers recalled. “We finished the show [at the Summit] and the rest of the band traveled on to Alabama, and Prince and I stayed in town. I was with him at the video studio and we edited the video for “Take Me With U.” From there we flew to Alabama and did a show. We had been up all night.”³⁸

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SATURDAY, JANUARY 19, 1985

Venue: Jefferson Civic Center Coliseum (Birmingham, Alabama)
Capacity: 17,700 (sold out)

*We worked in three different states, doing three different shows and we'd had no sleep except on the plane and that's about it, but that was pretty typical.*³⁹

—Susan Rogers

If Prince was unhappy, the tour had the potential to be difficult, and the repetitive grind of the tour was taking its toll on him, remembers Bobby Z. “What he thought of yesterday was already old. It was just the fact that he was trapped in this Broadway play, and couldn’t really change it. ‘Baby I’m A Star’ was when he kinda cut loose, but otherwise he was stuck doing it, couldn’t call out different songs. Everything’s automated. It would’ve had to run the way it did. So he became trapped in the ‘Kid’ character.”

A second show in Birmingham the following evening was postponed until early February. It is unclear why it was delayed. Instead, the tour left for Cincinnati directly after the concert.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 20, 1985

“**Dear Michaelangelo**” (various overdubs, Sheila E. vocal overdubs, mix)

“**A Love Bizarre**” (Sheila E. vocal, overdubs)

“**A Love Bizarre**” [12-inch version] (mix)

“**A Love Bizarre**” [instrumental] (mix)

“**Small Grey Monkey**” [early title for “**Merci For The Speed Of A Mad Clown In Summer**”] (basic tracking, overdubs, mix)

5th Floor Recording Studio, Cincinnati, Ohio | 8 a.m.–afternoon

Producer: Prince | Artist: Sheila E. | Engineers: Susan Rogers and Gary Platt

He had two bodyguards and the tour manager would come up first and check everything out. They looked at the studio, made sure nobody was there, made sure it was cool. Then they

brought him in, and he came up the elevator. They were asking people to not look at him or make eye contact. He just came in and said “Hey you ready? Let’s go.”

—Gary Platt

Prince was in constant motion, and at any point, he could be inspired to record a new song or add elements to existing unreleased tracks, so the engineers and band members knew that their schedule was at the whim of Prince’s creative urges as Susan Rogers recalled:

On the road we had trunks, labeled “T1,” “T2” and “T3,” big trunks that carried our tapes. We also had what was called a gig truck, because there were thirteen tractor trailers on the road during the *Purple Rain* tour. There was one small truck that carried a second set of equipment specifically for use in the studio. It carried a second bass, a second LM-1 drum machine, backup guitars, finger cymbals, and anything that he might need in the studio—his microphones, and backups of everything. This little truck would be parked and ready to go so that at the end of the show—if we were in Cincinnati and I had found a studio that day, the studio would be on hold—he would come off stage, and I would have the driver take the second truck to the studio and we’d set the whole equipment up and he’d walk in and then we worked.⁴⁰

Rogers booked the room, likely because of its incredible history of funk music, which included music by the Ohio Players, Bootsy Collins, Faze-O, and Zapp among others. As soon as it was scheduled, 5th Floor Recording Studio engineer Gary Platt was brought in to make sure everything was working properly.

We got there and it was 3 o’clock in the morning. Prince had played a show, and then waited on his bus outside the studio. He came in probably about 8 o’clock. In the meantime, I thought, “Oh boy we’ve got a bad cable on this mic, it’s crackling.” I went over and was changing the mic cable and plugged it in and someone came in, sat down and played the piano, that happens all the time. So, I plugged it in and he just kind of sideways kicked me, I was down on my knees almost and he kicked me, and I fell over. And I said, “It’s nice to meet you too,” and kind of got a laugh. And he said, “I thought you said it’d be ready.” I looked up and it was Prince, and I said, “Well it’s ready now.” And he was like, “Well all right, let’s get going.” It was funny.

Susan Rogers recalls similar situations on the road during that period.

I was never unaware of how grateful I was, but that's not to say that it wasn't hard. I had some really difficult moments. I remember we were on the *Purple Rain* tour, and we were at a studio late at night with Sheila there, working on Sheila's record. Prince was in one of his bratty moods, and he was insulting me, he was calling me names. And it was a small, tiny control room. It was hard to get from one end of the room to the other when you had to change tapes to do something like that. And I'm squeezing past him. He called me something along the lines of being fat. I'm not fat. Never been fat, but he called me fat. He was laughing about it, and I remember exchanging looks with Sheila, and Sheila just looked at me like, "I am so sorry, and I would defend you if I could." And I looked back at her like, "I know you would, just let it go." He could be like that, because he had a bee in his bonnet, a burr under his saddle, whatever. Something would be irritating him, and sometimes he needed a target. And on that day, it was me. But there were other days, it was Peggy. You're the target *that* day, and you just have to endure it until the next day comes. Sometimes his mood would change during the day, but sometimes you'd just go the whole session being the target.

"We had tape in the machine, he kind of knew what he wanted to do," remembers Platt.

He gave me a cassette and I put it in the machine, listened to it, and put that on the 24-track and kind of played around with that, then he started making a tune for it. It was a tape of the manual for the Tascam tape machine. He recorded the cassette. And the guy talked like that, "Thank you, and welcome to the Tascam model 5" and the announcer was like, "Now turn the knob to the left and you'll be recording," that kind of thing. I think it was just one of those things he was doing to kind of fool around to get used to the flow. Then he kind of started the tune that he was going to finally wind up putting on.

Sheila joined in this game by reading the manual as well, and her description referenced a recent track as she gave detailed instructions about how to handle her "toy box." This would be blended with the music he was recording. It isn't clear how far they got with the track according to Platt. "He put a beat down, put music in there, I don't know what it sounds like, I wish I did. So many times, I wish I had a camera, but the fact is they're very secretive, very careful. They didn't want anybody around to let them know what they were doing."

It is likely that "Small Grey Monkey" was based on something Sheila had previously written, and it was used as an experimental test to see what the studio could do. "[That song] was something Sheila had done with her band," Susan Rogers explained to *Uptown* magazine. "He just flipped out at how well it was

played.”⁴¹ Recording would continue on the song later in the week and possibly eventually at Sunset Sound.

Although work may have begun on “Small Grey Monkey,” it is probable that most of the time was spent adding Sheila’s lead vocals to “A Love Bizarre” and “Dear Michaelangelo.” Sheila worked on the percussion (which included timbales, bongos, and cowbell), and she joined Prince, Eddie M., and Susie Davis for the layers of background vocals. A mix for both was done, which included delaying the introduction of drums and percussion and restructuring the sound on “Dear Michaelangelo” to emphasize Sheila’s vocals and the choir-like background vocals. Eddie M.’s sax was recorded and blended with the main keyboard lines, and the track was ultimately edited to eliminate the long instrumental section at the end. It is unclear if any other recordings took place during this session.

Before heading to the arena for the soundcheck, Prince made a rough mix of whatever music he was working on, and this became a pattern for him for the entire week. “He was just non-stop. He was pretty manic. I mean he did not sleep at all,” explains Platt. “He would come in and do his thing, play at night, come back in late, as soon as he got away, soon as he was done, he’d come back in and keep going. He just went around for days.”

Status: There were multiple takes of the song that was listed as “Small Grey Monkey” but would eventually become “Merci For The Speed Of A Mad Clown In Summer” (2:47). It would be released on Sheila E.’s second album, *Romance 1600*. The bass line from “Merci For The Speed Of A Mad Clown In Summer” seems to have inspired the bass line in his 1986 song “2 Nigs United 4 West Compton.”

A 6-minute instrumental version of “A Love Bizarre” was being considered for the B-side of “A Love Bizarre.”

MONDAY, JANUARY 21, 1985

Venue: Riverfront Coliseum (Cincinnati, Ohio)

Capacity: ±14,700 (exact attendance unknown; likely sold out)

This was the first of three shows in Cincinnati. After the concert, Prince headed back to the recording studio.

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TUESDAY, JANUARY 22, 1985

“**Bedtime Story**” (basic tracking, mix)

5th Floor Recording Studio, Cincinnati, Ohio | after January 21 concert
Producer: Prince | Artist: Sheila E. | Engineers: Susan Rogers, David Tickle,
and David Platt

His voice was so soft-spoken and soothing, it was just so easy to talk to Prince over the phone because he seemed much more relaxed. He said my voice was musical and he liked it because it comforted him and helped him sleep. I guess that's why he wrote “Bedtime Story” for me. Many times, we would talk until the break of dawn. This ritual was becoming addictive and I began to fall in love with talking to Prince on the phone.⁴²

—Devin Devasquez

Eddie M. recalls “Bedtime Story” being introduced to the band before it was formally recorded:

He was messing with that song at soundchecks and he stayed up all night after we played one of the nights we were playing in town. He went back to the venue after the gig and he started recording and messing around and the next thing you know, they were waking me up to come into the studio. And that was what was recorded there. I was surprised, and still to this day I am amazed about how much music that man holds, and I just think he's so filled with ideas. I've never been around anyone so filled with music and passion and love. For him, it just seems like it is ongoing, and it is very rare that you hear something that sounds the same. It kept you on your toes.

The daily schedule of a tour as big as the *Purple Rain* tour is oppressive. Every day consisted of a small amount of sleep, followed by a long soundcheck, then dinner, the concert, and then either an afterparty or back in the recording studio, so there was no understanding about what was going on in the world. The tour was a traveling bubble, which limited Prince's access to outside inspiration. He would occasionally go to movies or to a museum with Sheila or some of the members of the Revolution, but to get new unfiltered inspiration, he would periodically reach beyond the bubble. During this time, he was also romancing Playboy model Devin Devasquez, who he'd met the previous month in

Chicago. She had joined the tour for several shows, wearing some of his clothes and watching him during soundchecks. “I had never seen a soundcheck before and he went and played every instrument on the stage. The bass, the drums, he was totally showing off. He was totally trying to impress me at that time. And I felt like the romance and the way it was going with him, he put a lot of his feelings into the music instead of verbally saying it to a girl.”

On many evenings, he would spend the hours talking to Devasquez on the phone. “Literally he would ask me questions like, what did you eat today, and do you believe in God? I asked him questions like, ‘Why do you write such sexual songs?’ And he says, ‘I write about life and sex is a part of life.’ And he goes, ‘Why do you pose nude?’ He was telling me about his life, about having this little dog that Wendy and Lisa had given him for Christmas. And he just sounded like a normal person. He was very, very down to earth.”

He even asked her if she’d like to sing for a project that he’d develop for her or have a part in his next movie, but she declined all of his professional offers. “That’s really the only way you could be close with Prince is if you worked with him because he was a workaholic,” explains Devasquez. “Even when I did see him, I was in a beautiful hotel waiting for him to call me on the phone because he was either in the studio or busy and he would call me, but he would be the one controlling when I would see him.”

According to her, Prince revealed how he was influenced by their time together on the phone when he wrote “Bedtime Story.”

I don’t think Prince would write a song for somebody that didn’t inspire him in some way. So, it definitely was an inspiration for him to write a song about me and he was the one that pointed it out. It was the busiest time in his life, and it was the busiest time in my life too. He would say, “Devin, you’re too much distraction. I have to work. And I’m married to my work.” He would say he could only take me in small doses because he wanted to hang out and have fun. But he was working, so that’s why he wrote the lyrics. “She was so fine, but her Prince had no time. Stay with me, tell me a bedtime story.” And that was always how it was. When we should be sleeping, we were talking on the phone and I was telling him stories and he was telling me stories until he felt like sleeping. He would fall asleep in my arms with us talking in person too. It was always like he had a hard time sleeping and for some reason talking on the phone to me at that time helped him to relax and go to sleep.

Devin continues: “I believe Prince told his autobiography through the music, through the people that he was with that were influencing his life, whether he was dating them, whether he was working with them, he wrote music about the people and the things that were going on in his life at that period in time. He was inspired

by everything around him that he would put what he really wanted to say more in the music than he would with words.

During this session, Prince would record the basic tracks including drums, Yamaha DX7 keyboard, bass, piano, and his guide vocals. Eddie M. added his sax as well. It is likely that Wendy and Lisa helped record the track and Steph Birnbaum supposedly played his 12-string guitar as well, but it is unclear if he performed on this date or during a future session. Sheila would likely record her parts the following night.

A rough mix of the song was recorded to cassette at the end of the shift.

Status: “Bedtime Story” (3:37) would undergo additional overdubs and mixing with a newly recorded beginning and would be included on Sheila E.’s *Romance 1600* album, and on August 12, 1985, it was released as the album’s second single (3:45). It did not appear on the *Billboard* charts.

Note: It is possible that “Bedtime Story” was recorded on January 23.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 22, 1985

Venue: Riverfront Coliseum (Cincinnati, Ohio)

Capacity: ±14,700 (exact attendance unknown; likely sold out)

Anyone who was around back then knew what was happening. I was working. When they were sleeping, I was jamming. When they woke up, I had another groove.⁴³

—Prince

Prince didn’t set aside much time for sleep as he scheduled a long soundcheck that afternoon with the band running through “Let’s Go Crazy,” “Computer Blue,” “Free,” and the “Baby I’m a Star” encore jam, which was rehearsed with Eddie M. and Eric on horns adding the horn part from “A Love Bizarre” that Eddie had recorded previously in the month. According to his soundman “Cubby” Colby, these sessions were vital to Prince. “There were many, many mornings where I’d be going to bed at 5 or 6 in the morning and because we were already set up, he wanted to rehearse on those show days at 2 because

there was no load-in on multiple show days. We would always be in there at 2 in the afternoon for . . . well, they were never just soundchecks. They were rehearsals or music events or dance, choreography or whatever it would be.”

According to Jill Jones, his soundchecks and the extra time Prince spent reshaping the performances over the course of the tour were crucial for him. “I think that kept away the boredom and may have been the discipline that he used in order to even stay out on the road, doing a show over and over and over.”

“If Prince was awake, and he was awake for most of the hours of the day back then, he would take business meetings, personal stuff, in the first few hours of the morning. But the rest of the day was devoted to making music,” recalled Susan Rogers. “I think the alternative was unthinkable. He was a kid from a poor background in North Minneapolis. He had a very loving heart, but I think Prince was well aware that time matters. He was using this powerful engine, the engine of his creativity, this incredible brain he had coupled with his unparalleled work ethic. All of those things he knew he had early in life, so he was going to use it. He was going to run it as hard as he could until the energy ran out.”⁴⁴

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 23, 1985

“**Small Grey Monkey**” [early title for “**Merci For The Speed Of A Mad Clown In Summer**”] (additional overdubs, mix)

“**Bedtime Story**” (Sheila vocals, mix)

“**Bedtime Story**” [duet] (mix)

“**Bedtime Story**” [instrumental] (mix)

“**Toy Box**” (possible new recording, mix)

5th Floor Recording Studio, Cincinnati, Ohio | after January 22 concert

Producer: Prince | Artist: Sheila E. | Engineers: Susan Rogers and Gary Platt

Prince was behind that one [“Small Grey Monkey”/“Merci For The Speed Of A Mad Clown in Summer”]. That was his keys and Benny [Rietveld] playing bass.

—Eddie M.

It is likely that Prince and Sheila continued working on “Small Grey Monkey,” but it appears that much of the time during this session was spent on Sheila’s vocals and percussion (including shakers and congas) for “Bedtime Story.” An

instrumental mix and a version that turned the song into a duet between Prince and Sheila were created, but possibly the most interesting part of the session was Sheila recording a love note that Prince had written to the instrumental version of the “Bedtime Story” that started with the phrase “Sweet and sour dreams, did you say your prayers?” The words were a playful romantic note from the female character to her male lover and sounded very much like conversations Prince and Sheila or Prince and Devin likely had.

“I think Prince liked romancing a girl, and thought, I’ve got to romance *this* one in the right way,” reveals Devin. “I was from the South and I’m very old fashioned. I never called him. He always called me, and I think he liked calling me. He even called me from a pay phone once. I didn’t know at first what to really think of him.”

Devin was not aware of anyone else he was romancing at the time or that Prince was asking another woman he had been romancing to record the song that her intimate conversations had inspired.

What made it romantic was when I would see him, we would go dancing, we would have fun, and then he would say, “It’s time for you to go to your room now.” And I would go to my room, which was down the hall from his room, and then he would call me on the phone and talk to me for two hours before I went to sleep. So, it was kind of like, how could I remotely think there was another girl in the picture when you’re talking to a guy this much.

Additional work was probably done on “Toy Box,” but it is unclear if it is a re-recording with Sheila’s band, or if it is a mix of the song she’d recorded with Prince.

Status: The spoken word version of “Bedtime Story,” as well as the duet mix remained unreleased during Prince’s lifetime.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 23, 1985

Venue: The Riverfront Coliseum (Cincinnati, Ohio)
Capacity: ±14,700 (exact attendance unknown; likely sold out)

The reviews were almost universally stellar with the *AvantGuardian* stating that “all the performers gave everything they had,” and hoping that the tour would pay another visit soon.⁴⁵

THURSDAY, JANUARY 24, 1985

“**Merci For The Speed Of A Mad Clown In Summer**” [previously listed as “**Small Grey Monkey**”] (edits, mix)

“**Bedtime Story**” (various overdubs, mix)

5th Floor Recording Studio, Cincinnati, Ohio | after January 23 concert

Producer: Prince | Artist: Sheila E. | Engineers: Susan Rogers and Gary Platt

*We’d play the show and when I got out at 1 o’clock in the morning, I’d go out and take a shower and eat and go into the studio around 3 in the morning and we’d work until the next day until about 6 when we had to play again.*⁴⁶

—Sheila E.

Additional overdubbing, mixing and editing were done on “Small Grey Monkey”/“Merci For The Speed Of A Mad Clown In Summer,” and by the end of the session, the song had been reduced to 2 minutes despite the track continuing for another 3 minutes. Sheila’s sped-up vocals would be removed in the mix and those areas would eventually be replaced by Eddie M.’s horn. This may have taken place during this session or later at Sunset Sound.

The sound effects at the beginning of the released version of “Merci For The Speed Of A Mad Clown In Summer” were also likely added on a later date at Sunset Sound.

Prince (and possibly Wendy) added some overdubs to “Bedtime Story,” and an updated mix was created.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 25, 1985

“Take Me With U” with “Baby I’m a Star” as the B-side is released as the fifth single from *Purple Rain*. It peaked at number 25 on the Pop Chart and number 40 on the Black Chart.

“Take Me With U” wasn’t the last song recorded for *Purple Rain*, but it was the final song added to the album and now it would be the album’s final single. With the tour scheduled to wrap in April—just in time for the pending release of his follow up album, *Around The World In A Day*—Prince was finishing the sentence and getting ready to start a new conversation.

JANUARY 1985

FRIDAY, JANUARY 25, 1985

Venue: Mid-South Coliseum (Memphis, Tennessee)
Capacity: ±11,200 (attendance unknown)

*We were the lab animals for sure. We'd be the testing ground for any artists he was working on, and we wouldn't really know it.*⁴⁷

—Bobby Z

During the soundchecks in Memphis, Prince continued teaching the Revolution new music, including the recently recorded “Bedtime Story.” Occasionally, he’d play new songs like this during the concerts, likely because it seemed to be important for Prince to continue to update what they played. “The show changed a bit,” remembers Dr. Fink. “It was just to change it up for himself, the group and also the audience. He wanted to keep it fresh on the road so he wasn’t playing the same thing every night over and over again. He’d get bored, which goes back to probably why he didn’t want to keep playing ‘Purple Rain’ for a year straight and being on a year-long tour all over the world. It just didn’t appeal to him obviously, or he would have done it.”

SATURDAY, JANUARY 26, 1985

Venue: Mid-South Coliseum (Memphis, Tennessee)
Capacity: ±11,200 (attendance unknown)

The following day, Prince, Sheila, their bands, and a select group of others traveled to Los Angeles to perform at the American Music Awards. With an expected audience of millions, this was a chance for Prince to morph from movie star to undeniable rock star in front of the world, so there was likely extra pressure on him to deliver.

JANUARY 1985

MONDAY, JANUARY 28, 1985

Venue: Shrine Auditorium (Los Angeles, California)
American Music Awards

*For all of us, life is death without adventure. And adventure only comes to those who are willing to take chances. I'd just like to thank, first of all, God. All of the American public. My band, Wendy, Lisa, Matt, Mark and Bobby and all the staff at Warner Brothers, Dick Clark and all of you here tonight. I'm just . . . I don't know . . . I'm very thankful to be here. I'm very thankful for all of you.*⁴⁸

—Prince

Prince was on top of the world. He was nominated in 10 categories and took home three awards including Favorite Album, for *Purple Rain*, in both the Pop/Rock and Soul/R&B categories, and Favorite Soul/R&B Single for “When Doves Cry.” Sheila E. gave an incredible performance of the Prince-penned “The Glamorous Life” and he had initially requested to perform “Paisley Park,” which was intended as the lead-off single from his next album, *Around The World In A Day*. It was an example of how Prince had moved on from the *Purple Rain* era, despite the fact that the album and tour were still popular. Abrupt changes in his focus would become a trademark of his career, and his seemingly erratic choices revealed that Prince didn’t make *business* decisions, he made *creative* ones. Prince’s promotional plan had to be changed when it was discovered that the award show only allowed performances of nominated songs, so they played one of the most emotional versions of “Purple Rain.” Even in a room filled with many of the biggest names in entertainment, Prince’s performance stood out. By the end of the show, Prince seemed invincible.

But what should have been one of the best nights of his career quickly went south. Most of rock’s biggest stars were gathering at A&M Studios to sing on “We Are The World,” the US response to “Do They Know It’s Christmas.” Both tracks were charity projects created to help feed starving people in Africa. “We Are The World” was written by Michael Jackson and Lionel Richie, and Prince was asked by the album’s co-producer Quincy Jones to participate, but Prince declined the invitation to the frustration of everyone around him, including his manager Bob Cavallo.

I said, “Are you going to talk to Quincy? He expects you to go there.” He says, “I’m not going. I’ll play guitar.” So, I call Quincy and he says, “I don’t need him to play guitar, we got fucking guitars.” So, I say, “Quincy, you know Prince is really sick. He can’t go and he’ll infect other people.” I made all this up right there. So, I go to Prince, “If you’re not gonna go tonight you have to go home. You have to hideout; I’m telling everybody you’re sick. If they see you out, it’s gonna be the headlines tomorrow, ‘Rock Royalty Saves Children While Prince Fucking Parties.’ You can’t do that!” What does he do? He gets in the car and he goes out to party.

“He had us go to Carlos ‘n Charlie’s and have a fucking party,” recalled Wendy. “I remember it perfectly, thinking, ‘This is so wrong.’ We were embarrassed. Everybody in the band was horrified. And that’s where it felt like, there’s something shifting here, where he’s getting nasty. The entitlement—it was almost like a kid with too much candy.”⁴⁹

What Prince needed to do was simply stay out of the spotlight for the rest of the night. Unfortunately, as they were leaving El Privado’s (the private bar and disco above Carlos ‘n Charlie’s), a photographer was attempting to take Prince’s photos as he got in his limo.

“The paparazzi goes over to the passenger side back door, opened it up, and shot off like a shutterbug of probably 20 shots,” according to one of Prince’s bodyguards, Wally Safford. “It was like an automatic bang. Prince said, ‘Get the film! Get the film!’ So, I went after him. He was running up the street on Sunset along with the other three or four paparazzi. I caught up to him. [The photographer] had a long-lensed camera. He swung it at my face and I ducked. Then I punched him in the eye and knocked him into the bushes as I was trying to grab the film.”⁵⁰ Shortly afterward, Wally and Sheila’s bodyguard Lawrence “Big Larry” Gibson were arrested.

Alan Leeds remembered going to sleep not knowing what had just happened. “At maybe four o’clock, four-thirty, the phone rings and it’s (Prince’s bodyguard) Chick. ‘Hey, buddy, better get back up!’ ‘What?’ ‘Well, we were at Carlos ‘n Charlie’s, and Big Larry, he’s in jail, the sheriff’s got him.’ I’ve had scandals on tour where musicians got busted and shit happens, but I’ve never read anything that was on page A1. It was just plain weird.”⁵¹

Prince didn’t understand the optics involved and tried to explain it away, but it was no longer effective. “A lot of times I’ve been accused of siccing bodyguards on people,” he rationalized. “You know what happened in L.A.? My man, the photographer, tried to get in the car! I don’t have any problem with somebody I know trying to get in the car with me and my woman in it. But someone like that? Just to get a picture.”⁵²

“So, it’s in all the papers, just that exact headline I predicted and that hurt him,” concludes Cavallo. “That hurt his image because all the artists who were in awe of him, weren’t in awe of him for another 5–6 years. You know what I mean. The tide was turning on him and I blame it all on that night.”

The effects were also intimately felt in the Prince camp, when—several weeks later—his lead bodyguard “Big Chick” Huntsberry quit. **“I think that after the L.A. incident, he feared for his job,”** reflected Prince. **“So, if I said something, he’d say, ‘What are you jumping on me for? What’s wrong? Why all of sudden are you changing?’ And I’d say, ‘I’m not changing.’ Finally, he just said, ‘I’m tired. I’ve had enough.’ I said fine, and he went home. I waited a few weeks and called him. I told him that his job was still there and that I was alone. So, he said that he’d see me when I was in New York. He didn’t show up.”**⁵³

TUESDAY, JANUARY 29, 1985

Venue: University of Texas at Austin–Frank Erwin Center (Austin, Texas)
Capacity: 16,112 (sold out)

Prince and the band quickly resumed the tour with two sold out concerts in Austin, Texas, but the press from the previous night’s events were starting to spread. “Prince’s Bodyguards Arrested in Scuffle With Photographers”⁵⁴ and “Prince and his Bodyguards Hit With \$15 Mil. Lawsuit”⁵⁵ screamed the headlines. The news was quickly changing the narrative, and the focus was turning from his music to the wizard behind the curtain.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 30, 1985

Venue: University of Texas at Austin–Frank Erwin Center (Austin, Texas)
Capacity: 16,112 (sold out)

JANUARY 1985

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 30, 1985 (ESTIMATE)

“She’s Always in My Hair” (7-inch edit)

Sunset Sound, unknown studio

Producer: Prince (not in attendance) | Artist: Prince | Engineer: “Peggy Mac” Leonard (likely)

A quick mix of “She’s Always In My Hair” was created for an upcoming release. Prince did not attend the session.

Status: The 7-inch version of “She’s Always In My Hair” (3:27) would be released as the B-side for “Paisley Park” (in the United Kingdom) and “Raspberry Beret” (in the rest of the world).



Prince was making it look easy, but underneath the calm, there was a machine that was in place and everything had to go through one man. But unlike most people, it was pushing him even harder, according to Susan Rogers.

Let’s talk about Prince and stress, because this little guy has more output than you’ve ever seen. Think of Steve Jobs. It’s like asking if Steve Jobs was stressed out. Well, yeah, of course. That’s how he got his work done. It’s that level. The heat in that oven is so hot. It’s a very active furnace and what would burn down someone else’s house is just the norm for a guy like Prince. So yeah, he was a really taut string. He had to be, because he’s making millions, he made a movie, and at some point, in the tour, he’s nominated for an Academy Award. The Grammys. They want him to play at the American Music Awards. Elizabeth Taylor’s coming out to see him. There’s all this, and the kid is, what, 25 years old? So to say he was stressed wouldn’t be an accurate depiction, but to say that his nervous system was operating at a really, almost unimaginable level for most people, a really fast rate of arousal would be very, very true. He didn’t relax. He certainly didn’t need to. And imagine, stress shuts down the cognitive processes, because you’re just so afraid, and you’re just protecting yourself. You can’t really be very creative when you’re stressed. But when your nervous system is operating at this really fast frequency, and you feel good, you can be at your most creative.



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