

PRINCE OF ROCK & ROLL?

HIS PRINCE AND NEW POWER GENERATION

MONDAY MAY 2, 2016

IT WAS 1978, I WAS 14 YEARS OLD, ABOUT TO BE 15. I WAS A BOYFRIEND MUSIC NERD & EVERYBODY KNEW IT. I WAS THE KID THAT ALWAYS HAD THE NEW ALBUMS AS SOON AS THEY CAME. FOR ALL YOU YOUNGSTERS, BACK-IN-THE-DAY THERE WERE NO COMPACT DISCS, NO MP3 FILES - NO DIGITAL DOWNLOADS. THERE WERE 8-TRACK CARTRIDGES, THEN THERE WERE CASSETTE TAPES, BUT OUR MAINSTAY, OUR GO TO WAS ALWAYS 12" RECORDS WE CALLED "ALBUMS". (OH YEAH, THERE WERE "REEL TO REEL" TAPES ALSO). THE ALBUM HAD SONGS ON BOTH SIDES, AND YOU WOULD PLAY ONE SIDE & THEN THE OTHER.

I WAS A FUNK-FREAK, A FUNKATEER IN UNCLE JAMES ARMY AND 1 OF THE CLONES OF DR. FUNKENSTEIN. I REMEMBER A GIRL NAMED ALICIA BURRIS FROM THE NEIGHBORHOOD HAD A PARTY. SHE ASKED ME TO BRING MY RECORDS & TO HELP DEEJAY. I HAD HEARD THIS NEW FUNKY JAM CALLED "SOFT & WET", BUT I HADN'T HEARD ABOUT THE RECORDING ARTIST, YET. SOMEONE HAD BROUGHT THE PRINCE ALBUM. SEVERAL OF MY RECORDS WERE OUT OF THEIR SLEEVE. I NEVER SAW THE PRINCE ALBUM COVER. BUT WHEN I WAS GATHERING MY THINGS TO LEAVE I ACCIDENTALLY PUT THE PRINCE ALBUM IN ONE OF MY FUNKADELIC ALBUM COVERS. WELL, IN MY DEFENSE, THEY BOTH HAD WARNER BROS. LABELS & IT WAS DARK IN THERE, WITH JUST BLACK LIGHTS & A RED LIGHT ON. I DIDN'T REALIZE UNTIL LATER ON, AT HOME. THAT I HAD STOLEN THE RECORD.

FOR A LONG TIME I THOUGHT THAT "PRINCE" WAS A GIRL GROUP. THE TITLE TRACK, "FOR YOU" STARTS OUT A CAPPELLA WITH ALL THESE VOICES; HIGH, SWEET, FEMININE SOUNDING VOICES AND I HAD NO IDEA IT WAS A DUDE SINGING - LET ALONE JUST 1 DUDE. ALSO, ON THE LABEL IT SAID "WRITTEN, PRODUCED AND PERFORMED BY PRINCE". SURELY THAT INDICATED A GROUP TO MY TEENAGED MIND.

THE ALBUM CHANGED ME. I NEEDED TO HEAR SOMETHING NEW. I NEEDED SOMEONE TO EXPRESS MY VULNERABILITY FOR ME, JUST THE WAY HE DID IT - RIGHT THEN. AND WE ARE TALKING FALSETTO SOUL-SINGING EXTRAORDINAIRE. THE GUY IN THE STYLISTICS ^{HAD NOTHING} WASN'T THIS ~~GOOD~~ ^{on prince}! THE ACOUSTIC GUITARS, THE KEYBOARD PLAYING, THE FUNKY BRILLIANT BASS, IT WAS ALL JUST SO HEARTFELT. I RECALL THAT FOR A LONG TIME I KEPT TRYING TO GET EVERYONE I KNEW TO LISTEN TO THE WHOLE ~~RECORD~~ ^{ALBUM}. I WOULD SAY THAT "SOFT & WET"



WAS THE JAM, BUT YOU NEED TO REALLY LISTEN TO THIS WHOLE RECORD." AND FROM THAT TIME HE DIDN'T DISSAPPOINT ME. I WAS ALWAYS A SUPERFAN - FROM DAY 1.

SO MANY GREAT LESSONS TO LEARN FROM HIS LIFE. HE RELENTLESSLY STUCK TO HIS GUITAR AND BELIEVED IN HIMSELF. IF YOU CAN IMAGINE BEING BOOED OFF STAGE BY 70,000 FOLKS THAT CAME TO SEE THE ROLLING STONES. THEY DIDN'T REALLY GIVE HIM A CHANCE. BUT REGARDLESS, THAT COULD REALLY BREAK SOMEBODY'S SPIRIT. BUT HE KNEW HE WAS PRINCE, EVEN WHEN THE WORLD DIDN'T KNOW IT.

AT THAT TIME I HAD THIS MUSICAL DICHOTOMY GOING ON. I LOVED R&B/SOUL & FUNK AND THE WHOLE ARRAY OF "BLACK MUSIC", INCLUDING JAZZ & BLUES, AND I HAD ALSO BEEN LISTENING TO ROCK & ROLL SINCE I WAS ABOUT 10. I HAD 3 SEPARATE GROUPS OF FRIENDS. GEORGE CLINTON'S BAND FUNKADELIC HAD ALWAYS INCLUDED ROCK RIFFS & HEAVY GUITAR. BUT THIS GUY, PRINCE, INCLUDED AT LEAST ONE ROCK SONG ON EACH ALBUM, AND I ALWAYS THOUGHT THEY SHOULDVE RECEIVED AIRPLAY SOMEHOW. AND THAT LEADS ME TO THE POINT I WANT TO MAKE: I THINK THE WORLD WOULD BE BETTER IF AMERICAN CLASSIC ROCK RADIO STATIONS PLAYED A FEW OF PRINCE'S ROCK SONGS IN THEIR ROTATION. C'MON, "LITTLE RED CORVETTE" IS A ROCK SONG. THEY SHOULD FIND A LIVE VERSION, OR PLAY THE EXTENDED VERSION FROM THE CD "PRINCE: THE ULTIMATE", AND BANG THAT. WHAT ABOUT "BAMBI", FROM THE 2nd ALBUM? EVEN "WHY YOU WANNA TREAT ME SO BAD?" IS A ROCKIN' SONG. THEN ON THE 3rd ALBUM, DIRTY MIND, THERE'S "WHEN U WERE MINE", AN EXCELLENT NEW-WAVE, ROCK DUTY THAT SHOULDVE HAD THE IMPACT OF A "HEY-YA" BY OUTCAST, OR A "CRAZY" BY CEELO GREEN WITH CHARLIE BARKLEY. IT SHOULDVE BEEN AS UBIQUITOUS AS "HAPPY" BY PHARELL, AND BEEN ON ALL THE STATIONS SIMULTANEOUSLY - IN EVERY GENRE. AS IT GOES, THOUGH, HIS MUSICAL LEGACY WILL REMAIN AND PEOPLE WILL ALWAYS CHECK INTO IT. BUT IT WOULD JUST BE GOOD FOR AMERICA AND THE WORLD IF HE COULD BREAK DOWN SOME OF THE BULLSHIT BARRIERS THAT STILL EXIST, THAT SAY ONLY WHITES MAKE ROCK & ROLL, AND BLACKS MAKE ONLY R&B, BECAUSE WE KNOW ITS NOT TRUE.

PEACE TO HIS PURPLE MAJESTY