


The Gold Experience

Artist's new album responds to media criticism with classic style

ALBUM REVIEW

Artist formerly known as Prince
The Gold Experience
Warner Bros./NPG Records
★★★★ (out of five)



By Rob Clark
THE BATTALION

Nothing makes me feel older than to realize that *Purple Rain* came out 11 years ago. 11 years — can it be?

Since the 1984 movie and musical masterpiece that put the artist formerly known as Prince on the map, I have followed His Royal Badness' curious career with eager eyes and ears, sometimes annoyingly so.

As these 11 years have shown, there is no one in music more eccentric, creative and, well, bizarre than Prince. Whether he hits (*Sign O' the Times*) or misses (*Diamonds and Pearls*), Prince remains the most enigmatic artist of the past 20 years.

So enigmatic that he even felt the need to change his name to a sort of morphed male-female sex symbol in 1993. And for such eccentricities comes criticism, as he has taken a royal beating in the press for his unpronounceable title. And he hasn't had a monster album in years, which could be attributed to a lack of anticipation due to his massive production output — 17 albums in his 16-year career.

So now, Prince finds himself in a situation of near-desperation. He desperately needs a hit.

This comes in the form of *The Gold Experience*. It is Prince at his best — mixing his diverse styles into a cohesive unit full of funk, rock and blues.

The album contains Prince's strongest response to his critics for his name change in "Billy Jack Bitch," a sort of open letter to biased reporters.

"What if I called you silly names?," he asks. "Just like the ones that you call me ... What distortion could you let your pen forget 2day ... Words intended 2 belittle or dismay / What if I say u lie?"

Prince's most ambitious response comes in "Dolphin," a reincarnation story of appreciating artists when they're dead. Combining

an ethereal synthesized sound with screeching guitar, "Dolphin" is simply gorgeous, reminiscent of Prince's strongest work from *Sign O' the Times* and *Lovesexy*.

"If I came back as a dolphin would you listen to me then?" he asks. "... U could cut off all my fins but to your ways I will not bend / I'd die before I let you tell me how to swim."

An interesting choice for the album's first single is "I Hate U," a smoldering ballad reminiscent of "International Lover" and "The Beautiful Ones."

Of course, funk is Prince's forte. He finally lets loose with the grinding "319," "Billy Jack Bitch" and "We March."

Even when Prince slips on the album, it is usually because of his extreme ambition. His continued attempts at rap just don't work, making the raunchy "P. Control" and "Now" the only weak spots.

But he more than makes up for it on "Shy," the masterpiece of the bunch. With light guitar flowing, Prince's vocals are stunning when tackling the chorus and melody.

In similar fashion is the album's finale, "Gold," with its "Purple Rain"-like bonfire ending.

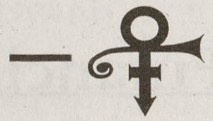
Prince finally gives a glimpse into his creative process, and his efforts to transcend. "Everybody wants to tell what's already been told / What's the use of money if u ain't gonna break the mold?" he implores, suggesting quality over compensation (Are you listening Michael Jackson?).

Ironically enough, the songs on *The Gold Experience* were completed in 1993 or '94 but due to record company tangles, are just now being released. In a trail-blazing career like Prince's, it's mind boggling to think of how much he has probably evolved since these "new" songs were even made.

He's always one step ahead of the game, whether the pop charts accept him or not.



"If I came back as a dolphin would you listen to me then? ...U could cut off all my fins but to your ways I will not bend/ I'd die before I let you tell me how to swim."



The artist formerly known as Prince has recorded 17 albums in his 16-year music career, which he started at age 19. He has produced 14 platinum albums.

Aggieland Post Office dispels disgruntled stereotypes

Community involvement heightens positive attitudes

By Rachel Barry
THE BATTALION

Receiving a letter written on a watermelon may not happen every day, but it has happened at the Aggieland Post Office in the MSC.

Danny Davis, a clerk at the Aggieland Post Office, said people have sent watermelons and coconuts through the mail.

"Someone will go to Hawaii and send a coconut back as a souvenir," he said.

Being able to send fruit through the mail is not the only little-known fact about the post office and the people who work there.

Faye Schoeman, a clerk at the Aggieland Post Office, said people do not understand what goes on behind the wall of mail boxes at the post office.

"They don't have any concept of the volume here," she said. "It's hard to realize that there are 6,000 (P.O.) boxes here."

Alvin Kucera, a clerk at the post office, said another common misconception about postal workers is that they are overpaid and underworked. However, he said, that is not the case.

"Everybody gives 100 percent," he said. "You have to be dedicated. It would be that way with any job."

Davis said some students do not think the postal workers care about

them, which he says is untrue.

"Most of us here have kids this age," he said. "And we are involved in the community in some way."

Tom McGrath, the postmaster for Bryan-College Station, said misunderstandings surrounding the post office stem from not knowing what goes on after a person puts their letter in the mailbox.

"For most people, when they think of the post office, they think of the window clerk that sells them their stamps or the carrier that brings them their mail," he said. "Most people don't

"They (people) don't have any concept of the volume here. It's hard to realize that there are 6,000 (P.O.) boxes here."

— Faye Schoeman
Aggieland Post Office clerk

have any idea about the processing."

So what does happen to a letter once it leaves the hands of its sender?

McGrath said that after the mail is collected and taken to the main office in Bryan, it is sent through a machine to have a bar code printed on it. The machine takes a picture of the address on the envelope and creates a bar code that corresponds to that address.

If the address is handwritten and unreadable, the machine sends the picture through satellite to a computer where an operator reads it and manually creates a bar code for the address. The bar code is then sent back to the post office and is checked to make sure that it is a valid address.

The letter is then sorted and sent to the post office of the destination city. There, the code is read, the letter is sorted, and it is sent to its final destination.

Kucera said postal workers arrive at the post office at 7 a.m. every day to begin sorting mail and placing it in the P.O. boxes. With five people working non-stop, the job takes three hours to complete.

McGrath said one of the biggest problems facing the post office is students who move several times during the year and neglect to turn in a change of address form.

"Students need to let us know they are gone so we can hold their mail or temporarily forward it," he said.

McGrath said students are ready to leave town after finals and do not think to put in a change of address form.

Working at the Aggieland Post Office has its advantages, and Kucera said he loves working there because of the students.

"You can't beat the Aggies," he said. "I don't think the job would be the same without them."

