

Consummate artist still has 'groove'

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Sentinel-Voice

Okay, the ultimate tease toyed with my emotions Saturday.

The Artist formerly known as Prince gave an exciting encore performance at the MGM Grand Garden Arena May 29, performing about seven hits that made Prince a household name.

But in the end, he made love to his instruments more than to his audience.

Don't get me wrong. The Artist is the consummate artist, playing all kinds of instruments, experimenting with his voice and pushing the envelope of musical genius in general.

But I yearned to sing along to more of the music that made him famous.

The "Jam of the Year" started with Larry Graham, leadman for Graham Central Station and the former bassplayer of Sly and the Family Stone.

He started out with familiar stuff, "Thankforlettingmebemyself" from his Sly and the Family Stone days, was his first selection. The 52-year-old jetted back and forth across the stage like a man half his age. Decked out in an all-white zoot suit of sorts, Graham threw around his guitar like it was his partner on "Dance Fever."

He then transitioned into one of his new songs from the album Graham Central Station called "Free."

And then the Artist did his first of two cameo appearances and the audience went wild. The five-footer came onstage in all black with a veil of chains covering his face, but everyone knew it was him. He sang with Graham and his backup singers and then scooted offstage.

It was a great performance. Graham even came out into the middle of the audience and did a solo. Graham did some pretty impressive things with his instrument, playing lots of riffs reminiscent of Jimi

Hendrix. He's a hard-working showman.

The Arena delivered a high-tech laser light show all the while; the eerie, green lights vibrating like guitar strings and beaming out over the crowd. The special lighting effects did get a little distracting later as you started to feel like you were at some laser lights show at a theme park.

After a half-hour intermission, it was time for the little man himself.

When the paisley curtain with the Artist's symbol came up, there were two, giant woman's legs spread apart, standing center stage. A



Larry Graham, leadman for Graham Central Station and former bassplayer of Sly and the Family Stone, opened his show for friend and musical cohort Prince (shown above).

sound echoed out during a mic check, and the fans almost brought the walls of the place tumbling down. They started stomping and shaking the rafters and it sounded like a herd of stampeding buffalos.

Over a soft melody of synthesizers, bass and rattles, the Artist began to speak. The crowd drowned him out in response.

All I can remember is him saying, "Sometimes, the best things happen when you least expect them!"

And with that, he was off! The Artist sang the old with the new, giving his fans a shot of musical heroine that

had them tripping. He was the perfect mix of cockiness with humility, giving as much energy as he was expecting to get back.

Although I don't think he did enough of what made him famous, he did sing "Delirious", "Purple Rain", "Let's Go Crazy", "Kiss" and a medley of "Baby, I'm a Star", "Raspberry Beret", and "I Would Die 4 U." During the encore, he sang "1999".

He also came close to telling people to "get savèd", so to speak. He said, "Love is what Christ taught. To get off this planet, you must believe in love."

He changed three times

during the performance, and surprisingly enough, his outfits were more subdued than I had anticipated.

At first he had on a black, shimmering getup. He changed midway through into a flowing white outfit. Finally, when he came back onstage for the encore, he had on a baggy, metallic suit.

All in all, I had a great time and it was well worth any trouble to see one of the musical legends of our time. Unfortunately, I didn't hear the songs I was yearning for, like "PopLife," "When Doves Cry" and "Little Red Corvette."



Sentinel-Voice photo by Kimberly Edwards

Stan Rankin-T is among the entertainers set to perform.

Festival brings heritage

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Las Vegas will get a much needed cultural shot at this year's Fruits of Africa International African Heritage Festival from June 18 to June 20 at the Las Vegas Convention Center.

There will be a preview of the festivities on Thursday, June 17 at 10 a.m. at the Fremont Street Experience before the festival begins. The actual party begins on Friday, June 18 and Saturday, June 19 at 10 a.m. in the Gold Lot on the northwest corner of Convention Center Drive and Paradise Road. On Sunday, gates open at noon.

Diana Asabi Aird, founder and producer of the festival described the twofold purpose of the event.

"The premise for the festival is, while entertaining our audience, to simultaneously educate them about the abundant contributions made by the multi-ethnic, multi-racial, multicultural and multi-national people of the African Motherland—the root, many of whose ancestors—the seed—were forcibly wrenched from their homelands, taken on a journey wrought with pain, suffering and sorrow; then dispersed and divided among many continents, countries and islands across the globe," she said.

The three-day event is sponsored by the Las Vegas Convention and Visitor's Authority and draws local residents as well as tourists from all over the world. It will feature performances by such groups as the Olabisi Nigerian Dance Troupe, Moroccan Belly Dancers, Valentino's Zoot Suit Connection, singer Darcus Speed, the Kinda Klassy Steel Drums Band and local reggae bands Stan Rankin-T and Meshak and Bonafide.

While artists demonstrate the powerful influences of African in talent, music and dance, vendors will offer participants arts, crafts, clothing, jewelry and authentic African-inspired cuisine.

For more information, call the event hotline at 454-1212.

Performer Lenny Kravitz collapses at NJ show

HOLMDEL, N.J. (AP)—Lenny Kravitz collapsed back stage during a concert, allegedly from heat exhaustion.

Kravitz played four songs

Sunday night, then walked off stage and collapsed while the band continued to play at the PNC Bank Arts Center. The show was cut short, and an announcement said the

cause of the collapse was heat exhaustion.

Kravitz, who has been touring with the Black Crowes and Everlast, was the final act in the first concert

held at the arts center this season.

Messages left Monday with the arts center and Kravitz's publicist weren't immediately returned.

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