

Prince reunites with ex-mates—Time, Sheila E.

NEW ORLEANS (AP) - Anniversaries often bring reunions. And to mark the 20th anniversary of "Purple Rain," Prince reunited with some of the players in his musical past—Morris Day and The Time, guitarist Wendy Melvoin and former protege Sheila E.

"This hasn't been done like this in a long time," said veteran musician Larry Graham, who performed at Friday's Essence Music Festival show at the Superdome in New Orleans. "This is just

right on time."

Prince's show, the kickoff to the three-day annual concert festival in the city, was a five-hour party attended by 50,000 people, the largest crowd for a concert in the festival's 10-year history.

The show started out on a bizarre note—Prince, onstage in a disguise of a straight-haired wig, hat and beard, playing the guitar on inline skates as relatively unknown performers danced or sang around him. The most

famous person to come on stage at that point was Graham, formerly of Sly and the Family Stone and Graham Central Station.

Then, the mysterious figure onstage announced Sheila E., and the audience erupted in cheers as she ran through her 1984 hit "The Glamorous Life."

Day and The Time, billed as the opening act to Prince, emerged later. Day, who starred with Prince in the groundbreaking film version

of "Purple Rain," joined his preening sidekick Jerome as they sang old hits like "The Bird" and "Cool."

Prince didn't hit the stage until nearly 11 p.m., but the crowd didn't seem to mind—middle-aged women squealed like schoolgirls and young men barely older than Prince's 25-year career bounced up and down as he performed classics like "Little Red Corvette," "Controversy" and "Adore," as well as material from his most

recent album, "Musicology."

Sheila E. rejoined her former mentor onstage to perform along side him on "A Love Bizarre" and other tunes, while Melvoin—who along with keyboardist Lisa Coleman were simply referred to as Wendy & Lisa in his old Revolution band—also sat in with his New Power Generation band.

Other surprise guests included Chaka Khan, who joined Prince to sing "I Feel For You"—a cover of his

song that she made a monster hit in the 1980s; and old school rapper Doug E. Fresh.

The high-energy show ended on an emotional note as Prince performed "Purple Rain" and spotlighted drummer John Blackwell, whose 2-year-old daughter, Jia, accidentally drowned just days earlier. An emotional Blackwell pointed to the image of his little girl on his T-shirt, as Sheila E. embraced him and the band walked off the stage.

Dance great Katherine Dunham turns 95

By Tonya Ogden
Special to Sentinel-Voice
EAST ST. LOUIS, Ill. (NNPA) - Beautiful weather, beautiful dance and a truly beautiful woman. Those components made Katherine Dunham's 95th birthday celebration a festive, loving and moving event.



Katherine Dunham took dance in new directions by combining Caribbean ritual forms of movement with modern and ballet techniques. She recently turned 95.

Hundreds of admirers lined the walkway and filled the halls of the East St. Louis Municipal Building Rotunda recently to honor the grand dame of dance.

East St. Louis Mayor Carl E. Officer honored the dancer/anthropologist/political activist and founder of the "Dunham Technique" with an official declaration of Katherine Dunham Day.

The beautiful weather that evening was a true reflection of the atmosphere.

The sound of drums reverberated throughout and Dunham's procession and ascent to her throne as guest of honor was underway.

Sitting regally in a wheelchair, looking decades younger than her actual age,

Dunham was wheeled along the walkway of the Municipal Building. All the while, she accepted long-stemmed roses and hugs from her admirers as she approached the door, at which point she was greeted with a heartfelt hug from Minister Louis Farrakhan.

"I don't believe it!" were the first words uttered by Dunham as she took her place amongst friends and admirers. Referring to the occasion of her 95th birthday, Dunham said, "I don't know what

it's like to feel old... (but) I know what it's like to feel well and giving."

Those feelings were evident in the energy and vitality that Dunham displayed. She shared words of wisdom and encouragement to her well wishers.

Farrakhan offered many words of appreciation to the woman he called "Mom."

He told of how Dunham had inspired him throughout his life, referring to her as "one of the chief architects of my life" and thanked "God

for the womb that bore Katherine Dunham."

In addition to Farrakhan and Mayor Officer, several board members of the Katherine Dunham Centers for Arts and Humanities offered words expressing their love and appreciation of Dunham's spirit and dedication to her community.

The celebration itself was culminated by several performances from both local and national Dunham dance troupes—all of which dazzled onlookers with their extraordinary performances.

A candle ceremony then followed, concluding in the singing of Happy Birthday (Stevie Wonder's version). Refreshments were then served, and a good time was had by all.

Dunham's knees prevented her from standing on her 95th birthday, but she made it perfectly clear that she plans to do so on the occasion of her 96th—and 100th birthdays.

Tonya Ogden writes for the St. Louis American.

P. Diddy engaging in 'party' politics

NEW YORK (AFP) - No stranger to tabloid gossip, rapper and all-around entertainment mogul Sean "P.Diddy" Combs caused a media stir by bringing an unexpected date to his annual July 4 "white party" bash.

Watched by the small army of supermodels who attended the Independence Day event in Long Island's celebrity-sodden Bridgehampton community, Combs strolled in escorting an original copy of the U.S. Declaration of Independence.

"No one would ever expect a young Black man to be coming to a party with the Declaration of Independence," The New York Times quoted Combs as telling his guests.

"But I got it and it's coming with me," Combs said. "And I promise not to spill champagne on it."

Combs's historical date reflected the theme of the party which he used to launch his "Citizen Change" initiative—a non-partisan movement to encourage minority and youth participation in November's presidential election.

"I don't really have faith in politicians or politics, but I have faith in the power of the people, and if we educate ourselves about the hustle we can make things right," Combs said.

Only around 25 of the 200 original copies made in 1776 of the Declaration of Independence are known to exist. The one that accompanied Combs was borrowed from movie and television producer Norman Lear, who bought it at auction for eight million dollars in 2000.

Three armed security guards escorted the framed document that was laid out for inspection by around 1,000 white-clad guests.

Discordia: Arab-Israeli conflict plays out on campus

By Kam Williams
Sentinel-Voice

With the Middle East a hotbed of controversy, it only serves to reason that the spillover effect would serve to ignite college campuses into a spirited debate of the issue. At Concordia University in Montreal, Canada, emotions boiled over to such an extent that several students were arrested after they tried to prevent former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu from speaking there on September 9, 2002.

What makes this movie fascinating is that it was made by a couple of recent Concordia graduates, one Jewish, one Muslim, with the help of Buck 65, a hip-hop

artist who lays down a sweet soundtrack which reflects the turbulent times we live in. The film opens with Jewish students running for their lives thru a gauntlet comprised of a coalition of Palestinian, Arab, leftist and other students upset about the aforementioned guest speak.

Police arrive, a riot ensues, picture windows are broken, and arrests are made. Surprisingly, among those siding with the demonstrators was Aaron Mate', the Vice-President of the Student Council. Not only is Aaron a popular campus leader, he is a Jew whose great-grandparents died at Auschwitz, and he is Pro-Palestinian.

Aaron uses his influence

to help ban Hillel, a Jewish student group, for recruiting soldiers for Israel. Yet, his feelings are hurt when is subsequently cursed and shunned as a self-hating traitor. So, he ventures to M.I.T. to commiserate with Noam Chomsky, another anti-Zionist firebrand.

Unfortunately, Noam is not much help, shrugging that "This is just what happens." So, one question this film tries to confront, is whether a person can be both pro-Jew and anti-Israel. Another revolves around an activist bailed out of jail named Samer Elatrash. Samer is a Palestinian majoring in Women's Studies who has a Jewish girlfriend. And she, like Aaron is upset about

the criticism leveled at her by her own people over the politics of the guy she happened to fall in love with.

Because Islam is the fast-growing religion in the Western Hemisphere, Muslim students now outnumber Jewish ones at Concordia and at most other college campuses. And with more and more Jews opting for cosmetic surgery and Anglicized names, they have blended into the mainstream more than the emboldened Palestinians and their sympathizers.

This picture graphically illustrates that there is growing sympathy for the Arab perspective on Israel. Free speech advocates certainly ought to support the idea of

encouraging debate, because college is precisely the place where such passionate discourse is appropriate.

However, after witnessing the level of hatred, the incessant curse words and the ethnic slurs being exchanged at Concordia by these seemingly irreconcilable adversaries, one wonders whether Israel might be too much of a hot button issue to confront on the politically-divided

college campuses of today.

Every tete-a-tete turns into a shouting match on the verge of violence. In the end, you can't help but feel for the obviously conflicted and exasperated Aaron, who comes off as just a frustrated little kid looking for a friend when he throws up his hands and moans, "It sucks to be so not liked."

Excellent (4 stars). Unrated.

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