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by governor.state.ms.us; Fri, 23 Nov 2001 23:31:04 -0600
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by e3000b.state.ms.us (8.10.0/8.10.0) with SMTP id fAO5VOi08662
for <governor@governor.state.ms.us>; Fri, 23 Nov 2001 23:31:24 -0600 (CST)
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(InterMail vM.5.01.01.01 201-252-104) with SMTP
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From: "Psychedelic Literature" <1725topp@bellsouth.net>
To: "Psychedelic Literature" <1725topp@bellsouth.net>
Subject: =?iso-8859-1?Q?Review_of_Prince's_The_Rainbow_Children?=
Date: Fri, 23 Nov 2001 23:34:28 -0600
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X-MSMail-Priority: Normal
X-Mailer: Microsoft Outlook Express 5.00.2615.200
X-MimeOLE: Produced By Microsoft MimeOLE V5.00.2615.200

This is a multi-part message in MIME format.

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Prince's The Rainbow Children Reaches for a Higher Musical Mantle
by C. Liegh McInnis

First, if you are looking for a cd filled with nicely cut and packaged =
hit singles that are radio and Billboard friendly, The Rainbow Children =
ain't for you. However, if you are looking for a diversified musical =
experience with lyrics that take you further than the sheets, then The =
Rainbow Children is up your alley. The biggest knock on Prince's latest =
efforts is that his albums sound incoherent because the songs stop and =
go with no specified direction. The truth, however, is that his albums =
are coherent, and they do have direction; it is just that the direction =
is not toward Billboard, nor is he attempting to craft songs that are =
easily packaged for radio. No, Prince's direction has been to become the =
best musician and lyricist that he can, which often means to stretch =
pass the charts, to juxtapose notes, sounds, chords, and other musical =
and lyrical ideas that produce--God forbid!!!--something...different!?! =
Many see Prince as one who has ceased to fulfill his potential. On the =
contrary, The Rainbow Children is proof that Prince continues to fulfill =
his potential. It is just that he never saw hit records as the "be =
all--end all" of his potential.

Most of the songs on the album have at least three musical movements. =
These multiple movements become a motif, as Prince continues to be one =
of the best in the pop field to use sound as a metaphor. For instance, =
in "The Work, Pt. 1" he is noticeably using a James Brown inspired riff =
that echoes soulful, black power semantics, which he laces with lyrics =
about the "hard" but necessary "work" that needs to be done for =
"revelation to come to pass." The music sets a mood of the black power =
struggle, then Prince infuses his notions of a metaphysical struggle, =
which exists along side the physical struggle. "Every time I watch the =
other people news/ I c a false picture of myself, another one of u/ They =

try 2 tell us what we want, what 2 believe/ Didn't that happen in the =
Garden/ When somebody spoke 2 Eve?" This connecting the black struggle =
to the metaphysical is quite essential to Prince's own theory, as =
evidenced by how he uses the term "Devil" throughout the cd to refer to =
the physical devils who exploit people for their wages. He then uses =
those physical devils as a trope for the metaphysical "Devil" in =
"Rainbow Children" and "Muse 2 the Pharaoh" because in Prince's theory =
the ultimate battle is in the metaphysical realm and not the physical =
realm, as also evidenced by "Digital Garden" and "The Everlasting Now." =
On one level, the multiple movements create a trope for Prince and his =
inability to be confined to arbitrary categories. On another level, the =
multiple movements represent his need to continue to grow, searching for =
the sound or idea to take him to the next level. As he states in "Last =
December," which has the most drastic musical changes and movements, =
"Did u ever find a reason Y u had 2 die?/ Or did u just plan on leaving/ =
Without wondering y?...In ur life did u just give a little/ Or did u =
give all that u had?/ Were u just somewhere in the middle/ Not 2 good, =
not 2 bad?" The musical movements combine with questioning lyrics to =
echo the desire of the jazz musicians, such as Sun Ra, who wanted to =
show that within the soul of the music was a desire to go somewhere and =
become something that transforms us. Thus, the lyrics of The Rainbow =
Children are pointing the listener in a direction, and the music is =
acting as a guide.

For the first two-thirds of the cd, Prince is challenging our notions of =
what a "pop" song can be by challenging the conventions of what sounds =
can be combined. While the first few songs are held on our musical radar =
by well measured/regulated beats and a soul-like mesh of hypnotic =
keyboards, Prince takes from that line and constructs grooves in various =
directions, attempting to expand himself and what we know as "popular =
music." Again, this expansion serves as a trope that works as a backdrop =
for what the lyrics want to do, which is to destroy our archaic =
understanding of what it means to be man and woman, what it means to be =
human, what it means to be living in truth, which also reflects in what =
it means to make art. He begins with a creation song, as all good myths =
do, but his creation begins with the fall and then redemption of mankind =
in "Rainbow Children." "With the accurate understanding of God and His =
Law they went about the work of building a new nation: The Rainbow =
Children." Playing on the myth of Osiris and Isis and Adam and Eve, =
Prince asserts that the new nation will only be created if we are able =
to build constructive relationships between man and woman. "As =
prophesied, the Wise One and his woman were tempted by the Resistor. He, =
knowing full well the Wise One's love 4 God, assimilated the woman first =
and only. Quite naturally, chaos ensued and she and 5 others were =
banished from the Rainbow...4ever." This ideology is nothing new for =
Prince, for man's fall from grace and salvation have always been linked =
directly to man's relation to woman, most notably in "And God Created =
Woman" and in a more secular sense in "Raspberry Beret" and "Forever in =
my Life," where it is the female who has the power to fertilize man's =
life. In fact, he affirms this by invoking a line from a much older =
tune, "Sexuality," with "Reproduction of the new breed leader Stand up =
and organize!" This line affirms that Prince is using sex as a metaphor =
for metaphysical union and that sexuality is a trope of human identity. =
The following songs continue to pontificate over the fall and redemption =
of mankind. The music acts as a guide, continually changing the mood as =
the lyrics take us down a sundry of issues and solutions. The songs are =
an amalgamation of jazz, with an avant-garde sensibility, where Prince =
pushes the instruments to their limits of sound, hoping his moving in =
various musical directions will push the listener to free his mind and =
become open to the messages.=20

The Rainbow Children is avant-garde in that it is pushing and =
questioning what we know as truth and beauty in the sense of pleasing =
music and gratifying ideology. It is not avant-garde in the sense of =

wanting to be art for the sake of art." Prince is too influenced by = black musicians to think of art outside the context of man's daily = existence, even if his inclusion of the metaphysics has put him at odds = with what has been on the charts for the past ten years. Working with = the definitions provided by Walter Davis in his essay, "So You Wanna Be = An Avant-Garde Fan," The Rainbow Children is avant-garde in the sense = that the "Freebop" or Ornate Coleman, the "Expressionism" of Coltrane, = "Restructualism," and the "Post-Modernism" of Wynton Marsalis all come = together to serve as aspects and foundations of what the term = "avant-garde" meant to the artists who were working within that certain = framework. In accordance, the music of The Rainbow Children seeks to = open alternative musical pathways and ideas that are then articulated = through the lyrics. In "1+1+1 is 3" he asserts, "As she fell in² the = Sensual Everafter, out of body/out of mind, he stroked her hair a = hundred times. And as she fell deeper in² the hypnotic unwind, he = counted his way in² the suggestive mind. Planting a seed that bears = fruit on the tree, he said, 'repeat after me...1+1+1 is 3.'" Throughout = the cd, the songs interact in a circular, call and response manner, = where the emotion of urgency and the notion of a quest is amplified by = the experimental fusion of varying sounds. On top of the silhouetted = jazz grooves, Prince coordinates funk, soul, and gospel in a manner that = shows both the brilliance of black music as well as the innate and = organic link that black music has to spirituality in all of its forms.

Just when you have slipped into the experimental form of this album, he = hits you with "Family Name," which is classic Prince: classic in that = Prince is able to take what he has done in the past and evolve it into = where he is now...classic in that it's Prince's electrified, thumping = bass line beneath his piercing falsetto...classic in that it's Sly and = the Family Stone meets Curtis Mayfield, and at the end of this meeting, = the song explodes into Prince making his case that he is the best = guitarist of his time, which he proves later in the final movement of = "Last December." "Family Name" is about the fallacy of the oppressor's = story and how this fallacy is used to oppress the Children of the = Rainbow.=20

"First of all, the term 'black and white' is a fallacy. It simply is = another way of saying 'this or that'...'this' means the truth, or 'that' = which is resistant 2 it. When a minority realizes its similarities on a = higher level--not just 'black'--but PEOPLE OF COLOR, and higher still = 'INGIGENOUS,' and even higher still, 'FROM THE TRIBE OF --' and yet = higher -- the 'RAINBOW CHILDREN'...When this understanding comes, the = so-called minority becomes a majority in the wink of an eye. This action = will cause a Reaction or Resistance. The source of this Resistance must = b banished as it is in direct conflict with the initial action. It = cannot b assimilated, 4 its very nature is resistance. In other words, = ONE CANNOT SERVE 2 MASTERS. U r either 'this' or 'that' which is not = 'this.'"

"Family Name" climaxes right into "The Everlasting Now," where the album = shifts into overdrive, leaving us with the question, "What the hell = happened to the direction of first part of this album?" Where jazzy soul = was the dominate form of the first two-thirds, funk dominates the last = third. As with the other songs on this album, "The Everlasting Now" has = at least two musical movements--three, depending on how you are = counting. Again, it is the funk chords and the refrain of "Don't let = nobody bring you down!" that drive this groove, which is seconded by the = horns that come late into the jam, which, in one final movement, shifts = into James Brown cookin' with Jimi Hendrix at 2:30 a.m. With the lyrics, = Prince is once again employing the metaphoric "I" as a way to connect = the individual to the collective. Many of the verses seem quite true to = his personal story, but he uses the impressionistic style best seen in = Around the World in a Day or in "Sacrifice of Victor" from 1992's =

"Symbol [0(+>]" cd, which allows his novel to assert the universal. =
Prince is continuing his theme of freedom and liberation and his ability =
to link that theme with the collective, moving from a focus on the =
individual to a focus on the masses. He is definitely talking about his =
liberation from Warner Bros. and from a world that he sees as based on =
entropy, but he is also using his personal as a metaphor for liberating =
the masses with truth.

"Mirror, mirror what u c?/ Have I still got those dark clouds over me?/ =
Or am I really feeling what I feel?/ The last days of the Devil's deal/ =
Mirror what u c?/ Devil, devil what u know?/ U been here since 1614, but =
now u got 2 go/ U been hidin' behind corporate eyes/ U wanna war, but u =
can't fight/ Devil u got 2 go...Teacher, teacher what u say?/ Did we =
really come over in a boat?/ Did it really go down that way?/ Or did I =
arrive b4 u and ruin Thanksgiving Day?/ Teacher, what u say."

Driving The Rainbow Children is the notion that the songs are meant to =
please and enlighten--to move both our bodies and our souls in a =
positive direction. Prince bookends the cd with love, because, in his =
theory, only love can save us. The first song, "Rainbows Children," =
concentrates on the love between man and woman. The last song, "Last =
December," concentrates on the love between God and mankind. "Did u love =
somebody/ But got no love in return?/ Did u understand the real meaning =
of love/ That it just is and never yearns? When the truth arrives/ Will =
u b lost on the other side?/ Will u still b alive?/ In the name of the =
Father/ in the name of the Son/ We need 2 come 2gether/ Come 2gether as =
one." The motif is still liberation--the liberation that has been there =
since day one--but now Prince has successfully merged his desire for =
individual liberation with the necessity of collective liberation. And =
this liberation must take place in the metaphysical before we can =
achieve physical liberation. With the insight of Stevie Wonder, The =
Rainbow Children is able to construct a theology of George Clinton's =
"Free your mind and your ass will follow," and the music is another =
lesson in just how spacious the spectrum of music can be if we allow it =
to be all that it has the potential to become.

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only love=20
can save us. The first song, "Rainbows Children," concentrates on the =
love=20
between man and woman. The last song, "Last December," concentrates on =
the love=20
between God and mankind. "Did u love somebody/ But got no love in =
return?/ Did u=20
understand the real meaning of love/ That it just is and never yearns? =
When the=20
truth arrives/ Will u b lost on the other side?/ Will u still b alive?/ =
In the=20
name of the Father/ in the name of the Son/ We need 2 come 2gether/ Come =
2gether=20
as one." The motif is still liberation--the liberation that has been =
there since=20
day one--but now Prince has successfully merged his desire for =
individual=20
liberation with the necessity of collective liberation. And this =
liberation must=20
take place in the metaphysical before we can achieve physical =
liberation. With=20
the insight of Stevie Wonder, <I>The Rainbow Children</I> is able to =
construct a=20
theology of George Clinton’s "Free your mind and your ass will =
follow," and the=20
music is another lesson in just how spacious the spectrum of music can =
be if we=20
allow it to be all that it has the potential to become.</P>

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