

FROM PAGE 1C

PRINCE

more material than the original double LP could hold.

Now “Sign O’ the Times” has been reissued and vastly expanded. A Super Deluxe configuration includes eight CDs and a DVD, augmenting the remastered original with its associated singles and B-sides; two live shows from 1987 (audio from a stadium concert in the Netherlands, video from a New Year’s Eve show at Prince’s Paisley Park studio complex in Minnesota); and, best of all, three CDs of unreleased material from Prince’s huge archive, the Vault. Some of the Vault tracks are early or alternate versions of familiar songs, but dozens are newly revealed. Prince’s original choices for the album hold up. But it’s a delight to hear so much more.

“Sign O’ the Times” didn’t start out as a double LP. Prince had too much music pouring out of him for that. He intended to release a triple album named “Crystal Ball,” which had evolved from an album named “Dream Factory.” But Warner Bros., his label at the time, insisted he cut back. Prince gave in, winnowing the track list down to 16 songs. Some of the others have trickled out over the years. Once Prince controlled his own label, “Crystal Ball” itself — a daring, shape-shifting 10-minute suite that would have dominated an LP side — arrived in 1998 as the title track for a three-CD set. A version edited for a prospective single, carving a still-strange psychedelic funk song out of the suite, is on the new collection.

In the mid-1980s — and well beyond — Prince was indefatigable. From 1985 to 1987, he was not only writ-

ing songs for his own albums; he was also touring, devising movie projects, overseeing the construction of Paisley Park and coming up with material for musicians he admired, including Miles Davis, Joni Mitchell and Bonnie Raitt. And he was trying on alter egos — including a female one, Camille, created with pitched-up vocals, for whom he had contemplated an entire album.

Prince was also dealing with two breakups. He dissolved his longtime band, the Revolution, in October 1986. And he ended his engagement to Susannah Melvoin, though his love song to her, “Forever in My Life,” stayed on “Sign O’ the Times,” remade to become more austere and percussive than the countryish, guitar-strumming version from the Vault.

The newly released songs reveal how many paths Prince was testing before he finalized “Sign O’ the Times” and how many solid songs still didn’t meet his high standards before his death in 2016. He was pushing further into jazz in instrumentals like “It Ain’t Over ‘Til the Fat Lady Sings” and the swinging “All My Dreams.” He affirmed his faith in “Walkin’ in Glory,” where he becomes a one-man call-and-response gospel celebration. He dabbled in the elaborate, neopsychedellic pop he had featured on his previous album, “Parade,” in “Adonis and Bathsheba” and “Big Tall Wall.”

He was grounding himself once again in deep funk like “Soul Psychodelicide,” a song he’d suddenly cue onstage by shouting “Ice cream!” (A 12-minute version is finally documented on the new album.) He was toying with the sampled instruments available on his Fairlight synthesizer and with studio effects; one song, the eerie “Neveah Ni Ecalp A,”



Miami Herald File

Prince performs during halftime in the 2007 Super Bowl in Miami.

tape-reverses the vocals of another Vault song, an eccentric waltz he repeatedly reworked, “A Place in Heaven.” He was writing peppy new wave songs like “Cosmic Day” (for his high Camille voice). He was rocking out on guitar in “Love and Sex” and rewiring soul to hard rock in two very different versions of “Witness 4 the Prosecution.” Meanwhile, his lyrics tried on male and female perspectives and worked through disillusionment, loneliness, lust, spirituality and euphoria.

“Sign O’ the Times” would have been very different if Prince hadn’t disbanded the Revolution and muted, minimized or shelved most of their contributions — though one of the peaks of the original album is a live Prince & the Revolution track, “It’s Gonna Be a Beautiful Night.” The album might well have been more embellished and less hard-edge, more communal and less a solitary quest.

Most of “Sign O’ the Times” was, as usual, the work of a one-man studio band: “written, arranged,

produced and performed by Prince.” But some Vault tracks on the expanded album illuminate how collaborative Prince had grown with members of the Revolution, particularly Wendy Melvoin (Susannah’s twin sister) on guitar and Lisa Coleman on keyboards, who would go on to record together as Wendy & Lisa.

Prince built some tracks on their jazz-tinged instrumentals, and in alternate versions of songs from “Sign O’ the Times,” Prince handed over his tracks to Wendy & Lisa for additional production. One find among the Vault songs — an intriguing road not taken — is “In a Large Room With No Light.” Built on music by Wendy & Lisa, it has an upbeat Latin big-band feel, with a blithe scat-singing refrain and zigzagging melodies and harmonies, belied by Prince’s lyrics that detail dead-end lives and “situations that aren’t right.” Another Melvoin-Coleman-Prince collaboration, “Power Fantastic,” glimpses Prince at work. It’s a first run-through of a serpentine

ballad that begins with Prince coaching the musicians and yields a richly introspective performance that’s by no means tentative.

Prince’s long-documented but previously unreleased studio collaboration with Davis, “Can I Play With U,” turns out to be only a curiosity. It’s a slice of busy synthesizer-and-saxophone-riffing Minneapolis funk that Prince sent to Davis for trumpet overdubs. Amid Prince’s vocals, keyboard chords, distorted lead guitar and a chatty bass guitar, Davis wedged in his recognizable chromatic sprints and tangent harmonies. But Prince seems to be trying so hard to impress Davis that he ends up squeezing him out.

It’s no wonder Mitchell turned down a song Prince offered her, “Emotional Pump”; its angular funk and laconic verses hardly suit her style. (“Power Fantastic” would have been far more compatible.) Prince reworked songs from his backlog for Raitt; the reggae-ish “There’s Something I Like About Being Your Fool” and the

scolding “Promise to Be True” could have clicked, but according to the reissue’s extensive liner notes, their touring schedules got in the way.

Prince could write and record all the parts of a song in a day, and sometimes more than one song. He heard every instrumental part in his head and got them on tape as fast as he could. He seemed to hear every viewpoint, too: men and women, lovers and fighters, pragmatists and dreamers, heroes and scoundrels. The huge list of characters mentioned on the original album — the waitress Dorothy Parker, the classmates in “Starfish and Coffee,” the tough pretty girl in “U Got the Look,” all the desperate people in “Sign O’ the Times” — get plenty of new company in the Vault songs. For all the time Prince spent sequestered making music, he never shut out other people’s lives.

And he always understood the power of sheer sound, of tune and beat and voice. One song he consigned to the Vault was “Blanche,” perhaps because it was such a light-hearted concept, perhaps because “Sign O’ the Times” had “Housequake,” another club-ready stomp.

“Blanche” is a funk vamp harking directly back to James Brown, though it slides up and down the chromatic scale at whim. Performed entirely by Prince, it’s a series of come-ons, grunts and moans sung by Stanley — as in Stanley Kowalski of Tennessee Williams’ “A Streetcar Named Desire” — to an elusive Blanche: “Blanche, you know you ain’t been driven / ‘til you try my ride.” It was the kind of thing Prince could seemingly execute without a second thought, then stash in his Vault. Now that it’s out, just try not to dance.

FROM PAGE 1C

DRINKS

The 8-year-old boy grew into a 44-year-old man who, after more than a decade of running bars in New York City, opened the Settle Down Tavern in Madison, Wisconsin, in May. So any exploration of America he undertook would necessarily incorporate the country’s watering holes. Bartels visited more than 700 of them, from fancy cocktail dens to timeworn dives.

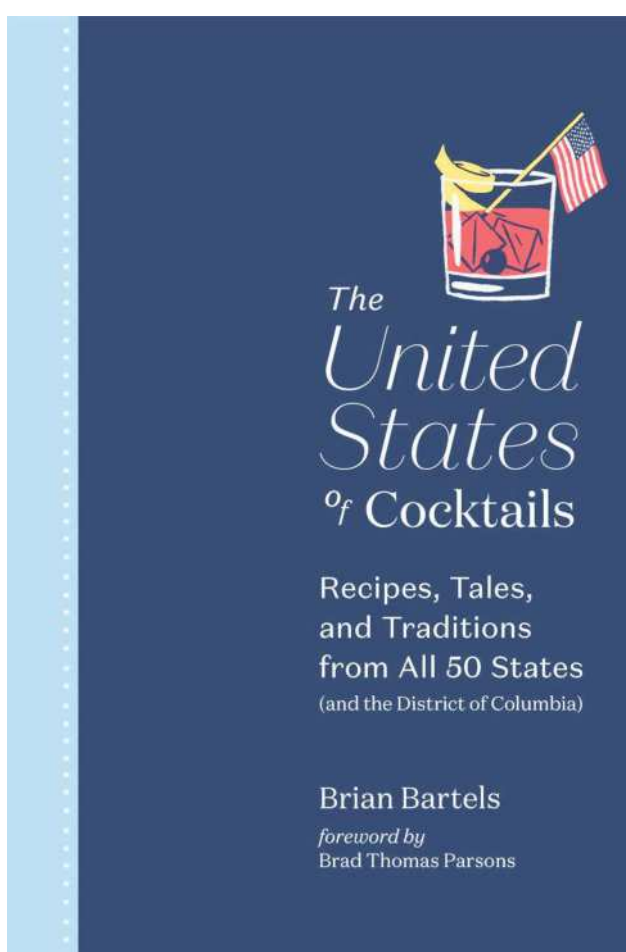
While that may sound like fun, Bartels called it “the hardest thing I’ve ever done in my life,” and said the pace was “dizzying.”

Research took many forms. He barhopped around Seattle with Murray Stenson, a career bartender so revered in that city that young barkeeps would greet him with the question, “Is it really you?”

Bartels drank orange crushes (vodka, triple sec and orange juice) with Fred Comegys, a photographer who covered Joe Biden’s first presidential campaign in 1988 and is an owner of Comegys Pub in Wilmington, Delaware. (Orange crushes are more a Maryland drink, but, hey, the two states border each other.)

Bartels drove through a Montana blizzard to get to the Sip ‘n Dip Lounge, a Great Falls hotel bar where patrons drink “fish bowls” while they watch human “mermaids” swim in a pool behind the bar and listen to “Piano Pat” Spoonheim, an octogenarian who has been playing there since 1963.

He craned his neck at the Mount Royal Tavern (aka the “Dirt Church”) in Baltimore to take in its reproduction of the Sistine Chapel ceiling. And Bartels drank alongside sharks and Cookie Monsters at the Atomic Bar & Lounge, a Birmingham, Alabama, bar that provides costumes for



Amazon

“The United States of Cocktails” by Brian Bartels.

customers to wear and has a room dedicated to Angela Davis, the activist and scholar who was born in the city.

“It was a beautiful juxtaposition of ‘Come in and enjoy yourself, but don’t forget that we’re all part of the community and we’re here to love one another,’” Bartels said.

He found that local drinks can be as specific and peculiar as local bars. They show that, even during a time of mass homogenization of tastes and habits, cities and states can still cling to their old and sometimes peculiar ways.

Thanks to the large Basque population in Boise, Idaho, you can order a Kalimotxo, a mix of red wine and cola — far from its origins in Spain. In Jackson Hole, Wyoming, frozen drinks called sloshies can be had at restaurants, bars and gas stations. Michigan-

ders are enamored of the hummer, a blender drink made of ice cream, vodka and Kahlúa that was invented at a Detroit yacht club.

Salt Lake City cocktail bartenders have in recent years turned the Wray Daq, a daiquiri made with the high-proof Jamaica rum Wray & Nephew, into a local phenomenon. And in many a kitchen cabinet in Maine you will find a bottle of Allen’s Coffee Flavored Brandy, a liqueur that has a commercial foothold almost nowhere else.

Bartels has been promoting the book at the same time he is trying to start some drinking traditions of his own. This has been difficult, given that during the nearly four months the Settle Down Tavern has been open, he has not been able to invite many customers inside (seating capacity indoors is currently capped

at 25%) and the windows were for a time covered with plywood.

Still, cheese puppies, a cross between fried cheese curds and hush puppies, have found an audience, and they are frequently washed down with an Advance, Wisconsin, a sort of Brown Derby cocktail (whiskey, grapefruit juice, honey) laced with Campari.

In normal times, Bartels might have hoped his book would inspire some bar-based tourism. Under current circumstances, he may have to settle for armchair tourism. But that’s OK by him.

“Martin Cate has a great quote in the book,” said Bartels, mentioning an owner of the noted San Francisco tiki bar Smuggler’s Cove. “Escape is a dying art.’ Books are necessary to fuel our imaginations and afford one the ability to travel when they have limited means to explore. And given our current world, my hope is to offer some semblance of a healthy distraction that fuels one’s appreciation of history, culture and all the possibilities of engaging society before, during and after COVID.”

(Some of the bars mentioned in the book have begun to open again. You can once again order a du Pont cocktail at the Hotel du Pont in Wilmington, Delaware. There are dozens of recipes in the book, so you can make Arizona and Oklahoma’s favorite drinks at home without visiting those states.)

The pandemic has also lent an unexpected poignancy to the text, since some of the bars mentioned have closed for good. Bartels’ tributes to those haunts now read as eulogies.

“If we’re losing these places,” he said, “at least they’re in a book now for people to possibly cherish and know that this place happened.”



Alberto Carrillo
2020 Residential President
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Miami-Dade Total Home Sales Surge in August

Miami-Dade County total home sales surged in August 2020 as Miami real estate completed its recovery from the brief impact caused by the global COVID-19 situation, according to the MIAMI Association of Realtors (MIAMI) and the Multiple Listing Service (MLS) system.

Miami-Dade County total home sales jumped 6.4% year-over-year, from 2,374 to 2,527. Miami single-family home sales jumped 16.6% year-over-year, from 1,164 to 1,357. Miami existing condo transactions decreased 3.3% year-over-year, from 1,210 to 1,170.

Pent-up demand, historically low mortgage rates and the robust fundamentals of the South Florida housing market is leading to increased buying activity.

Miami single-family homes priced between \$400K to \$600K surged 43.1% year-over-year to 392 transactions in August 2020. Miami existing condo sales priced between \$400K to \$600K increased 22.1% to 116 transactions.

Miami single-family luxury (\$1-million-and-up) transactions jumped 86.6% year-over-year to 153 sales in August 2020. Miami existing condo luxury (\$1-million-and-up) sales increased 29.6% year-over-year to 70 transactions.

Record-low interest rates; a record-high S&P 500; the appeal of stable assets in a volatile economy; homebuyers leaving tax-burdened Northeastern states to purchase in Florida (no state income tax); and work-from-home and remote-learning policies have all combined to create a robust market for luxury single-family properties.

105 Consecutive Months of Price Appreciation in Miami
Strong demand coupled with limited supply continue to drive price appreciation in Miami-Dade.

Miami-Dade County single-family home prices increased 12.4% year-over-year in August 2020, increasing from \$370,000 to \$416,000. Miami single-family home prices have risen for 105 consecutive months, a streak of 8.5-plus years. Existing condo prices increased 9.7% year-over-year, from \$241,635 to \$265,000. Condo prices have increased or stayed even in 107 of the last 111 months.

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