

Welcome to TimesPeople [Share and Discover the Best of NYTimes.com](#) 11:44 PM [Log In or Register](#)  
What's this? No, thanks

HOME PAGE MY TIMES TODAY'S PAPER VIDEO MOST POPULAR TIMES TOPICS [Get Home Delivery](#) [Log In](#) [Register Now](#)

**The New York Times** **Music** Search All NYTimes.com

WORLD U.S. N.Y. / REGION BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY SCIENCE HEALTH SPORTS OPINION ARTS STYLE TRAVEL JOBS REAL ESTATE AUTOS  
 ART & DESIGN BOOKS DANCE MOVIES **MUSIC** TELEVISION THEATER



EMBASSY SUITES HOTELS® [Book Now](#)  
Advertise on NYTimes.com

MUSIC REVIEW | PRINCE

# Rocking and Acknowledging Signs o’ the Times

By JON CARAMANICA  
 Published: October 12, 2008

On Friday the stock market concluded a brutal week, its worst in history, with the Dow Jones Industrial Average having lost almost 1,900 points, just under a fifth of its value. But were you still feeling flush, or maybe a bit oblivious, a familiar if rare indulgence was available in the rooftop loft at the Hotel Gansevoort in the meatpacking district: a concert by Prince. A hundred or so tickets for the almost claustrophobically small concert were, depending on how you looked at it, something of a steal — just \$1,000.

[Enlarge This Image](#)



Kevin Mazur/WireImage

Prince performing in a small-scale charity show on Friday in the small rooftop loft of the Hotel Gansevoort.

It was for charity of course: Love 4 One Another Charities and Urban Farming, both with roots in Prince’s hometown, Minneapolis. And it doubled as a release party for “21 Nights” (Atria), a collection of glamour shots and photos of his 21-night stand at the O2 Arena in London last year. Depending on that state of your 401(k) there was also the option of a late-night jam session — a bargain, comparatively, at \$300.

Not that Prince was deaf to the times. Moments into the early set he joked about the tough day, then he tweaked the lyrics of “1999” to reference the financial crisis: once an apocalyptist, always an apocalyptist. But he didn’t dwell. Over four virtuosic hours split between the two shows — attended by a sprinkling of celebrities ([Dave Chappelle](#), [Howard Stern](#), [Spike Lee](#)), a few rabid Prince fans and several dozen disposers of disposable income — he was by turns sensual, exuberant, raw and, in far rarer

moments, indulgent and cautious. Prince may no longer surprise, but he still has the capacity to astonish.

The shows’ impact was intensified by its scale: Prince, three band members (not counting the harmonica player Frédéric Yonnet, who popped in and out), and two singers were crammed on a tiny elevated stage, playing in a room the size of a four-car garage. For the dour Prince of the late ’90s this might have been a suffocating setup, but in recent years — from 2004’s flexible “Musicology” to his sly performance at the 2007 Super Bowl — he has rediscovered some electricity and vigor of his early years.

[More Articles in Arts »](#)

## Movies Update E-Mail

Sign up for the latest movie news and reviews, sent every Friday.    
[See Sample](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)

SIGN IN TO E-MAIL OR SAVE THIS  
 PRINT  
 SHARE  
 ARTICLE TOOLS SPONSORED BY  
**THE SECRET LIFE OF BEES**

[Advertise on NYTimes.com](#)

## MOST POPULAR

E-MAILED BLOGGED SEARCHED

- Op-Ed Contributor: Buy American. I Am.
- The Long Run: Behind McCain, Outsider in Capital Wanting Back In
- David Brooks: Thinking About Obama
- Is Anybody Happy?
- Nov. 5, 2008
- Reaching an Autistic Teenager
- 36 Hours in Paris
- Editorial: Last-Minute Mischief
- Nearing Record, Obama’s Ad Effort Swamps McCain
- Op-Ed Contributors: Poor Homeowners, Good Loans

[Go to Complete List »](#)

**The New York Times** **AUTOS**  
[nytimes.com/autos](http://nytimes.com/autos)

In both sets he played “Purple Rain” — early in the night it was jagged and howling, but a few hours later, in a far looser rendition, it was languorous and breathy. Other repeats — “Cream” (better version: first set; firm and funky) and “U Got the Look” (better version: second set; unexpectedly greasy, with dashes of 1950s rock) — highlighted his effortless facility and that of his band. The drummer Cora Coleman-Dunham in particular was ferocious and had an easy rapport with the bass player Joshua Dunham, her husband. On keyboards Morris Hayes did yeoman’s work, becoming a virtual one-man horn section when needed.

If the group faltered at all, it was during the second show, which was filled with covers tied together by elongated jamming; the onstage comfort at times felt too insular. But overwhelmingly they were crisp, especially on the [Rolling Stones](#)’ “Miss You” and on a pair of extended-Prince-family Minneapolis gems: [Janet Jackson](#)’s “What Have You Done For Me Lately” (produced by Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis) and a mayhem-inducing version of the Time’s “Jungle Love.” That Prince was confident in his crew was evident by just how much of the time he removed himself from the spotlight — feigning exhaustion as Mr. Yonnet played any of several exemplary solos; working a shaker while his backup vocalists, Marva King and Shelby Johnson, took over. Sometimes he wasn’t doing anything but watching, happy to be catching a good show.

“I’m just moaning like an old hound dog,” Prince joked during “Satisfied” early in the night. And blues do seem to be heavier on his mind now than at any time in his career. He followed that song with the hilarious “Beggin’ Woman Blues,” which borrows from two decades-old numbers, “Beggin Woman” and “Three Handed Woman.” (A zippier version of “Beggin’ Woman Blues” is included on “Indigo Blues,” a CD packaged with “21 Nights.”) Humor has never been a strong suit of Prince’s, so hearing him sing “She begged my Aunt Gertrude/She even begged my Uncle Jake/She even tried to beg the sweetness out of my grandma’s lemon cake” was a pleasant shock.

Midway through the late show Mr. Chappelle, the comedian, took over the stage for an impromptu set. And like everyone else he was giddy. “I played tambourine tonight at a Prince show — that’s the good news,” he said before settling down to reality: “The bad news is, I flew coach.”

A version of this article appeared in print on October 13, 2008, on page C5 of the New York edition.

[More Articles in Arts »](#)

[Enjoy the convenience of home delivery of The Times for less than \\$1 a day](#)



**Testing hybrids in the rain**

Also in Autos:

- [The new face of Venturi Automobiles](#)
- [An exotic Vette for the jet set](#)
- [Highlights of the Paris Motor Show](#)

ADVERTISEMENTS

[Need to know more?](#)

Get 50% off home delivery of The Times.

Cover Yourself.

Go to [UCompareHealthCare.com](http://UCompareHealthCare.com).

Ads by Google what's this?

**[In Home Music Lessons](#)**

Instruments, Voice, & Piano Tuning No more driving. Serving VA DC MD  
[www.inhomemusic.com](http://www.inhomemusic.com)

**[Prince Purple Rain](#)**

Looking for Prince Purple Rain? Find exactly what you want today.  
[Yahoo.com](http://Yahoo.com)

**[Watch Prince Videos. Free](#)**

Free Access to your Favorite Videos Free With The Video Toolbar.  
[videos.alottoolbars.com](http://videos.alottoolbars.com)

Ads by Google what's this?

**[Prince Official Site](#)**

For 21 Nights Book Photos, poetry and new music  
[www.simonsays.com/prince](http://www.simonsays.com/prince)

**[Gansevoort South Beach](#)**

Wholesale Rates at the Luxurious Hotel Gansevoort South Beach Miami.  
[www.SouthBeachLuxuryHotels.com](http://www.SouthBeachLuxuryHotels.com)

**[Prince Purple Rain](#)**

Everything to do with Prince Purple Rain items.  
[Yahoo.com](http://Yahoo.com)

**Past Coverage**

- [Surprise From Prince \(September 17, 2007\)](#)
- [CD REVIEW; The Ego Sessions: Will Success Spoil Kanye West? \(September 5, 2007\)](#)
- [MUSIC; The Once And Future Prince \(July 22, 2007\)](#)
- [ARTS, BRIEFLY COMPILED BY LAWRENCE VAN GELDER | PROTESTS DONT DERAILED FREE PRINCE CD; Protests Dont Derail Free Prince CD \(July 16, 2007\)](#)

**Related Searches**

- [Music](#)
- [Get E-Mail Alerts](#)
- [Prince](#)
- [Get E-Mail Alerts](#)