

MORE DIRTY DOZEN DISCS

FRIENDLY FIRES

Friendly Fires

Believe the hype! Remember last year when everyone was telling you how cool Vampire Weekend was? Remember when you finally listened to them, and you realized they were cool? Well, Friendly Fires is this year's sensation. Get onboard early with this one.



ROBYN HITCHCOCK & THE VENUS 3

Goodnight Oslo

The oddball rocker reconnects with his sometimes side band the Venus 3 (Peter Dinklage of REM, Scott McCaughey of Minus 5 and Bill Rieflin of Ministry) for a stark and mellow affair. *Goodnight Oslo* is a return to Hitchcock's roots.



VARIOUS ARTISTS

Dark Was the Night

A who's who of alternative rock superstars—including Iron & Wine, Ben Gibbard from Death Cab for Cutie and Feist—comes together for a good cause. The two CDs feature collaborations and covers, all to raise money for the Red Hot Organization, which helps people with HIV.



TYRONE WELLS

Remain

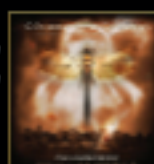
Tyrone Wells seems to have a bit of an identity crisis on his CD. Some songs channel the wimpy, piano-driven sound of bands like Coldplay and the Fray. Others rock out with the arena leanings of Nickelback.



COHEED AND CAMBRIA

Neverender: Children of the Fence Edition

With nine discs in all, this may be the most ambitious CD/DVD box set ever released. Witness Coheed and Cambria at New York's Terminal 5, where for four consecutive nights the progressive rock band performed each of their concept albums in chronological order.



THE SOUNDTRACK OF OUR LIVES

Communion

A double-disc set is an ominous undertaking for even the most talented of artists. TSOL pulls it off. Their new 24-track offering is a spacey masterpiece full of epic rock 'n' roll. Electric. Eclectic. Eccentric. Perfect. Now could someone please explain the strange cover art to us? ☹️



Wendy & Lisa

WOMEN OF THE REVOLUTION

Prince's Former Bandmates Return to Form.

In 1984 the movie *Purple Rain* became a worldwide cultural phenomenon. Wendy Melvoin and Lisa Coleman were there right alongside Prince as the guitarist and keyboardist for the Revolution. We caught up with them to discuss life with Prince, scoring TV shows (including *Heroes*), their latest CD (*White Flags of Winter Chimneys*) and if the water is warm enough.

HUSTLER: Lisa, how did you end up in Prince's band in 1980?

LISA: That was through a friend who was working for a company that was managing Prince at the time. She thought of me. He was looking for a female keyboard player to replace Gayle Chapman. I recorded myself playing some songs and sent in a tape. He liked it and flew me to Minneapolis. And we fell in love. (Laughs.)

What was it like going from Los Angeles to Minneapolis?

LISA: It was a complete culture shock. I thought it would be much more relaxed. Having played in bands all my life, I had this image in my mind of what it would be like. Prince himself, as a person, was already trying to act like he was big. He and I talked about this. His philosophy was "Fake It Till You Make It." So he was a little bit separated from the band, and I didn't expect that. Minneapolis was very cold. I didn't even have a coat. I remember at one of our first gigs I had a blazer on, and there was a blizzard outside. We were being pelted by snow, and Prince looked at me and said, "That's just sad, girl." (Laughs.) He had the road manager buy me a coat.

Did you two know each other before Wendy joined the Revolution?

WENDY: We grew up together in Los Angeles. Our fathers were studio guys. We each came from three kids a side. We grew up together as family members, and then we spent a few years apart. When we were all teenagers, my family went to one side of the country; her family stayed in L.A. When I turned about 15 years old, I came back one summer, and Lisa and I hooked up when we reconnected in our teens and both realized we were gay. (Laughs.) We started a relation-

ship that lasted for about 20 years.

LISA: Shocking.

WENDY: I joined the band because of Lisa. I spent some time with her on the road during the 1999 tour. Prince's guitarist [Dez Dickerson] wasn't showing up to sound checks, and I just happened to be there at the right time. I had already been playing guitar since I was very young. Prince heard me play and asked me to join in on a sound check for "Controversy" with the band. Then I went back home to L.A.

Lisa called and said, "He's going to call you." Prince called me that night and asked me to join the band. Nothing was better. I had been a fan of Prince long before Lisa had joined the band.

Was it tough being in a relationship and being in the band?

LISA: No. It was so great because at first I kept leaving to go on the road. That was hard and sad to be apart. Then being in the band together was like a dream-come-true. To have Wendy along and have Prince end up loving her as much as he did and still does. I can say she's probably still his favorite band member that he ever had.

Was it true that Prince would come up with everything and then tell the band what to play?

LISA: There's truth in that.

WENDY: He really did do a lot of that. I think he relied a lot on our takes and feedback. He would come in and say, "This is what I have.



How do we enhance this? What do we take away from this? What can you guys offer to this?" That's the way he communicated with us. A lot of times he would hire people in the other bands and his band where he would absolutely walk behind you, take your instrument and say, "Play this." It was usually the right thing.

As professional musicians, was it frustrating to be told what to play?

LISA: No. Not to blow our own horn, but out of anyone in the band the two of us really became creative partners. A lot of the time it depended on the song. Because of the way that Prince works. He is so obsessive. He would be up all night. A lot of songs he would just do all by himself. He knew how to run his gear. He could play all the instruments. He'd get inspired and stay up all night recording a song. He would call in the middle of some nights and ask, "What are you doing?" We'd say, "Sleeping. What are you doing?" He'd say, "I'm cutting."

LISA: "I'm cutting, and you're missing."

What is your most vivid memory about the filming of *Purple Rain*?

WENDY: It was 70 below the day we wrapped. Lisa and I flew back to L.A. for Christmas, and it was 70 above. I'll never forget it because the two of us had to be on set at six in the morning, which meant we needed to be up by 4 a.m. to run downstairs outside to start the car and let it run for an hour-and-a-half before we could get down to the set. Because it was too cold.

LISA: It was a physical challenge. Other than that, there was a really long buildup to it. For a long time, even before Wendy was in the band, we had been talking about making this film, which was going to be called *Graffiti Bridge*. We had been talking about all these little ideas. Prince would ask, "If I wrote this in a film, would you do this?"

We talked about making it realistic but still like a story. Prince always had a notebook and would write things down. There were a couple of years that built up to what ended up being *Purple Rain*. We were talking about it as a cult film. Once he

brought in professionals, they decided to make a big film, and the plot changed a lot.

WENDY: What struck me during that time is that Minneapolis was becoming the epicenter of the music scene. As Seattle was for grunge and the Village in New York City for the punk scene, Minneapolis became the scene for a second, and during that time we were doing *Purple Rain*. There was a three-year period where life was in a fishbowl.

LISA: The bowl was First Avenue [a landmark Minneapolis club].

How realistic was the interaction presented in the film?

WENDY: It was sort of like an anime or cartoon version of real life.

LISA: Yeah, a very moody, melodramatic, caricatured version of the reality.

WENDY: In reality the dynamics weren't even remotely that intense. There were undertones and subtext to all of it, but the film sort of turned it into a cartoon.

Lisa, at the beginning of the song "Computer Blue" you ask, "Is the water warm enough?" What were you making? Tea? Soup? What does that mean?

LISA: I don't know. (Laughs.)

WENDY: (Laughs.) There really is no mythology to it. Prince said, "Do you guys mind saying this?" That's really all that was.

What motivated you to leave the Revolution?

WENDY: We got fired. (Laughs.)

LISA: That's usually a good motivation.

WENDY: Prince wanted to move on. He was ready for the next thing, and we weren't

a part of that next thing. It was a difficult time for us. I understand why he did that, and it made sense for him as an artist to want to keep evolving. Everybody does that. David Bowie did that. He didn't stay with Spiders From Mars forever. Prince also was very clear that he wanted to attach a new sexuality to the visual aspect of his career, and that did not include the two of us because we were too much musicians. He knew it, and he was very fair about it.

How hard was it to continue your careers without Prince?

LISA: Creatively, it was really easy. Professionally, it was a puzzle because people expected us to sound more like Prince, expected us to wear certain types of clothes. That was a hard battle with record companies.

WENDY: They wanted us to be like the

centerfold for HUSTLER for sure. We have never been that. "Why aren't you wearing a fur coat and sitting on a motorcycle? Why are you wearing baggy jeans and a T-shirt?"

Being women in that scenario was really difficult. The people at Columbia Records kept saying, "Who are you? Where do we place you? We don't know what to do with you and how to market you." We got dropped because no one knew what to do with us. They couldn't find the box to put us in.

How did you get into scoring films and such TV shows as *Crossing Jordan* and *Heroes*?

WENDY: We met [producer] Trevor Horn and [soul singer] Seal and wanted to make a big orchestral pop record like Grace Jones's *Slave to the Rhythm*. We did the song from the film *Toys* ("Closing of the Year") and a full CD that ended up being the most disastrous record that never saw the light of day.

LISA: It was meant to be, because it was the vehicle that brought us to scoring *Dangerous Minds*.

You've also just released your fifth studio CD, the cinematic *White Flags of Winter Chimneys*. Were all the songs on it planned for a pop record?

LISA: They were all made for the record. What was great about making it was it was entirely for ourselves and by ourselves. There was a television writers strike, so *Heroes* took a break, and the strike kept going and going. We had to do something. So we made the record in those months that the

writers went on strike.

Thanks, writers!

What is the relationship like with Prince today?

LISA: I think it's a lot more comfortable in a lot of ways.

WENDY: It is more comfortable.

LISA: He seems really respectful. When we see each other, and he

walks in looking all slick....

WENDY: We all give that nudge/hudge, wink/wink.

LISA: And it just breaks into silliness again. One night we went to his house into his studio/jam room, just the three of us. We got some sounds out and started playing. It was "Oh, yeah! This is great!"

Do you foresee a full Prince and the Revolution reunion?

WENDY: It would be great. Everyone is ready and willing to do it except Prince. It's just not a time he wants to revisit right now. Maybe someday. ■



PHOTOS BY LAUVON JANNEY