

# Brown Mark Talks The Revolution & Prince (Interview)



A little over one year ago the unthinkable happened when Prince Rogers Nelson unexpectedly passed away amid mysterious circumstances. The superstar musician who was always everywhere had just given a concert six days before he was suddenly gone. Fans had to digest the previously unknown facts about his battle with pain killers that led to an accidental overdose. By the time these things became public knowledge fans were only concerned with the shock and pain of his loss. Thirty-eight years of seeing Prince's purple funk onstage came to a sudden stop and family, fans and those who knew him are still trying to heal from his passing.

The Revolution was the band that became legendary for making music with Prince during his prime until his 1987 *Sign o' the Times* period when he put together a new lineup of musicians. All of Prince's various periods have their specific merits but there was always something romantic about The Revolution. They were introduced to the world in *Purple Rain* within a highly fictitious storyline about Prince being a musical autocrat. But Brown Mark, Bobby Z, Wendy, Lisa and Dr. Fink gave their own creative impulses to Prince in rare moments of collaboration. The years of their absence never stopped the fans from wanting a proper reunion. This year The Revolution toured the United States to share in the mourning process with the fans and each show made the acceptance of Prince's death a little easier. Brown Mark talked to Kick Mag not long after The Revolution's tour stop in Detroit and he talked about Prince, The Revolution, Detroit, his days with Mazarati and his next creative destination.

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**How has the tour been?**

It’s been awesome, it’s been a real healing not just for us but for the fans we really didn’t realize how many lives we had touched throughout the years but it’s becoming more and more evident People are very very happy that we’re out here doing this it’s a good feeling.

**How was Detroit?**

Detroit is always like a second home to Minneapolis. They accepted us with open arms. The lines were around the block and it was just crazy they were the loudest crowd we’ve had so far.

**How did Prince and all of you develop such a close relationship with Detroit? I remember as a kid listening to The Electrifying Mojo and I would hear him interviewing Prince from the limo and of course all of his music. Is it safe to say that Detroit embraced Prince on a national level before Minneapolis?**

Yes, that’s him. I would say in the Black community yes, most definitely. As a musician as the development of that Minneapolis sound no. Minneapolis, the atmosphere developed Prince but who broke Prince I would have to say I would have to give it to Detroit. Detroit really set the stage for him to really do what he does and be accepted throughout the nation. Detroit was home for him. I remember when I first joined the band during *Controversy*, and he was like “Wait till we get to Detroit” and I was like “What’s going on in Detroit, And when we got to Detroit it was like holy crap, I see

whatâ€™s going on.

**How much had you all played together before Princeâ€™s passing?**

We did three shows together three or four. He had asked us to stop because he wanted to reunite and if we were out there doing it, it wouldnâ€™t be anything new he wanted us to wait for him. So we kind of put it on hold and we stopped playing together just for that purpose.

**So there plans in the long run for you all to reunite? Were there plans also to maybe record a new album?**

No, it was strictly just to go out. We bugged him especially me. He had me to fly out to Paisley and do a lot of projects with him and other groups that he was trying to put together because he would always form a different combination of people to take out on the road. So I had been out there three different times and I was like â€˜Why donâ€™t you put The Revolution back together?â€™ He says â€˜Why would I want to do that?â€™ and I told him â€˜Because the fans want you to.â€™

He was like â€˜Maybe at some time weâ€™ll be able to do that.â€™ So I was always pushing the issue and I know he had talked to Bobby and Matt on a few different occasions about what they thought about going back out on the road with him. So it was being talked about and Iâ€™m almost confident we wouldâ€™ve gotten back together had he not passed.



Photo credit: Nancy Bundt

**How did you know the fans wanted you back together?**

Just by the conversations. It wasnâ€™t just me. I talked to Matt I talked to Bobby at different intervals and time periods about it. Really he had been out of touch with the group. He had been in touch with me throughout the years but like the

girls and I think like Bobby they were out of touch for several years so he wanted to know how they felt. I know he talked to Bobby and Matt about putting the band back together. We basically were back together we just didn't play, a kind of just waiting for him.

**What can you tell me about the album you all recorded in the late 80s that's in the vault?**

You're talking about *Roadhouse Garden* that's *Roadhouse Garden*. I was the first to quit. It gets to a point where you reach this pinnacle and it's like where do we go from here? There really was nowhere for me to go. Prince had a lot of places he could go but for me, I was just the bass player. And I wanted more out of my life than just being the bass player. I wanted to produce and do my own thing so I split. The album had been done probably a year before that because we were always a year and a half in front of the next release.

When we were out on tour with *Purple Rain* the *Around The World In A Day* album was already done. He didn't even want to stay out on the road with *Purple Rain* he was ready to move on to *Under The Cherry Moon* and do this whole other project very impatient he would get bored very quickly. But when I left the group I think that it was to a point where everybody started getting the same idea like where do we go from here.

I think even Prince battled with the idea of wanting to go back into a solo arena where it was just Prince with backup musicians. Instead of Prince being in a band because we were really the only band he's ever been in. All the other bands were just backup musicians. When I was hired into the band we were just backup musicians. We became The Revolution around 1983 we formed the name and became a separate entity. We had a voice if we didn't like something we would say that sucks If we liked it we would say hey let's work on it. We had a voice where the other bands never had a voice. It was where learn this song and he would take them out on the road and

they would play. I think he got back to that because we wrote a lot of the stuff on *Sign o' The Times*. A lot of the stuff that ended up on there even was Revolution stuff that carried over. The *Sign o' The Times* album remember he got Shelia E, he asked me to play bass, I said no but what he did was formed a group of musicians and called them NPG. The New Power Generation wasn't a band it was a concept that's why how many New Power Generation groups maybe five or six of them. It was never the same members and a lot of people tried to say that was his new band no it wasn't that was a concept.



Photo credit: Niikko

**What's up with Mazarati will that music be back in print will we get a new record from them?**

You know I'm getting a huge push to re-release that stuff. I might do it because they're in rehearsals right now. They're planning on surfacing in August of this year. And hopefully they will but there was a lot of issues substance abuse and many different things happening so they kind of fell off the map for decades. There's four original members and two new guys. They sound incredible they're definitely seasoned now compared to the way they were when they just started. I'm excited I'm working with them so we'll see what happens. I hope to be able to do another record with them. That group that's a special group I call them special cause they're crazy.

**What about The Revolution making a record has that ever been discussed?**

Not at this point, we've thrown the idea before here and there but nothing serious because we're just not there. Our mindset is about helping the purple family the worldwide purple family to get through this it's a lot bigger than people realize. A lot of people are really hurting at his

loss.

### **Where were you when you found out?**

I was at home and I just woke up and one of the people that was on security detail in Minneapolis called me immediately and said there's a fatality at Paisley I'll call you right back. I was like what do you mean there's a fatality? "Somebody died at Paisley I don't have a confirmation if it's Prince yet." I'm like are you kidding me and five minutes later he called me back and said: "It's him." I just hit the floor.

### **When was the last time you had spoke with him?**

About nine months prior I would say he would call me periodically at my home just to see how I was doing and reminisce on old times. He would have me come out to Paisley and do different things. But when that happened it hit me like a ton of bricks. It's like losing a family member. He was my big brother we fought, we laughed, just like family members.

### **When was the last time you had seen him before he passed?**

Last time I had seen him was right before he went on the road with Third Eye Girl. Before Third Eye Girl came together it was me and John Blackwell and he had called us out there with Ida, the bass player in Third Eye Girl cause he was forming another project and then he decided to do the all girl thing so that's where Third Eye Girl came from. But that's the last time I had seen him.

***“Every night to get on that stage with him it was surreal”***

### **What do you remember most about filming Purple Rain?**

Acting class. It was crazy I tip my hat to actors because

Iâ€™m not an actor. It takes a highly skilled person to come out of body and pretend like youâ€™re something that youâ€™re not. Thatâ€™s a skill. Acting class they teach you that you have to exercise scenes that are just not you. They would give you characters and you would go through these scenes like impromptu. You pretend like youâ€™re husband and wife and your child is on drugs and boom youâ€™d have to jump right into character. It was crazy but I loved it.



Photo Credit: Larry Williams

### **What about the concert scenes?**

It was like shooting a video. A live concert thatâ€™s fun but to film concert footage for a movie itâ€™s youâ€™re stopping every two minutes. Youâ€™ll get started and all of a sudden itâ€™s like stop, cut! Theyâ€™ve got to fix some lights and youâ€™re standing there for the next 30 minutes yeah boring.

### **What are some of your strongest memories being a member of The Revolution? Do you have any crazy memories of when things reached the heights of Purple Rain?**

Yeah being able to travel the world with a superstar, I mean we were all superstars back then but the real superstar was Prince. Every night to get on that stage with him it was surreal. It was like wait a minute this dude is bigger than Elvis Presley, this is like The Beatles and Iâ€™m up here. That was like every night that would go through my head.

### **So you were very humbled by it all?**

Totally. I was like wow I made it I always talk about yeah Iâ€™m going to make it one day and I was like I made it now where do I go? But traveling the world seeing the different people react, different crowds, different reactions. What was

really cool too was seeing how Prince was developing. I remember the funny kid that would go roller skating with me around Calhoun Park with some lavender shorts and some legwarmers. I watched the kid that went from that to a full-blown rock star. I watched that development I got to witness that the transition was amazing. All the way from the car he used to drive to what kind of stereo system he would put in his automobile. I knew every little detail about it so to see him reach that pinnacle of success was pretty surreal.

**What else have you been doing and do you think you all will tour again?**

We have to see where it takes us we don't make promises because we don't want to let anybody down. It's really up to the fans and right now there's a movement going on where fans all around the world especially in Australia. They're petitioning that the promoters bring us there. The tour we just did was basically at our own expense. It cost us as band members we didn't make any money on it, we just did it for the fans to see just to see if we could do a reunion. And we realized very quickly that wow this could really take off. So it's really going to be up to the fans and the demand they create for it because other than that you're dealing with a whole other beast with promoters because they're just hardcore. They're the ones who have to bring a band into the city if we don't bring ourselves. We're just kind of sitting back waiting to see but so far we're getting a lot of attention.

**Do you all have any plans to continue to tour after this year?**

I got an album I was releasing right before he passed and I put it on hold because I couldn't go there I had to deal with this. So now that this is moving I've been back in the studio on and off for about one month and my writing's coming back because you know I shut down I had writer's block. I couldn't think but I found that part of the healing

process is to create. Prince was a creator and he taught me how to create. I find that the more I write the better I start to feel again and now Iâ€™m writing with the spirit of Prince you know like my style has changed a little bit because is passing did something to me. It opened me up to a whole other vision of what I should do myself. I had a book I wrote 10 years ago and it was in editing stage I was about to send it to him to get his approval on it and he passed away. A lot of things I had going on I put on hold. The book is called *My Life In A Purple Kingdom* about a little boy who grew up with a dream and then came Prince. But thereâ€™s too many books out there now so thatâ€™s going to wait for a while but I am going to work on a record and I talked to Stokley of Mint Condition heâ€™s going to be helping me with some of it and some other folks so thatâ€™s going to be my next project other than Mazarati.

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