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Housequake Interview with Susan Rogers

★ [Parade](#)

Source: Housequake.com



HQ Moderator
Posts: 9752
From: Holland
Status: Offline



With much pride we can present you the interview we have conducted with Susan Rogers. She is a well known name in the Prince community, because she was responsible for his engineer work between 1983 & 1988 and during the eighties she was around to help Prince with recording his classics. Much thanks to Susan for answering our questions!

Susan has not only worked with Prince, on her resume you will find names like the Barenaked Ladies, Michael Penn and David Byrne. Byrne once said about Susan: "Susan Rogers has the ability to listen to what the song is about and be technical at the same time". Nowadays Susan works as a doctoral student in Canada. Her research focusses on what the brain is doing when it is engaged with music...

09-05-06 : 10:21

★ [Parade](#)



HQ Moderator
Posts: 9752
From: Holland
Status: Offline

How and when did you get started in the music business Susan? And how did you get to work with Prince?

I started my career in Los Angeles in 1978 with the goal of just getting my foot in the door since there weren't many women in professional audio at that time. I heard that audio maintenance engineers (the people who install studios and repair equipment) always have jobs so I studied electronics and audio engineering on my own, using books I purchased from a Hollywood technical bookstore. I went to work as a trainee for a company called Audio Industries where I learned to repair mixing consoles and multi-track tape machines. I spent my days going from one studio to another working on equipment, and I met a lot of interesting people.



Susan Rogers

In 1981 I was lured away from my job by Crosby, Stills, and Nash who owned a studio in Hollywood and needed a maintenance engineer. In 1983, I heard that Prince was looking for an audio technician to maintain his home studio and I immediately contacted his management for an interview. Prince was my favorite artist ever since the "For You" album and the opportunity was a dream come true. His management hired me and in August, 1983, I moved to Minnesota and got started by installing a new console in his home studio (his purple house on Kiowa Trail), and did some repairs on his tape machine. Next thing I knew, I was in the engineering chair.

Prince needed an all-around engineer, one who could repair and use his equipment. I had to learn very quickly what sounds he liked but I was helped by a member of The Time, Jesse Johnson, who taught me how Prince liked the kick drum to sound, what reverb he liked on his vocal, what mics he used, etc. By the time Prince came home from LA (he was working on the Purple Rain movie), I knew enough to be of great use to him in the studio.

Music producers can play different roles. What were your tasks during the period you worked with Prince?

I was not a producer at that time. Prince produced and engineered his own albums, and I assisted him by setting everything up and keeping the equipment working. I would prepare the session by having the console and tape machine and his musical instruments ready to go, so all he had to do was sit down and record. I set the reverbs and outboard gear to the settings he preferred and recorded his band members when he asked me to.

I was also responsible for doing many of the live recordings we did on tour at that time as well as moving his recording equipment to new rehearsal spaces (we recorded his band rehearsals) and providing audio technical assistance on movies and videos. I also helped the design team of Paisley Park Studios and made decisions on the purchase of new recording gear.

You have worked with Prince during the most productive period of his career (83-88). Is there a song, period or album that you cherish the most?

I think that would be the Parade album. I enjoyed the direction he took with that album, musically and lyrically. I think it shows some of his best melodic work.

The albums with The Revolution (Purple Rain, Around The World In A Day and Parade) were presented as group efforts. Was it really that way or was most of the work done by Prince himself?

Well, they were not group efforts in the writing or arrangements but each band member contributed his own sound on many of the tracks. Some were performed entirely by Prince while others were recorded at rehearsals, with Prince leading the direction and each musician adding his own part. Prince would include what he liked of their ideas. In nearly every case, Wendy and Lisa were around to provide backing vocals and input.

According to Uptown's guide to Prince: "The Vault", Housequake was recorded on October 18th 1986. Since Housequake.com was named after that particular song, do you still remember something from the day it was recorded? Or are there any anecdotes to tell about that song?

Ha, ha (LOL). We were at Sunset Sound in LA and recorded every day and night during that time period so I am sorry to say I don't have much in the way of specific memories of that song. I do remember that it was one of the songs he spent a long time on which usually meant (I assume) that the song was one he considered especially important or he particularly enjoyed working on. I remember that it came at a time when there were other changes in his life; his musical instruments, his style, his colors, and the people around him were evolving. It is only my guess but I think Housequake represented a new idea in dance music for him.

You recorded the bulk of Prince's material in commercial facilities and at his home(s). Are there any other locations fans might be unaware of?

Not major sites, no (not during that time). Prince traveled a lot and recorded nearly every day so we needed access to studios while on the road. I kept a studio directory with me and was able to get us into studios in Atlanta, or Cincinnati, or London, or Paris, if we needed, but just for a day or two. For convenience and privacy, we usually had a mobile recording truck available to us in the US or Europe so that we could record during soundcheck or after a show while on tour.

How do you think Prince has developed as a musician? Did you expect him to take different musical paths these days perhaps?

That's a great question but I am not prepared to answer it. I am not familiar with his recording period in the 1990s but I do have "Musicology" and "3121", although I have not listened to them in depth. He's a master arranger and his lyric writing is touching and profound. Currently I listen to 50's era jazz and am a huge fan of the pianist Bud Powell so my idea of a perfect Prince album would be just piano, double bass, and drums. I would enjoy hearing his melodic and harmonic ideas reduced to one instrument. I would also like to learn what Prince could contribute to interpretive music, in other words, an album of standards. Listening to jazz has sharpened my appreciation for the art of interpreting a known melody in an original way.

You must have recorded hundreds of songs with Prince that have never been released. If you could step into Prince's shoes, what would you do with them? Would you release them? Or do you consider most of them not 'worthy' enough to be released on a Prince album?

Release them in their original form. I think he is an important figure in American music and with that comes (somewhat of) a responsibility to provide a record of his artistic progress. Artistic license means he can release whatever he wants of his own intellectual property but I think that when a true genius comes along, society benefits from seeing what he or she produced. It is understandable that he wouldn't release them today, but I hope they are packaged so that someday those old recordings are available to the public.

In an interview Prince said: "You think Susan Rogers knows me?" he asked. "You think she knows anything about my music?". Susan Rogers, for the record, doesn't know anything about my music. Not one thing. The only person who knows anything about my music (pause for very pointed effect)....is me." How do you feel about this?

Yes, Prince is correct on this, but only in one sense. In another sense, namely the experience of listening to music created by another, Prince knows his music the least. Because creating music and consuming music are two distinct processes.

When a chef prepares a new meal, he knows everything that goes into it, including how he intended it to taste. So when he sits down to eat it, he already knows something about it, and that affects how it tastes to him. The customer who knows nothing about what went into the meal will taste it from a different perspective, one that the chef will never be able to experience. So the customer knows something about the meal that the chef will never know.

Prince fans know how his music makes them feel, regardless of whether or not he intended the music to move them that way. Only he knows what inspired a song or he wanted his music to say but there is a gap between how it felt to make it and how it feels to listen to it. Like a lot of things, it is a two-sided experience. Science isn't science until it is published; food isn't food until it is eaten; and art isn't art until it is interpreted.

As for knowing him as a person, I have said for the record that I am only qualified to speak on his studio life from 1983 to 1988. His life beyond the studio doors, outside of that time-period, is not known to me. Since he has had a rich life, I don't entirely know him.

Are you still producing music or are you focussing completely on your academic work now? And can you tell us if your past as a engineer helps you in certain ways with your scientific research?

I was called out of retirement by Canada's own Barenaked Ladies last fall so I went back in the studio and we recorded 30 tracks together. I was not producing, just engineering, but we had a wonderful time and I was so happy to be in a studio again. That said, I am extraordinarily happy to be a research scientist and am getting a chance to exercise my creativity in ways that are more personal than in my music career. Audio engineering and producing are service-oriented professions: we provide technical or

editorial skills to artists expressing their own ideas. As a scientist, my work today is my idea, and I've waited a long time for that. This is my music. I am a cognitive psychologist in the field of music perception so I have the chance to bring what I know of music to the field of how the human brain (and mind) processes music.

Before school, I was a scientist in the service of art. Now I am an artist in the service of science. Both experiences enrich and inform the other.



Keep up the good work, Prince fans!
Its nice to know people are interested in learning more about his life and work.

Regards,

Susan Rogers

"Revolution, put the groove on the bus"
www.paradetour.com: Do you have anything to contribute?

09-05-06 10:25

★ [Aaron](#)



HQ Moderator

Posts: 11085

From: Holland

Status: Offline

Thank you for answering our questions Susan, it's very much appreciated!
And also big props to Marika (Parade) for making all this happen.

09-05-06 12:02

★ [Cateto](#)



Super Funkateer

Posts: 1976

From: Spain

Status: Online!

WOW! Thanks a lot for this!

If u love somebody, your life won't b in vain
and there's always a rainbow
at the end of every rain

09-05-06 12:03

★ [Vc61](#)



HQ Moderator

Posts: 10525

From: Belgium

Awesome!! 😁

** Patrick **

Busy doin' something close to nothing....

[VC's Place](#) Updated may 8th 2006

Status: Offline

09-05-06 12:09

SEND PM HOMEPAGE BUDDY

REPORT QUOTE

TheDriver



Thanks! Very nice read!

I do not sell bootlegs nor do I know anyone who does sell bootlegs. I do not endorse bootlegs or bootlegging. This mail is for educational purposes only!

Super Funkateer
Posts: 2567
From: Netherlands
Status: Offline

09-05-06 12:11

SEND PM HOMEPAGE BUDDY

REPORT QUOTE

Mister McGee



Thanks!

Junior Funkateer
Posts: 151
From: Planet Earth
Status: Offline

09-05-06 12:11

SEND PM BUDDY

REPORT QUOTE

Cateto



Originally posted by Parade on 09-05-06 at 11:25
... **Since he has had a rich life...**

Super Funkateer
Posts: 1976
From: Spain
Status: Online!

I wonder whether this was a serious statement, or if there is a bit of irony there.

If u love somebody, your life won't b in vain
and there's always a rainbow
at the end of every rain

09-05-06 12:14

SEND PM BUDDY

REPORT QUOTE

Thetan



Thank you.

Incredible.

Fantastic work.

Affinity Reality Communication

Junior Funkateer

Posts: 191

From: Universal

Status: Offline

09-05-06 : 12:17

Muirdo



good interview thanks Housequake and Susan Rogers.
Was it Susan Rogers who accidently made If I was Your Girlfriend sound the way it does?

Funkateer

Posts: 358

From: Scotland

Status: Offline

09-05-06 : 12:18

Muffin



This is why Housequake rules! Thank all involved SO much.

Life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived forwards.

Glad2Bhere Funkateer

Posts: 1757

From: London, UK.

Status: Offline

09-05-06 : 12:19

Glamslam1972



thank u Susan-thank u HQ !!!! that was awesome

~Teachers Do It Better~Kostas~

~~There is a site that is known 4 the face it attracts
Colorful people whose hair on one side is swept back
They've taken a lifetime lease on HouseQuake 😎~~

Teacher Funkateer

Posts: 11045

From: Greece (Andros island)

Status: Online!

09-05-06 : 12:25

★ **Gsh**

Some nice insights there - thank you.



HQ Moderator

Posts: 4615

From: UK

Status: Offline

RIP frankie*

09-05-06 12:27

SEND PM BUDDY

REPORT QUOTE

VelvetSplash

Junior Funkateer

Posts: 108

From: The Mothership

Status: Offline

“ Yes, Prince is correct on this, but only in one sense. In another sense, namely the experience of listening to music created by another, Prince knows his music the least. Because creating music and consuming music are two distinct processes.

When a chef prepares a new meal, he knows everything that goes into it, including how he intended it to taste. So when he sits down to eat it, he already knows something about it, and that affects how it tastes to him. The customer who knows nothing about what went into the meal will taste it from a different perspective, one that the chef will never be able to experience. So the customer knows something about the meal that the chef will never know.

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”

Fantastic analogy and reply by Ms. Rogers there.

Thanks for the interview HQ. 😊

09-05-06 12:34

SEND PM BUDDY

REPORT QUOTE

TheKid87



Super Funkateer

Posts: 2135

From: Holland

Status: Offline

Woow! Thanks you to those involved!! This is really great!!!

09-05-06 12:38

SEND PM BUDDY

REPORT QUOTE

Turnitup



Senior Funkateer

Posts: 622

From: UK

Status: Offline

Nice to see a comment on Prince's little dig at the Uptown interviews 🌐

Good job everyone involved !

📅 09-05-06 12:39

Jimino1



Senior Funkateer

Posts: 661

From: new zealand

Status: Offline

great interview - interesting reading - thanks to Susan and Parade...I don't think even Prince knows himself - so I don't think she could be offended by his statement LOL!

I'd love 2 have seen prince's face when he found out that Susan recorded 'if I was your Girlfriend' at the wrong speed....i can imagine his face curling up in disgust then slowly a smirk on his face appearing....wonder what was said between them? if anything..if Prince acknowledged the 'happy accident' in any shape or form - other than re-using and naming the new 'voice' Camille?

so, who's next on the list...how about morris day? that would be an interesting little story..I guess he's probably got a gag order or something like most of the ppl Prince has worked with.....

those that know don't tell....and those that tell don't know!

📅 09-05-06 12:51

-Moloko-

Newbie Funkateer

Posts: 9

From: spain

Status: Offline

Tttttthhhhaaaaaannnnnnkkkkkkkssssssss.

📅 09-05-06 12:55

Bishop31



Junior Funkateer

Posts: 110

From: Maryland

Status: Offline

Fantastic Interview! Thanx 4 this!

www.myspace.com/xoticsoul

What is the answer 2 the ? Of U?

📅 09-05-06 13:08

Telecaster

Great Thanku.

Junior Funkateer

Posts: 225 James1

From: Liquid Sunshine UK.

Status: Offline

09-05-06 : 13:12



SEND PM



BUDDY



REPORT



QUOTE

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