

SUSAN VOELZ

Beautiful Life

Songs of Prince Re-Imagined



It was a steamy night in South Austin, Texas.

The tape rolling through the Tascam 688 cassette recorder began to melt, giving the strings on *Money Don't Matter 2 Night* a nice wobbly tone. It was the first song of what unexpectedly became a 20-year Prince project. We spent days recording deep in the cool dark of the legendary Austin Rehearsal Complex. In Chicago, we set up in an attic apartment, chilling champagne out the window during a blizzard and later, we took over the basement to record vocals and trumpet in the shower. We listened deeply to Prince's recordings, falling in love with the essence of each song. Then we'd pull instruments down off the wall and let new sounds inspire us:

Charlie Sexton's Turkish cumbush on *Anna Stesia*; his duet vocal on *I Wish U Heaven*; a song playing in reverse bled thru the tape at the perfect moment to create the end of *When U Were Mine*; Alison Chesley in her glasses and slippers rolled her green cello case across the alley to rock *17 Days* and *The Beautiful Ones*.

Prince and I did meet. Poi Dog Pondering was recording at Paisley Park. Walking through the lounge one evening, I heard a rustling above and behind me. I turned and he was slowly coming down the stairs. We looked at each other and we each said 'hello.' A simple little blessing.

To the artists who played on this record: I adore you.

*To Prince: Here are songs from your beautiful life played back to you—
Love from the very first note.*

1. **Anna Stesia**
2. **The Most Beautiful Girl in the World**
3. **17 Days**
4. **I Would Die 4 U**
5. **The Beautiful Ones/Rant in the Rain**
6. **Miles Away** (orig.)
7. **Take Me With U**
8. **I Wish U Heaven**
9. **When U Were Mine**
10. **Reverse Life** (orig.)
11. **Money Don't Matter 2 Night**

OCTAVE 8 RECORDS

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MECHANICAL LICENSING
SECURED THROUGH LOUDR



1. ANNA STESIA

Vocals, violins, upright piano, pump organ, cumbush: SMV
 Vocals, cumbush, loop, bass: Jared Tuten
 Recorded in Charlie Sexton's Studio at the ARC
 Mix: Jared Tuten at Studio X

2. THE MOST BEAUTIFUL GIRL IN THE WORLD

Vocals, violins, piano: SMV
 Vocals: Abra Moore, Kornell Hargrove
 Acoustic guitar: Josh Houda
 Electric guitar: Josh Houda and Jackson Wilson
 Bass, drum loop: Chris Houda
 Originally recorded by Jared Tuten
 Re-mix re-invent: Houda Brothers
 Final mix: Rick Barnes at Rax Trax Recording

3. 17 DAYS

Vocals, violins, cello pizz: SMV
 Vocals: Abra Moore, Robert Cornelius, Dag Juhlin, Johnny Ride
 Cello: Alison Chesley
 Electric guitar, acoustic guitar: Josh Houda
 Guitar tornado: Johnny Ride
 Bass, drum loop: Chris Houda
 Originally recorded by Jared Tuten
 Re-mix re-invent: Houda Brothers
 Final mix: Rick Barnes at Rax Trax Recording

4. I WOULD DIE 4 U

Vocals, violins: SMV
 Backing vocals: Kornell Hargrove, Robert Cornelius, Arlene Newson
 Electric guitar: Ted Cho
 Harmonic guitar: Frank Orrall
 Acoustic guitar and electric guitar: Josh Houda
 Bass: Ron Hall
 Drum loop: Chris Houda
 Originally recorded by Jared Tuten
 Re-mix re-invent: Houda Brothers
 Final Mix: Rick Barnes at Rax Trax Recording

5. THE BEAUTIFUL ONES/ RANT IN THE RAIN (INSPIRED BY PRN)

Vocals, violins, keyboard: SMV
 Guitars, keyboard, bass, intro loop: Jared Tuten
 Cello: Alison Chesley
 Sampled drums: Frank Orrall
 Live drums: Ned Folkerth
 Song mix: John McEntire at Soma Electronic Music Studios
 Recorded and Rant in the Rain outro mix: Jared Tuten in Wicker Park and at Studio X

6. MILES AWAY** (ORIGINAL COMPOSITION BY SMV AND JOHNNY RIDE)

Guitar and guitar melody: Johnny Ride
 Trumpet: Dave Max Crawford
 Bass: SMV
 Drums: Jared Tuten
 Recorded and mixed: Jared Tuten in Wicker Park and at Studio X

7. TAKE ME WITH U

Vocals, violins, Casio SK-5 keyboard: SMV
 Vocal "Thank you": Sir Thomas Dunning of Dublin
 Loop, bass, sounds: Rick Gehrenbeck
 Drums: Chris Searles
 Recorded and Intro mix: Doug McBride at Gravity Studios
 Song mix: Rick Gehrenbeck

8. I WISH U HEAVEN

Vocal, violins, B3 organ, bass: SMV
 Vocal and cello: Charlie Sexton
 Cello: Alison Chesley
 E-bow guitar: Johnny Ride
 Percussion: Leddie Garcia
 Drums: Ned Folkerth
 Recorded and mixed: Jared Tuten at Studio X

9. WHEN U WERE MINE

Vocal, Casio SK-5 sampling keyboard, electric guitar, violin: SMV
 Cello: Alison Chesley
 Casio SK-5 sampling keyboard loop: Mel Hammond
 Drums and tambourines: Mark Stevens
 Mix: Martin Stebbing

10. REVERSE LIFE* (ORIG.)

Guitars, bass, loop: SMV

11. MONEY DON'T MATTER 2 NIGHT

Vocals, warble violins: SMV
 Trumpet: Dave Max Crawford
 Bendy guitars and Bass: Johnny Ride
 Drums: Chris Searles
 Trumpet recorded and edited: Martin Stebbing
 Mix: Jared Tuten at Studio X

*Susan Voelz Music Publishing

**Susan Voelz Music and Shiny Thing Music
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The Songs and the Stories

Money Don't Matter 2 Night.

The strings and guitars got all bendy sounding from the heat melting the tape. Max recorded a few passes of trumpet that inspired us to create an instrumental song keeping vocals only in the chorus.

Take Me With U begins with a tritone (devil tone) melody that I love to play on violin with Chris Searles drumming. Years later, Thomas Dunning came over to record two wonderful words: "Thank you." Still, the song wasn't going to make the cut until the french girl, 'hip drop' mix was created by Rick Gehrenbeck.

Charlie Sexton's upright piano begins **Anna Stesia**. His studio was at the back of the Austin Rehearsal Complex where Jared and I were then recording. While plunking out the piano chords, I saw a banjo looking instrument—a turkish cumbush—hanging on the wall. We took it down and loved the tone.

There are a lot of vocal harmonies on the original **I Wish U Heaven**. I interrupted Charlie's cello practice to record him singing and it became a duet. Then he picked his cello up off the oriental rug and we recorded cello, too.

Before leaving Austin, I bought an SK-5 Casio Sampling Keyboard at a garage sale. The best of its eight sounds are 'piano' and 'pipe organ' on **When U Were Mine**. At the end of the last chorus, we hear a song from the other side of the tape bleeding through in reverse, arriving at the perfect moment and pitch (**Reverse Life**).

In Chicago, we took over my roommate's basement bedroom to record **The Beautiful Ones**. We paid him with a case of

Red Stripe beer. For the **Rant in the Rain** outro, we asked the drummer to play as if he and the drum kit were tumbling down the stairs.

The aftermath of **The Beautiful Ones** is **Miles Away**. Max recorded trumpet in the shower.

Alison Chesley pulled her cello across the alley, her glasses on, her slippers on, to record **17 Days** in front of the fireplace. Abra sang at Rob Halverson's old East Austin house studio on a hill. Of course the place was said to be haunted. She channeled the ghosts. So did Robert. Well, so did everyone.

A theatre in San Francisco loaned me mics to record my vocals and strings for **The Most Beautiful Girl in the World**. Kornel drove down to Wicker Park to add his smoky fireman vocals. Abra sang up into the high wood ceiling of Rob's studio.

We chose to play **I Would Die 4 U** at a Hoot Night in Chicago—the theme was death. It went well so we decided to record it. But the song was on hold until the Houda twins arrived in Chicago. I gave them tracks to remix. A few weeks later, they handed me a CD after a sound check and we walked out to the alley to listen on my car stereo. Sublime.



