

An extraordinarily fecund pop artist, Prince has been releasing an album every year of his career excepting 1983, including many double LP's and modern day CD equivalents. His prolificacy suggests he releases every idea, making for an always interesting, if spotty, canon. As an actor Prince is embarrassingly self-conscious and lyrically he's often narcissistic, dumb or relentlessly fuck-mad, but as a musician he's a natural, creating in a manner similar to a brilliantly talented child let loose in the studio. Though his music has become more and more banal every year since *Lovesexy*, he is one of pop's few evergreens, and years from now will be mentioned in the same breath as Stevie Wonder, Marvin Gaye and James Brown.



*Dirty Mind* (1980)

His notorious artistic breakthrough at its worst ("Sister"--"My sister was thirty-two, lovely and loose" and "Head"--"Till your love is red") may sound relatively tame to a 2 Live Crew hardened generation. The presentation is comparatively primitive, but the songcraft is sharp, hooky and tight, possibly his best set of songs.

(10)



*1999* (1982)

His first big hit, the revered *1999* is frequently brilliant ("Little Red Corvette," "1999," "Let's Pretend We're Married"), but like most double albums, it's padded, this time with meandering, over-long grooves that may keep the party going, but are still wearing. The songwriting isn't quite as sharp overall as on *Dirty Mind*, but the highpoints were his highest to this point.

(9)



*Purple Rain* (1984)

Over-exposure has dulled the ears to the immense pleasures of this flawless pop album. A varied collection of distinct songs, of course, featuring, "When Doves Cry," arguably his best song.

(10)

*Around the World in a Day* (1985)

An uninspired set for fans only, though "Raspberry Beret" is pleasant enough.

(5)

*Parade* (1986)

This pop-baroque creation is notable mostly for several spare funk numbers ("New Position," "Girls and Boys" and "Kiss," another one of his best songs), though it contains much listenable music. The references to the film and Tracy make no sense.

(9)



*Sign 'o' the Times* (1987)

Prince's best album. A generally superb (but edittable) work in the tradition of *Exile on Main Street* and *The White Album*. Contains