

RULING POWER

While Sebastian Vettel commandeered Sunday's Grand Prix, Prince gave his own scintillating display on Yas Island

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IT'S A QUESTION as old as time itself: how many free-flowing funk interludes should one perform on any given evening?

For Prince, a man not known for understatement, it's as many as the crowd will let you. Given his tendency to ask his audience before ripping into a bout of virtuoso guitar work, it was clear no one minded the pop legend's love of all things epic.

The first four songs alone must have brushed half an hour. Striding on-stage in a black suit with red piping (plus obligatory heels), the 52-year-old was as striking as ever – no wrinkles, receding hairlines or sprouting waistlines here. Impossibly svelte and looking like a waxwork of himself from 15 years ago, Prince immediately created an unbridled party atmo-

sphere lacking from the Kanye West and Linkin Park concerts the previous two nights.

R&B barnstormer *Delirious* kickstarted the show, with the performer busting out some Elvis moves – laying to rest rumours that he needs double hip replace-

ment surgery – as well as teaching the Yas Island crowd some unusual hand choreography.

This led straight into the anthemic 1999, which hasn't lost its swing despite switching from futuristic ode to retro relic in the passage of time.

After bathing the stage

in red lights and heading into another classic, 1983's *Little Red Corvette*, the Minneapolis oddball began a lengthy exchange with the crowd – knocking the chant “Oh, Abu Dhabi!” back and forth before eventually exiting the stage for a costume change.

While his trio of soulful female singers kept everyone entertained with some rousing balladry, ‘The Purple One’ climbed into what looked like a silk pyjama suit of his favourite colour, and segued into *Nothing Compares 2U*. Penned by Prince and turned into a famously morose hit by Sinéad O'Connor, his Abu Dhabi duet with backing singer Shelby J erred more on the side of cheesy karaoke (think Elton John and Kiki Dee's *Don't Go Breaking My Heart*).

But if this was a low point of Sunday night, the star quickly pulled another few irons out of the fire with *Raspberry Beret*, the seductive *Cream* and the almighty *Purple Rain*, unsurprisingly the crowd's highlight.

The encore saw another costume change, this time

a black and white sleeveless suit, as Prince opened with *Kiss* then invited dozens of elated audience members to party with him onstage.

Joining this concert-within-a-concert was Pussycat Doll Nicole Scherzinger, who had earlier watched boyfriend Lewis Hamilton claim second place in the Grand Prix.

Though he may be known for his reclusive and odd behaviour away from the spotlight, Prince proved to Abu Dhabi that he still revels in his Herculean ability to entertain.

After a two-hour warm-up set at the Skybar Lounge on Friday night, the singer's stamina was far from waning as he continued with a second encore, even after many unassuming audience members had already headed for the exits.

Evidently, the man still wants to party like it's 1999.

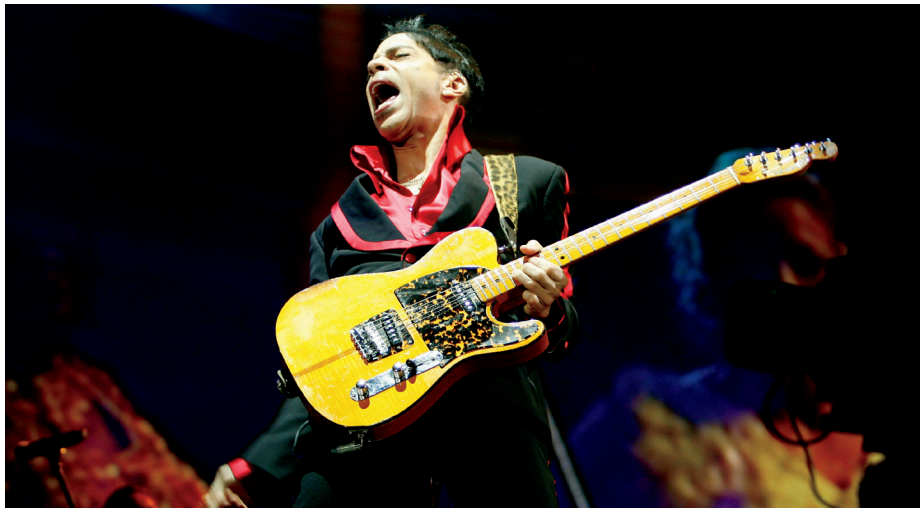


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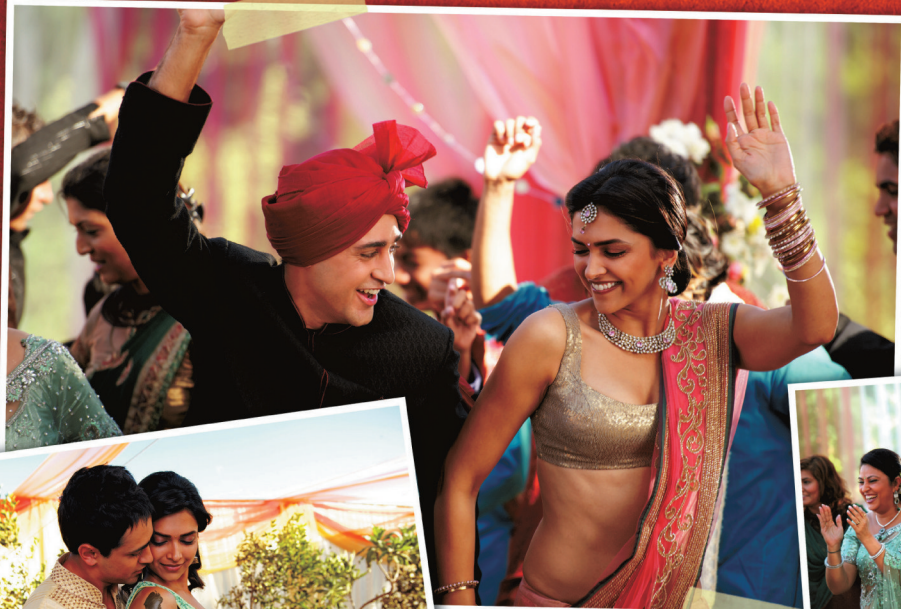
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