

AUDIO FILES

Graffiti Bridge

Prince

This album is everything one expects from Prince. It is eccentric, funky and innately appealing as only the most inspired music can be.

Graffiti Bridge is the companion piece to his latest film, a sequel to *Purple Rain*. It features a passel of guest singers ranging from George Clinton to Mavis Staples to Morris Day.

But anyone who doesn't pay attention to the liner notes could be forgiven for thinking it is Prince throughout. As always, he delivers a dazzling array of vocal performances.

He's a silky smooth R&B crooner on "The Question of U," a raspy-voiced realist on "Elephants and Flowers" and a pop singer on "Can't Stop This Feeling I Got." Prince is also the source of the electronically processed back-up singing and the syncopated grunts and groans peppered everywhere. Other people sing lead on half the tracks of this 17-song collection, but it's Prince's show.

The Time play the role of party boys on such rave-ups as "Release It" and "Love Machine." Mavis turns in a few scorching turns, especially on "Melody Cool." And newcomer

Tevin Campbell seems a much looser and more interesting talent on "Round and Round" than on the Quincy Jones album *Back On The Block*.

The music reflects the densely layered funk of *Parade* married to the eclecticism of *Sign o' the Times*. Like *Parade*, the odd musical details don't emerge until after repeated listening. Then you only begin to appreciate how complex and rhythmically relentless even the most basic tunes like "Thieves In The Temple" are.

There isn't a weak song here, but especially good moments include "Joy In Repetition,"

which dissolves into a blistering montage of electric guitar and wailing vocals, and "Tick, Tick, Bang," which manages to turn premature ejaculation into an erotic come-on.

This album follows the release of two weak recordings from Prince — the driest spell since his musical coming-of-age on *Dirty Mind*.

The faint odor of complacency surrounding Prince has been dispelled for the moment. Ten or 12 months from now, *Graffiti Bridge* will be followed by something equally unexpected.

BY MICHAEL GILTZ

