

# Arts & Entertainment



## Princes' girl groups show no promise

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It has been a tough life hanging onto someone else's success and being able to pick up royalty checks you really have little claim to.

That was the case with Vanity 6, a girl group started and kept two years ago by Prince. The only album was a one-hit wonder spurred by the provocative album cover and a few Penthouse Forum lyrics. They couldn't sing, couldn't dance and were saved on stage by the gimmick of wearing only lingerie.

Now it's showtime again for Vanity 6, only several changes have been made. Prince, of course, is no longer a brooding genius. Now, thanks to "Purple Rain" he's an international star. Vanity, a Canadian who went by D.D. Winters in her short and undistinguished career, split the group before "Purple Rain" was made. That opened the way for Appollonia 6, who did show up on film, and consequently, Appollonia 6.

As a result of all this, you now have two mildly interesting but silly albums instead of one.

First of all, Vanity's album, *Wild Animal*, is the better of the two since it does show some signs of life beyond Prince. Still she has the same Prince mentality of "if you can't say something nasty, don't say anything at all," which spawns the semi-hit "Pretty Mess."

Appollonia 6 will probably sell better however, because of the brief exposure in "Purple Rain," and its still very real connection to the star himself.

But there's not much to recommend in Appollonia 6 that you don't have if you've already got the "Purple Rain" soundtrack or The Time's "Ice Cream Castles." The music attributed to Sheila E. and the Revolution is comparatively lackluster, the lyrics uninspired by anything that seems to motivate Prince or The Time, and vocally, they couldn't compete with street corner warblers, much less any professional artists.

To describe the content best, think of it as the stuff Prince rejected for his own albums. He then reworked the lyrics to say what he apparently wishes women would think, then gave it to these three pretty (?) faces to choke themselves on.

Prince isn't given anymore writing credit here, Appollonia is. But it seems kind of strange that someone who was hired after a casting call could write the same kind of stuff Prince does. Nevertheless, the women of Appollonia 6 are stood up, knocked up and hard up throughout the album, but never express the slightest anger or even disgust with the thoughtless men who are abusing them. Sounds a lot like the Prince philosophy that showed through "Purple Rain" to me.

Ironically though, Appollonia does a stronger, more confident and compelling vocal job at the front of the group than Vanity did. And the chats between tracks on the second side are at least interesting since you have to wonder why any producer would want them there. Plus, like Prince's own albums, when it finds the dance groove it likes, it plays it to death. So, chances are if the lyrics don't offend you and you can pick up one beat here and there, (and be swayed by the five pictures included in the album) Appollonia 6 may not be that bad a deal for you.

Vanity risked a quick fade into obscurity by bucking her group for Motown records. But she found a Prince-like musician there in the person of Bill Wolper, who wrote and plays all the music, while Vanity wrote the lyrics and sings.

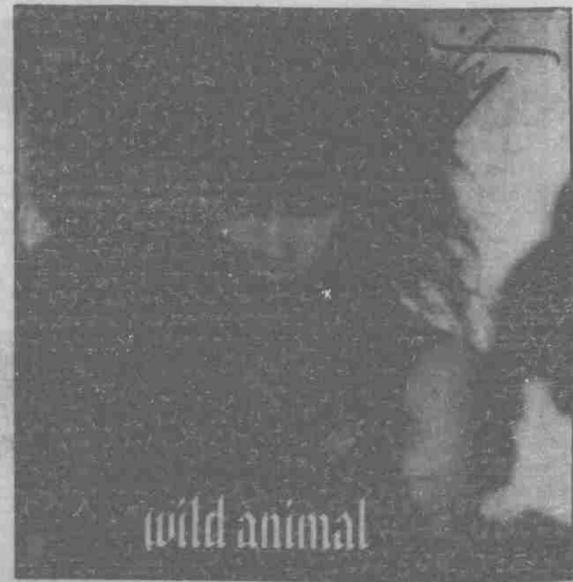
Vanity didn't shake Prince all together, but the advantage of getting off the Minneapolis sound bandwagon is that it does allow some room for growth. While the first side is played pretty safe with the double synthesizers, single grooves, etc., the second is actually pretty good with the African-inspired "King Kong" and "Mechanical Emotion," the only track on which her high, aimless vocals really work. She whispers, groans and sighs through the rest, which, depending on your tolerance for such, is either slightly sexy or horribly annoying.

Wolper isn't as captivating a musician as Prince, but at least Vanity is getting his best, unlike the retreads her former friends have. But is it worth buying? Probably not, because even with the second half surge, you will likely forget this in the face of stronger competition.

Vanity has at least, made some inroads to a future. If Appollonia 6 doesn't score now, this could be the last we hear of them. After all, they are a blatant commercial venture. They aren't serious artists, so if they don't sell, there's utterly no reason for them to be around. Vanity's album indicates that there might be an artist lurking underneath that cryptic look somewhere.



Courtesy of the Starr Company



Courtesy of Motown