



PHOTO: RICHARD E. AARON/REDFERNS

PRINCE'S

"When Doves Cry"

Avant-Garde Meets Pop in the Biggest Hit of 1984

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DURING A 38-YEAR CAREER that concluded with his death this past April, Prince Rogers Nelson produced countless hits that have since established him as one of the most influential pop artists of our time. His 1984 album *Purple Rain*—the soundtrack to the film by the same name—contained several of his best-known hits, including the No. 1 lead single, "When Doves Cry." The song was created at the

request of director Albert Magnoli to match the film's themes of parental drama and romantic struggle. And, in a highly uncharacteristic decision for any pop song, Prince stripped "When Doves Cry" of one crucial element: a bass part. Like many of his songs, each sound was recorded and produced by Prince himself, and originally, a bass part was created for the track. But in a move that worked out in his favor, it ended up on the cutting room floor. 🎧

0:00
An aggressive, heavily distorted guitar solo begins the recording, followed by a slightly syncopated kick drum pattern created with a Linn LM-1 Drum Computer.

0:18
A snare sound introduces the beat of the song, followed by the main melodic theme played on a Yamaha DX-7 keyboard.

0:56
At the end of the first verse, Prince's vocals are doubled on "Animals." A faint high harmony is heard on the lyric "They feel the heat."

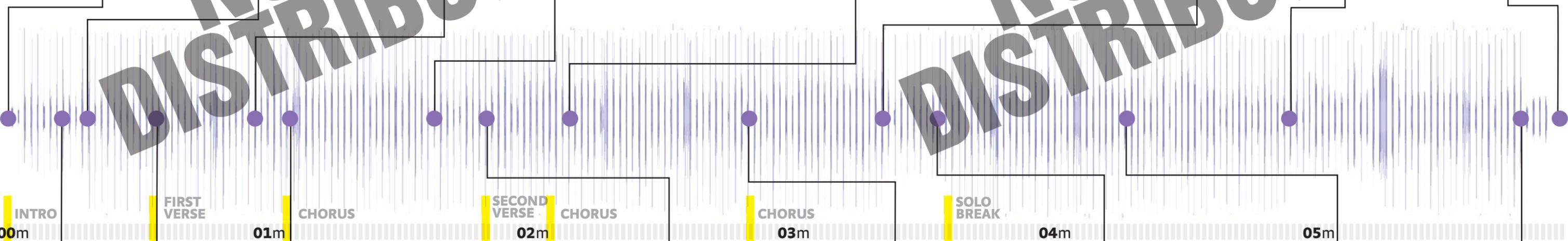
1:34
The initial keyboard figure returns, followed by Prince's wordless falsetto in a style reminiscent of his contemporary and fellow pop giant, Michael Jackson.

2:04
The second chorus repeats the instrumentation of the first. Prince echos the lyrics "So cold" and "She's never satisfied." The chorus ends with a series of improvised vocal melodies, doubled on the final phrase.

3:20
The beat returns to the stripped-down kick drum of the song's intro. Prince repeatedly sings "When doves cry" in eight overlapping, dramatic phrases.

4:53
The syncopated kick drum leads into four bars of a three-part vocal harmony, followed by a rapid, sixteenth-note solo played on an Oberheim synthesizer in a Baroque-inspired style.

5:54
End



0:12
Prince's voice is heard for the first time in the form of electronically modified "yeah"s. They repeat fifteen times before fading in the next section.

0:33
Prince sings the first verse with no musical accompaniment other than the sparse drum programming.

1:04
Beginning with "How could you," the chorus is sung in an octave harmony, with an additional harmony heard on "Alone in a world." A high-pitched keyboard melody enters the mix.

1:49
The second verse features a variety of subtle vocal inflections and harmonies. A synthesized pizzicato (plucked) string sound repeats an eighth-note melody before switching to a chromatic pattern at "Don't make me chase you."

2:50
A repetition of the chorus follows, this time with a quiet synth pad in the background. Prince continues with improvised vocal phrases.

3:35
Prince launches into a guitar solo as the main beat resumes. His ongoing vocal ornaments and inflections build in intensity.

4:14
Prince's vocal inflections become anguished screams as sharp exhales are added in the background, accenting every other beat.

5:45
A final, rising synth melody brings the song to a close.