

Royal return 王子回歸

The Prince of pop reclaims his throne with his electrifying new album *Art Official Age*, writes Dorothy So

流行音樂王子Prince推出電子曲風的全新專輯《Art Official Age》，誓要重奪樂壇王者的地位，且聽Dorothy So的詳細介紹

There's always been something otherworldly about Prince, whether it was his delicate androgynous looks or his eccentric publicity stunts (culminating in a notorious, unpronounceable name-change in the early 90s).

It's fitting then that the Purple One would use his latest album *Art Official Age* to address his detachment from reality, especially in an increasingly impersonal modern society. Unlike *Plectrumelectrum*, a straightforward rock album recorded with female-trio 3rdeyegirl and released on the same day, *Art Official Age* is a solo effort that straddles generations and genres in an electrifying way. It's rooted in funk and soul but dressed up with everything from EDM effects and hip-hop beats to psychedelic space-age tones. It's not an easy collection to digest at first, but that's what makes it one of Prince's best albums in years.

Set over a fat and snappy bassline, the album's second track *Clouds* introduces us to the artist's fictionalised persona, who has just awoken after being in suspended animation for 45 years. This storyline sets the stage for the album's unabashed experimentation, from the taut groove of *The Gold Standard* to the playfully suggestive *Breakfast Can Wait*. But it's the ballads that really showcase Prince's wizardry in the studio, especially the slickly produced R&B number *What It Feels Like*.

Art Official Age is a fine comeback for the artist currently known as Prince. Perhaps the most mystifying thing about this talented musician is how, even after close to 40 years, his reign over pop remains so exciting.

Hair apparent: Prince is back in full force on his latest album

王者風範：Prince推出最新大碟，強勢回歸樂壇

不論是雌雄莫辨的獨特造型，還是異想天開的宣傳噱頭（最令人印象深刻的一次，當然是他於1990年代初換上一個無從發音的奇異名字），歌手Prince總是如此不甘平凡，拒絕從俗。

又名Purple One的Prince，這次藉著最新大碟《Art Official Age》，打正旗號與現實世界劃清界線，在人情愈見冷漠的當今社會，新大碟別有一種抽離感。有別於他夥拍三人女子組合3rdeyegirl錄製的純搖滾專輯《Plectrumelectrum》，《Art Official Age》是Prince的個人大碟，以電子音樂曲風演繹不同年代和類型的歌曲；不過，兩張大碟於同日推出，相當有趣。《Art Official Age》以放克和騷靈為主調，結合電子舞曲效果、嘻哈節奏及太空迷幻聲效，雖說樂迷乍聽之下可能一時難以接受，但這正是大碟的出色之處，令這張大碟成為Prince近年來的最佳作品之一。

大碟中第二首歌曲〈Clouds〉以厚實輕快的低音旋律，帶出了一個昏睡45年後甦醒過來的虛擬角色，而這個虛擬故事也成為整張專輯的骨幹。瀟灑實驗色彩的大碟收錄了多首意識大膽的歌曲，包括節奏明快的〈The Gold Standard〉及具挑逗意味的〈Breakfast Can Wait〉。然而，最能展現Prince魔力的，始終是抒情慢歌，特別是他精心製作的R&B節奏怨曲〈What It Feels Like〉。

這位目前以Prince為名闖蕩樂壇的音樂王子，以如此精采的個人專輯回歸，才氣橫溢的他雖說已穩坐流行歌王寶座近40年，卻仍不斷為樂迷帶來驚喜，確實非常不可思議。



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