



Kim Berry

Two years after his death, a new Prince album *Piano and a Microphone 1983* was

released last week. For three decades KIM BERRY worked as the singer's personal hairstylist, during which time she saw a side to the star not often seen in public, as she tells *Renée Davis*

PRINCE may be gone, but aside from his music, there are many aspects of his career that cannot be forgotten, such as his outfits and his flamboyant and expressive hairstyles – many of which, from the late 1980s, Kim Berry was responsible for.

When California-born Kim left school, the last thing she expected to hear was Prince saying to her, 'You've got the job.' Kim was a straight-A student, but after finishing high school, she decided that she wanted to take a break. Her mother wasn't having it.

'She simply told me that I either needed to go and get a job or get out of her house,' Kim says. 'So I went to beauty college and enrolled on a course.'

After beating 200 other young people at a state-wide hair competition, Kim knew she was on to a winner. Two months later, she ended up working for one of the biggest entertainers in the world.

'I was dating one of Prince's bodyguards, and he would often tell me to come and hang out at video shoots or social activities, so I was always around the crew,' she says. 'On one particular video shoot, I was introduced to Prince's hairstylist at the time. My dad always used to tell me that success is where preparation and opportunity meet. So I would watch everything she did, knowing that I might be there one day.'

'I watched how she laid all her hair tools out on the table. I took note of the gels and hairsprays she used.'

When the hairstylist quit, Prince's bodyguard called Kim and told her to be at a particular club at a certain time. Prince would be there. It was just the opening that Kim needed.

'I showed up at the nightclub, walked right up to his table and laid my portfolio down. I said, "My name is Kim Berry. I do hair. I know you don't have a hairstylist right now and I just want to let you know that if you give me the opportunity, I'm available for you."

'He flicked through my pictures and asked me if I had a salon. I told him yes and he told me to get it ready for him. About an hour later, he called and said, "It's Prince.'

Styling the look

I called my mom and told her Prince was sending a car for me. By this point, we were both screaming

I'm not going to be able to make it." I said: "That's OK, just know that when you come back to LA, you have a hairstylist." He said: "Well, do you travel?"

'I hadn't even been out of Inglewood let alone California,' Kim recalls, 'but I told him yes anyway. He told me that he was sending a car to get me, that we were leaving LAX airport in an hour and he'd meet me there. I immediately called my mom and told her Prince was sending a car for me. By this point, we were both screaming.'

Kim threw all her styling tools in a tote bag and got into the limo. She flew to Minnesota with Prince, his brother and another bodyguard.

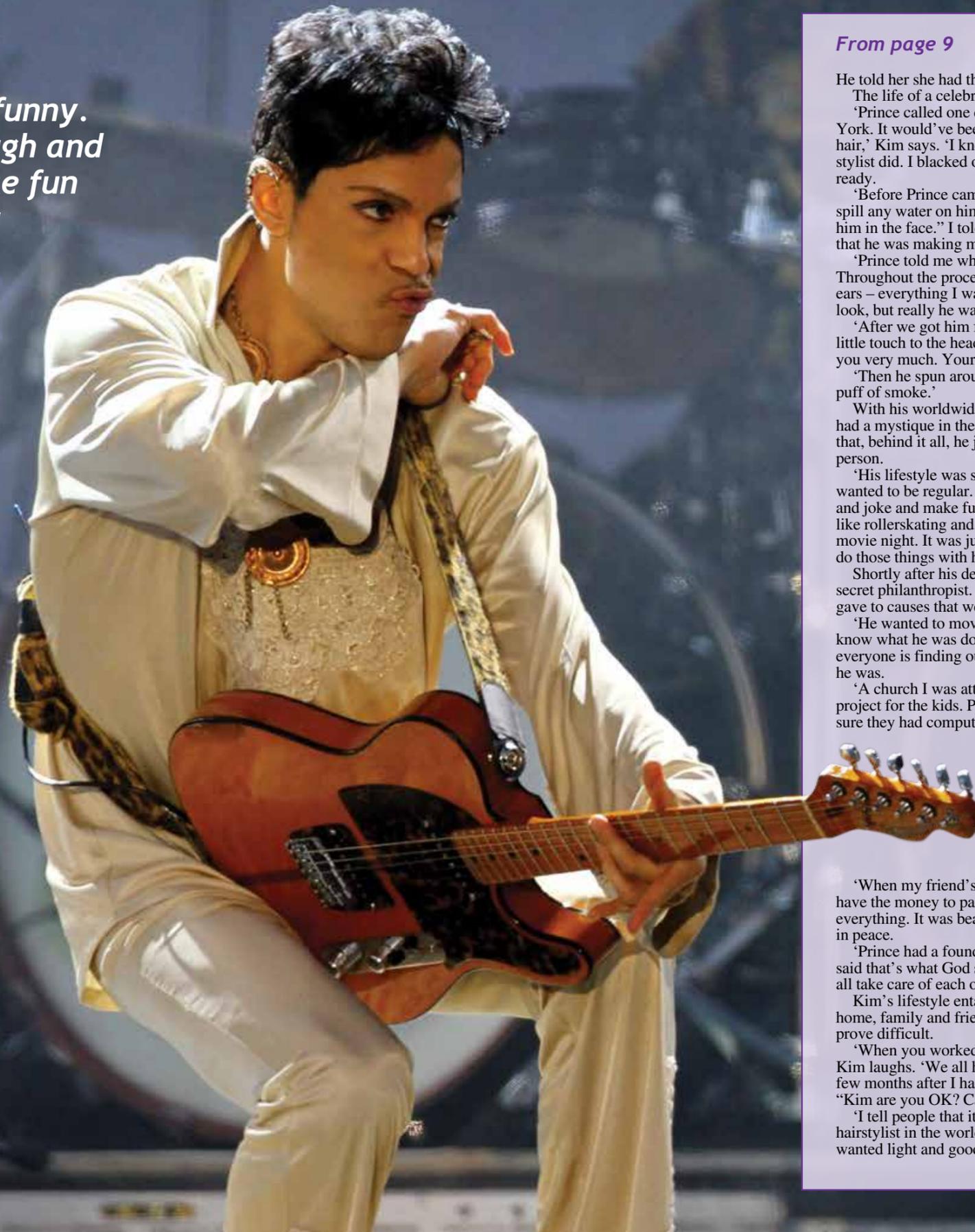
She remembers: 'The Paisley Park gates opened up and we went upstairs into the hair salon. The room was beautifully decorated with jewellery and many of his outfits, including the "Purple Rain" jacket.'

Kim styled Prince's entourage one after the other. After many hours, she finally got to speak with Prince.

Turn to page 11 ➔



He was very funny.
We would laugh and
joke and make fun
of each other



Prince performing at the
Hop Farm Festival near
Tonbridge, Kent, in 2011

From page 9

He told her she had the job.

The life of a celebrity hairstylist took some adjusting to. 'Prince called one day and said we were going to New York. It would've been my first time actually styling his hair,' Kim says. 'I knew how to do everything his previous stylist did. I blacked out the windows and got the table ready.'

'Before Prince came in, his brother schooled me: "Don't spill any water on him, don't drop colour on him, don't look him in the face." I told him there were too many rules and that he was making me nervous.'

'Prince told me what he wanted and I got started. Throughout the process, I spilt water on him, touched his ears – everything I was told not to do! He gave me a certain look, but really he was cool about it.'

'After we got him fabulous, he looked at his hair, gave a little touch to the head, tweaked his beard and said, "Thank you very much. Your car is waiting for you outside."'

'Then he spun around on his heels and disappeared into a puff of smoke.'

With his worldwide fame, riches and accolades, Prince had a mystique in the eyes of many people. But Kim says that, behind it all, he just wanted to be treated like a regular person.

'His lifestyle was so crazy that on his days off, he just wanted to be regular. He was very funny. We would laugh and joke and make fun of each other. He enjoyed activities like rollerskating and ping-pong, and we would often have a movie night. It was just a beautiful experience to be able to do those things with him.'

Shortly after his death, it was revealed that Prince was a secret philanthropist. Throughout his career he anonymously gave to causes that were close to his heart.

'He wanted to move in silence, he didn't want anyone to know what he was doing,' Kim reveals. 'It's only now that everyone is finding out about his giving and how generous he was.'

'A church I was attending wanted to do a computer project for the kids. Prince donated \$10,000 just to make sure they had computers.'

Prince knew that there was a God

'When my friend's son passed away and she didn't have the money to pay for his funeral, Prince took care of everything. It was beautiful that she was able to bury her son in peace.'

'Prince had a foundation called Love 4 One Another. He said that's what God sent him here for, to make sure that we all take care of each other.'

Kim's lifestyle entailed being on the road away from home, family and friends. Having a personal life could often prove difficult.

'When you worked for Prince, there was no personal life,' Kim laughs. 'We all had to be there to take care of him. A few months after I had a baby, he called me and was like, "Kim are you OK? Can you come back to work now?"'

'I tell people that it wasn't because I was the best hairstylist in the world. I truly believe it was because he wanted light and good energy around him,' Kim says.



Kim felt 'blessed'
working for Prince

'We shared experiences and we grew up together. It just worked.'

Kim grew up in the Christian faith, but didn't fully adopt it until the age of 18.

'That's when I knew God was with me, and that I could be bold and do what I needed to do in life,' she says. 'I love the relationship I have with Christ. It's a beautiful experience to be able to live for God and tell the world who he is.'

'Being on the road was hard,' she continues. 'But my faith kept me going. I stayed prayed-up and kept my mind focused on positive things. I read spiritual books and prayed with my mom on the phone.'

Kim says that she and Prince would often have conversations about faith.

'He studied many theologies. He walked around with different types of books. One day I asked him why he read all those books. He said, "I'm just looking for the truth." I told him that sometimes the truth is just as apparent as the nose on your face. I told him he had to look within himself and his heart.'

'We shared Bible stories, Scriptures and life stories. Prince knew that there was a God who could take care of him. I believe he came to know God for himself. It was beautiful to share that with him.'

Kim is putting her 30 years of experiences with Prince into a book called *Diamonds and Curlz*. Scheduled to be published in January 2019, the book will portray the Prince that the world didn't often get to see.

'It's going to be about the brother, the husband, the father and the son,' she explains. 'It's going to detail the funny and quirky moments and behind-the-scenes things that people don't know about. I'm looking forward to sharing it with the world, knowing that God blessed me to work so closely with one of the largest entertainers in the world. I really believe that there was no one else that he would have trusted to do this – to carry on his legacy in such a positive and inspiring way.'

'Prince always tried to empower us and help us get to the next level in life. Now, all the people who worked for him are carrying on his legacy by doing just that. I'm going across the world, telling the stories about Prince and the loving, kind, beautiful man that he was.'

● For more information, visit kimbonset.com