

Prince & Public Radio

OK Go bassist Tim Nordwind explains these two powerful influences



Listeners to The Current may hear OK Go's latest single, "White Knuckles", and easily think, *Hey, Prince has a cool new song.* OK Go bassist Tim Nordwind would happily forgive them. "We are huge Prince fans," Nordwind raves. "We have been since we were 10 and *Purple Rain* came out. Prince is amazing."

Nordwind admits the Prince aesthetic that manifests itself on OK Go's latest album, *Of The Blue Colour of the Sky*, wasn't in the original plan. The band members had come to the studio with various grooves and sonic sections that carried emotional heft. "As we started teasing songs out of those feelings, all of a sudden we realized, 'Wow—some of this sounds like Prince,'" Nordwind recalls. "It wasn't necessarily a conscious thing at first, but once we started hearing what was emerging, without even knowing we were channeling and referencing this musical inspiration of our youth."

Once Nordwind and the rest of OK Go became aware of the Prince influence, they fully embraced it. Prince became an inspiration for *Of The Blue Colour of the Sky*. "If the first two records were what we were listening to in high school and college, all of a sudden now we were going back to what we were listening to in elementary school," Nordwind laughs.

OK Go have gained great exposure through their innovative YouTube videos. Ira Glass, host of public radio's *This American Life*, writes that if you haven't seen OK Go's "Here It Goes Again" treadmill video, "Google it right now and prepare to lose two hours of your life."

It turns out Ira Glass and OK Go are good friends. Glass wrote the bio that appears on OK Go's website, and he has hired the band for various live *This American Life* events. Like the Prince influence that blossomed on the latest OK Go album, the friendship with Glass also grew organically. Nordwind says that during OK Go's early years, lead singer Damian Kulash had a day job as a sound engineer at NPR's Chicago bureau. Kulash befriended Glass as well as *Wait, Wait ... Don't Tell Me!*'s Peter Sagal. Nordwind says that OK Go are excited to play Rock The Garden, given that it is co-presented by The Current. "We have a huge fondness for public radio," Nordwind says. "We have some good friends who have great shows on public radio. We've been fans and admirers for a long, long time."

So it is that public radio and Prince, two of OK Go's major influences, converge at Rock the Garden. Nordwind also says the show will give OK Go a chance to continue one of their lesser-known traditions. "We don't know Prince, but of course, every time we go to Minneapolis, we put him on our guest list—just in case," Nordwind chuckles. "For eleven years we've done that! We always put Prince on the guest list."

It remains to be seen whether Prince will make an appearance at Rock the Garden. But for a band as creative and inspired as OK Go, anything's possible. LT