

## COLUMN: Under the Purple Umbrella

*Lucio Palazzo*

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Only five months into 2016 and we've lost some of the most influential musicians of our time — most notably Prince. Within hours of the news, we heard those closest to the musician convey semblances of the real man, what he was really like.

Upon his death, the curtain was drawn and the mysterious lifestyle of the one “formerly known as” was revealed.

Yes, he was working on a memoir which I certainly hope to read someday. Also, he does have an actual vault of likely amazing, yet unreleased, music we can look forward to.

Outside of the obvious, though, he was a Jehovah's Witness and read his Bible regularly. He was a vegetarian. He loved his Jamba Juice. He liked to ride his bike and enjoyed a game of ping pong once in a while.

One characteristic those who worked closely with him can all agree upon was his generosity.

In a recent Billboard Magazine article, Prince's former tour bus driver, Neville Shende, shared how much the musician truly listened and cared about those around him.

“One of the coolest conversations I had with him — which, at the time, I thought went in one ear and out the other — was I told him that I used to love to ride motorcycles, and when my wife and I got married I sold my Harley,” he told the magazine.

“I told him, ‘My wife always said I'd be able to get another one, and it's already been five years and I ain't even close.’ Well, at the end of the tour I got a purple Harley Sportster for a tip.”

Prince's Los Angeles chauffeur in the 1990s, Oscar, an employee of CLS Transportation, the limousine company of choice to the who's who of Hollywood - including the late Michael Jackson and Scott Weiland - was also the recipient of Prince's generosity.

Oscar drove the singer/songwriter frequently - always preparing the limousine with his favourite black shag carpet and special napkins with his logo on them. He was pleasant and quiet and usually kept the partition up.

When Prince was preparing his exodus from Los Angeles back to permanent residency in Minnesota, he began to bequest some of his personal items to those closest to him in L.A. Oscar was the proud recipient of a baby blue BMW 750i, a gold-coloured Mustang convertible and an awesome brass espresso machine.

I was also a chauffeur at CLS Transportation in the 1990s, I found that the bigger the star, the nicer they are.

Certainly, many of the celebrities have what most would call quirks or unique requests, but they're artists and it should be expected.

The temperature just right, a specific brand of water in the car, their favourite cigarettes waiting for them. They've learned how to fashion for themselves the environment most conducive to creating the next great hit.

My hope is that the musicians and songwriters of today not create this aura of mystery around them, but instead open up to their fans and share a little of the private person.

*Lucio Palazzo is freelance writer living in Hamilton. He lived in Los Angeles for 20 years and was employed at Music Express Limousine and CLS Transportation. He can be reached at [luciopalazzo.ca](http://luciopalazzo.ca).*



Prince