

Purple Rain

© 1984 Controversy Music/Warner Chappell Music Ltd., London W1Y 3FA
Words and Music by Prince

Guitar

For the first half of the song, up towards the end of section [C], the guitar provides the harmony in the shape of chord back up. Using a chorus pedal and clean tone, the guitar forms half arpeggio/half strummed chords, often sounding the root first and then adding the remaining notes, sometimes in different combinations later in the bar. In the latter half, the familiar distorted tone emerges and the guitar gradually leaves the back up, via some counter riffing, and comes to dominate the piece with an imposing solo.

'Purple Rain' gives the feeling of being much more strongly based around the guitar than most of the other numbers from the album.

Keyboards

The keyboards tend to take back seat in this guitar ballad, concentrating more on long sustained string chords and slow, bassy counter melodies. But they nevertheless have a strong presence in the music, especially when the band arrangement thickens up to support the climactic guitar break. Having just strings and piano to cope with, there is only need for one keyboardist.

Bass

In the bass part, long held root notes provide a deep, booming backdrop without ever really developing into a line, except for a little doubling on one of the main themes at the end of the refrains. This does, however fit perfectly with the song, leaving reams of space for the low string lines and the guitar, as well as underpinning the slow tempo.

Percussion & Drums

Like the bass, the drums work so as not to clutter up the ensemble sound. The second and fourth beats are continually stressed by a heavy, dragging, snare drum, that stands out in the music and makes the slow beat stagger for a moment, keeping the slow tempo on course. The bass drum patterns do vary subtly from time to time and should be followed closely.

The musical score is arranged in a system with seven staves. From top to bottom, they are: Voice (Vo.), Chorus (Chor.), Guitar (Gt.), Keyboard (Kb.), Bass (Ba.), Percussion (Perc.), and Drums (Dr.). Above the first four staves, the chords for the introduction are indicated: B^badd9, Gm7⁽¹¹⁾, F, and E^badd9. The guitar staff shows a complex arpeggiated pattern with various chord voicings and fingerings (e.g., 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12). The drum staff shows a simple pattern with a snare drum on the 2nd and 4th beats and a bass drum on the 1st and 3rd beats. A 'Reverse Echo' effect is indicated on the drum staff for the 3rd beat.

Gt. ① : Take care with the chord embellishments and the right hand strokes (as described in 'Song Introduction'). Use a chorus pedal and listen closely to the album for these opening bars.

Dr. ① : The snare falling on the 2nd beat needs a bold smash to make it really ring out. The reverse echo on the 3rd beat is purely production technique.

A B^badd9 Gm7⁽¹¹⁾ F E^badd9 E^bsus4 E^b

Voc. I nev-er meant 2 cause U an-y sor-row I nev-er meant 2 cause U an-y pain

Chor.

Gt. ② →

Kb. E.P. ① →

Ba. ① →

Perc. ① →

Dr. ② →

B^badd9 Gm7 F B^b

Voc. I on-ly want-ed-onetime-see U laugh-ing I on-ly want-ed 2 see you laugh-ing in the Pur-ple_Rain Pur-ple_

Chor.

Gt. ③ →

Kb. ① →

Ba. ① →

Perc. ① →

Dr. ③ →

Gt. ② : Stroke these chords slowly from 6th to 1st string like a mild arpeggio.

Key. ① : This typical Fender Rhodes sound on the electric piano wants a shallow tremolo setting to create a slightly oscillating lilt to the sound. The touch should also be light.

Ba. ① : A good booming and resonant bass sound needs to be achieved here and throughout the song.

Vo. Rain Pur - ple Rain Pur - ple Rain Pur - ple Rain
Chor. (Rain) Pur - ple Rain Pur - ple Rain
Gt. (11) F F
Kb.
Ba. D.S. time D.S. time D.S. time D.S. time
Perc.
Dr.

Lyrics:
 1 on - ly want - ed 2 see U ba - by
 1 on - ly want - ed 2 see U un - der

Dr. ② : Try and get consistent accents on the hi-hat, as marked on the score. As mentioned, the snare drum beats must stand out very strongly. Conventional left hand snare and right hand hi-hat is the most convenient playing approach.

Gt. ③ : Accent and make this chord stop dead straight after you hit it, as it occurs on a kind of half crescendo in the music.

Ba. ② : This B^b needs accentuating and muting (see also Gt. ③).

F to B^b C B^badd9 Gm7⁽¹¹⁾

Vo. in the Pur - ple — Rain I nev - er want - ed 2 be your week - end lov - er
 - neath the Pur - ple —

Chor.

Gt.

Kb.

Ba.

Perc.

Dr.

F E^b E^bsus4 E^b B^b

Vo. I on - ly want - ed 2 be some kind of friend — Hey — Ba - by I could nev - er steal U — from an - other

Chor.

Gt.

Kb.

Ba.

Perc.

Dr.

Dr. ② : After crashing the cymbal, mute it quickly with your left hand. All instruments in the band have to rest on the 4th beat of this bar, so careful timing is needed on the re-entry.

Key. ② : Avoid making the strings too heavy. They should resemble a string quartet rather than an orchestra. The sound should be as close as possible to real strings, with a little thoughtful vibrato to get an authentic feel.

Gt. ① : For the next 6 bars the guitar is in unison with the bass. Opt for a light valve distortion from the amp.

Chorus

Vo. $Gm7^{(11)}$ F B^b
 It's such a shame our friend-ship had to end Pur-ple Rain Pur-ple Rain

Chor.

Gt. (Distortion) → 5

Kb.

Ba.

Perc.

Dr.

D.S.

Coda B^b D $B^b add9$ $Gm7^{(11)}$ F

Vo. Rain Hon-ey I know I know I know times R chang-in' — It's time we all reach out 4 some-thin' new —

Chor.

Gt.

Kb.

Ba.

Perc.

Dr.

Ba. ④ : In the D.S. repeat, the F notes whimsically switch octaves.

Gt. ⑤ : From here on, a gradual crescendo builds up in the guitar part with the sound completely going over to thick distortion.

Vo. E^b B^b $Gm^{(11)}$
 Pur - ple Rain Pur - ple Rain — Whew If U know what I'm sing-in' a - bout help me and come on raise you're hand_

Chor. Pur - ple Rain Pur - ple Rain — Pur - ple Rain Pur - ple Rain_

Gt.

Kb.

Ba.

Perc.

Dr.

Vo. F $F7$ F F
 I on - ly want 2 see you _ on - ly want 2 see U _____ in the Pur - ple Rain

Chor.

Gt.

Kb.

Ba.

Perc.

Dr.

F Eb B^badd9 Gm7⁽¹¹⁾

Vo. _____

Chor. _____

Gt. *Gua* $\frac{1}{2}$ $\frac{1}{2}$ $\frac{1}{2}$

Kb. _____

Ba. _____

Perc. _____

Dr. _____

F Eb B^b(onD) Cm B^b E^b(onG) E^b(onF) B^b G (3 times Repeat) Gm7

Vo. _____

Chor. _____

Gt. $\frac{1}{2}$ $\frac{1}{2}$ $\frac{1}{2}$

Kb. _____

Ba. _____

Perc. _____

Dr. _____

Gt. 7 : This ensemble unison brings the guitar solo to an end, so make sure the guitar enters it well, so as to round the solo off nicely.

Ba. 6 : Big unison ensemble on this lead out phrase. Play it with dramatic stress, drawing out the notes a bit. Although the tabulature shows an open D, it would probably sound stronger at position 3/5.

Dr. 6 : The most demanding piece of drumming in the song. The rhythm between bass and snare looks awkward, but it's easier to work out if you hear it in your head. The balance between the drums must be well controlled.

F Eb B^b(onD) Cm B^b E^b(onG) E^b(onF) H B^b Gm7

Vo. Ooh H B^b Gm7
 cor.
 Gt. 6 5 6 5 6 5 6 5 6 5 6 5 %
 kb.
 Ba. ① ③
 sax.
 Dr. ③

F Eb sus4 B^b

Vo.
 cor.
 Gt. 6 5 6 5 6 5 6 5
 kb. ③
 Ba. ① ③
 sax.
 Dr. ③

Key. ③ : On the album, there is actually an extended, and probably partly, improvised, keyboards coda after the final B^b chord. I've decided to leave this out and arrange an ending based on the arpeggio figures played.