

### Who were your musical heroes growing up?

Prince. All the way, every day. In the 80s, that was it for me. My sister liked David Bowie and my brother liked Queen and I was informed by their choices, but Prince was my thing. He was my whole identity.

### What was the first single that you ever bought?

The 12" of *Let's Go Crazy*. The first single I ever bought that wasn't Prince was *Let's Go All The Way* by Sly Fox. It was a rip-off of *I Am The Walrus*, wasn't it?



### What's your all-time favourite album?

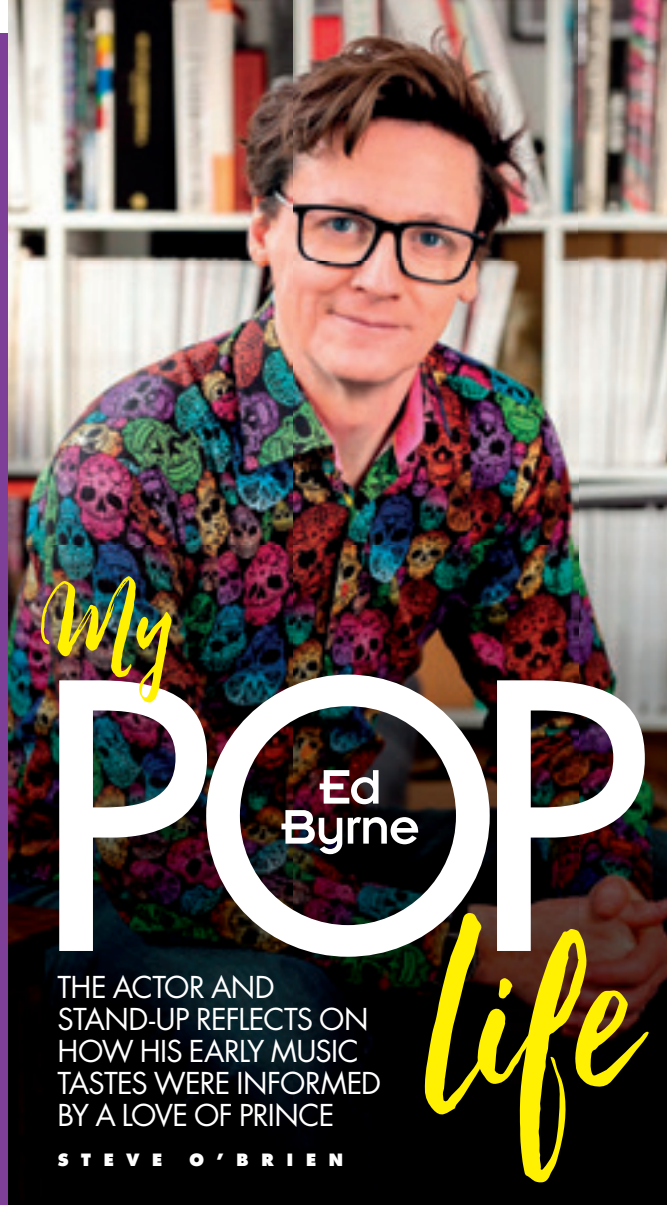
I would probably say *Parade*, 'cause it would take me back. But at the time, I had *Around The World In A Day* and *Purple Rain* on either side of a 90-minute tape, and I played that every night when I went to bed. So those two are the albums I've probably listened to the most.

### Did you ever manage to see Prince live?

The first time he came to Ireland was in 1999, which was on the Nude Tour – not his best tour by any stretch of the imagination. He didn't play for very long and the audience was terrible. It was the year Ireland had been in the World Cup and at one point he goes into one of his signature funk jams and the fucking audience started chanting *Olé Olé Olé*. I was up at the very front, with all the hardcore Prince fans, and we all just looked at each other, like 'what the fuck is wrong with these people?' When a crowd of Irish people reach critical mass they have to just start singing *Olé Olé Olé*.

### And did you ever get a chance to meet him?

Never. There was once this gig at The Roundhouse or somewhere and everyone who was managed by [comedy talent agency] Off The Kerb got an invite, so people like Dara Ó Briain and others got to go to this really intimate Prince



THE ACTOR AND STAND-UP REFLECTS ON HOW HIS EARLY MUSIC TASTES WERE INFORMED BY A LOVE OF PRINCE

STEVE O'BRIEN

gig that had something to do with raising awareness of autism. But I didn't get to go and I was like, "I'm a bigger Prince fan than any of you!"

### Do you have any Prince memorabilia?

I do have a guitar he used to own. I bought it in 2001. It was a guitar made for the Purple Rain Tour and

**He may have missed that intimate show, but Ed is the proud owner of Prince's stunning purple Fender Telecaster with floral designs**



he actually plays it in the video to *America*. Not one of his most iconic songs or videos, I know, but there is footage of him with it. I've also got photos of Prince playing it and Wendy Melvoin playing it, too. It's a very cool guitar. It's in a case on the wall.

**Are there any other artists that you're as obsessive about as Prince?** Recently I've shifted my allegiances in



**Ed became a fan of Sly Stone and Joni Mitchell via his love of Prince**

the direction of grunge, so I'm a big Pearl Jam fan.

### Very different artists...

Well, Prince was very much someone who could rock with the best. That's another thing about Prince, is that, growing up, he led me to so much other music. I'd check out all of his influences so I listened to a lot of Jimi Hendrix, Sly & The Family Stone and Joni Mitchell. Prince was a massive Joni Mitchell fan.

### How do you listen to music now? Are you a vinyl hound or a Spotify-head?

I tried to resist Spotify so much, but it's just the convenience of it. I still buy music if I like it and, if I do, I'll buy it often on vinyl. I've kind of fallen out of love with iTunes. I was making a playlist for my tour 'cause one of the things I quite enjoy is curating the music that people will be listening to as they come in and sit down. Just trying to get it from iTunes into mp3, you can't do that anymore. You can't just convert an iTunes song. Even if you bought it and ripped it to iTunes, like on a CD, it still won't let you do it. It's really inconvenient.

### What's on your current tour playlist?

There's a lot of Lizzo, there's some classic rock as well like *Don't Fear The Reaper* by Blue Oyster Cult and *Cult Of Personality* by Living Colour. My walk-on music for this tour is *I Just Want To Celebrate* by Rare Earth. My new show is called *Tragedy Plus Time* and it's all to do with the fact that last year my little brother died. So all of the pre-show music is off his Spotify playlists. Spotify has its issues but being able to access my late brother's music, what he was listening to in the last couple of years, has been incredibly beneficial to me. ■

● **Ed Byrne is currently on tour. For more details, visit [edbyrne.com](http://edbyrne.com).**

