



# Andre Cymone

## *The Stone*

"I feel like I'm starting from scratch," Andre Cymone says of *The Stone*, his first new album in 29 years. "I guess it's a little unexpected for me to be finding my voice after all this time, but it feels great."

Indeed, *The Stone* marks a stunning creative rebirth for the veteran singer/songwriter/producer/multi-instrumentalist, delivering eleven riveting original songs that add an exciting—and unexpected—chapter to the musical legacy that Cymone built in the 1980s. The artist's catchy, punchy new tunes merge raw, muscular rock 'n' roll with insistent hooks and sharp, insightful lyrics that tap into timeless human truths while exploring a range of social and political concerns.

The enthusiasm and urgency with which Cymone speaks of his personally charged new music is an accurate reflection of the music itself. There's no mistaking the deeply felt passion and seamless craftsmanship that fuels new songs "Rock And Roll," "Live Life" and "Naked," whose timely lyrical message encapsulates Cymone's current attitude towards his work.

"'Naked' is saying, let go of distractions and strip things down to what's really important," he says. "People, relationships, and family is important, the earth is important. It's about concentrating on what really matters, and that's what I tried to do with these songs and this album."

Cymone is as surprised as anyone at the burst of inspiration that spawned *The Stone*. After establishing himself as an influential musical force in the '80s, he'd put his musical life on hold in order to concentrate on parenthood and family life. "I was enjoying life and having a pretty good time" he explains, "but something kept nagging at me, and making me feel like I needed to get back out there and address the issues that are important to me. Something told me, now is the time for someone like you, at this point in your life, to stand up and share the power of music."

Even if he'd never returned to active duty to make *The Stone*, Andre Cymone's place in the musical canon would be assured. His rich musical history encompasses three much-loved solo albums and a prolific career as hitmaking producer, as well as a long-running collaboration with Prince, during which Cymone emerged as one of the architects of the revolutionary Minneapolis sound that permanently changed the face of popular music in the '80s.

Raised in a politically and musically engaged family amidst a tough urban environment in Minneapolis, Cymone grew up with an interest in sociopolitical issues and a burning desire to make music. Early on, he found a kindred spirit in his schoolmate Prince, whose father had played in a jazz group with Andre's father years before. Andre and Prince began playing in bands together in their teens, and when Prince began his recording career in the late '70s, Andre spent three years as bassist in his band.

In the early '80s, he broke away to launch a solo career, releasing three well-received albums—*Living in the New Wave*, *Survivin' in the '80s* and *AC*—whose visionary new wave/funk fusion spawned half a dozen hit R&B singles, including 1985's Prince-penned Top Ten hit "The Dance Electric."

Andre also established himself as an in-demand producer, overseeing a series of successful releases by Jody Watley, who scored with such Cymone-produced hits as "Looking for a New Love," "Real Love" and "Still A Thrill," as well as successful releases by a diverse array of acts including Tom Jones, Pebbles, Adam Ant, Jermaine Stewart and Evelyn "Champagne" King.



Although he'd put music on the back burner in order to channel his energies into parenthood and family life, it was his children who helped to reignite Cymone's musical instincts. "My kids had a lot to do with making me feel like I had to get back in the game," he says. "They've always made me play and sing for them, and then they made me start writing songs for them. Before I knew it, the songs started to get serious, and they started to pour out of me. Eventually I had 67 of them to choose from, and I realized that it was time to make an album."

Cymone introduced the public to his new musical direction in the fall of 2012 with the digital release of the upbeat anthem "America," which served as both a fund-raiser for President Obama's reelection campaign and a sneak preview of *The Stone*.

In recording the new album, Cymone embraced a more basic, direct musical vocabulary than the one he'd employed in the '80s, emphasizing the energy and immediacy of live performance by cutting the tracks live in the studio with a group of talented players—guitarists Devon Pangle and Sharief Hobley, bassist Mike Torres, keyboardist Ricky Pageot, drummer Nick Adams and percussionist Alberto Lopez.

"We were all in one room, counting the songs off and playing them together," he explains. "I wanted the spirit and the sweat of a live band, because that's what the songs were asking for. I wanted the performances to sound as natural and organic as the songs."

The resulting album is both expansive and intimate, reflecting the remarkable musical and personal journey that's brought Andre Cymone from his influential early days to his current creative mission.

Cymone notes "I think I've pretty much come full circle now, from being a fairly selfish person to being a person who looks to other people, who wants to hear what other people have to say and understand where they're coming from. I just feel a lot more in tune now—as a musician, as an artist, as a father, as a husband, as a friend—and I think that that evolution is reflected in these songs.

"The music that I'm making now is about how I see the world and how I see my place in it," he concludes. "I feel like now I understand what my purpose is, and it's not what I used to think it was. Now I feel connected with the artists who came before me, people like Jimi Hendrix and Chuck Berry and Bob Marley and Bob Dylan and the Beatles, people who were saying things and connecting with people, and I feel a responsibility to live up to the standards that they set. I feel like I've been given the gift of being able to create, and now it's my responsibility to make music that connects with people."

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