

KING ready to showcase for the world; signed to Prince

Written by Harry Colbert, Jr.



In 2011 a three-song EP shook up the music world.

"I listened to about five seconds of the first song I heard and I stopped the CD and turned to my wife and said, 'this is about to be great,'" said soul music superstar Eric Roberson.

The song was "The Story" and the group behind the song was KING. Roberson got a hold of the CD while dining at a Mexican restaurant in Los Angeles. It was there where fellow diner, Paris Strother – producer and one-third of KING, noticed Roberson and offered him the CD. The chance encounter was serendipity.

"He literally got the first copy. We had just gotten them printed," said Strother. "He called me that day and said it was the best CD anyone had ever handed him. I was so excited."

As Roberson tells it, he called a month or so later to check on Paris and the group and Paris replied by saying that KING just heard from Erykah Badu and Prince wanted them to open for him.



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"We didn't do a PR (public relations) campaign or anything," said Amber Strother, twin sister to Paris, who along with Anita Bias form the trio known as KING. "We put it (the three-song EP) up on YouTube for our friends and family and it just took off from there."

"And somehow Prince heard it and we got an email from his manager – who is now our manager – saying Prince loves your music and wants you to come to North Carolina to see him perform," said Paris, who said the group later opened for him in Los Angeles as well.

The story that is KING is quite amazing – and in many ways almost unbelievable.

To start, Amber Strother never really sang before producing the EP, titled "The Story."

"I went out to L.A. for my 23rd birthday to visit Paris, who was working with Anita and we all started writing together, and I just decided to move out there," said Amber, who was making a pretty good living as a nail technician in Minneapolis before the impromptu move.

Paris' move to L.A. was also serendipity.



A graduate of the prestigious Berklee College of Music in Boston, Paris originally wanted to score music for film and television. Paris made her way to California's Bay Area when she reached out to an old mentor, Patrice Rushen – who she had met years prior in the Twin Cities while working at the Dakota Jazz Club – and Rushen said if you're serious about scoring move to Los Angeles.

"So I put everything I owned in my truck and drove down to L.A. and got a place that day," said Paris.

Soon after moving to Los Angeles, Paris ran into Anita, a fellow Berklee alum, and the two started working together.

"Anita and I didn't really know each other at Berklee, but I was musically directing a play there and Anita was singing background and when she started singing I stopped the whole thing and told her how amazing her voice was," said Paris. "But I was graduating and she was just getting

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there, so we really didn't connect until L.A. Then Amber came through and soon after KING was born."

According to the twins, Paris came up with the name for the group.

"It wasn't a big process," said Paris. "It's such a strong name. It's independent. It's so uniquely us."

"When we first met Prince he said, 'Are you ready to live up to the name,'" said Amber.

It appears the trio was more than ready.

Off the strength of just three songs, KING signed with Prince's management team, and toured with the music icon, furthering the buzz. Prior to meeting, Prince had no idea that Amber and Paris were from his hometown of Minneapolis. Later, the group landed a spot on Robert Glasper's "Black Radio," with the song "Move Love." The project earned the 2013 Grammy for Best R&B Album.

Just recently KING signed a record deal with Kobalt Music. The label that allows artists to retain control of their masters boasts a roster that includes Maroon 5, Busta Rhymes and Paul McCartney. Amber and Paris said the much anticipated full-length KING project is due out in the summer of 2014.

"Jimmy Jam got to hear it and he said it's his favorite album of 2014," said Paris. "That's so awesome because we are the biggest Jam and (Terry) Lewis fans."

Rabid fans clamoring to see and hear KING will get a chance this spring and summer when the group begins touring, including landing a coveted spot at this summer's Essence Festival in New Orleans. Until then, fans will have to be content with the three songs that vaulted KING to the throne.