

POP CONFERENCE 2024 MOVING TO LOS ANGELES

FEBRUARY 20, 2024

For the first time, Pop Conference (PopCon) will be hosted by the USC Thornton School of Music in collaboration with the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism. This year's event, titled "Legacy! Legacy! Music Collections and Archives," will be held Thursday through Saturday, March 7-9, 2024, on the USC University Park campus.



USC Thornton will host the premier music writing and popular music studies conference, bringing such luminaries to campus as George Clinton, Wendy & Lisa, dream hampton, and Danyel Smith. This year's event, hosted in collaboration with the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, is titled "Legacy! Legacy! Music Collections and Archives," and takes place on March 7-9 on the USC University Park campus.

Now in its 22nd year, PopCon is the premier music writing and pop music studies conference. Held every spring, the conference brings together people from all over the world to present papers, roundtables, discussions and performances about popular music.

"For 22 years the Pop Conference has been an incredible gathering of pop music writers, journalists, critics, scholars and musicians," said dean of the USC Thornton School of Music Jason King, who serves as the USC conference producer and keynote curator for PopCon. "It's an unparalleled opportunity to engage in sustained, thoughtful discussion on pop music over the course of a weekend. This year's theme—all about music legacies, archives and collections—is a topical one, given that we're living in a moment where we are witnessing polarizing cultural debates around the value of history, memory and the past. I'm so happy to bring this conference to USC and Los Angeles."

This year's three-day event will feature more than 30 panels and discussions, keynote addresses, mentorship sessions and performances with GRAMMY-winning musicians,

award-winning journalists and renowned scholars focused on the meaning of musical legacies, archives and collections.

Participants include legendary funk musician George Clinton; Wendy & Lisa, celebrated musical duo and original members of Prince & the Revolution; dream hampton, executive producer of the award-winning documentary series *Surviving R. Kelly* and co-author of Jay-Z's memoir; and Danyel Smith, the first African American and female editor-in-chief of Quincy Jones' *Vibe* magazine.

"Legacy! Legacy! Music Collections and Archives" takes its name from singer-songwriter and poet Jamila Woods' 2019 studio album. The theme invites PopCon participants to explore what beloved bands, musicians, scenes, critics and fans leave behind once they've left the building. The conference will look at how musicians consider and carve out their own legacies and how communities, audiences and other forces can shape the way we think about musical legacies. It also investigates musical archives, collections, sources and ephemera, asking critical questions about who curates and serves as custodians of music past, present and future.

George Clinton will participate in the keynote opening session on Thursday, March 7, at 7 p.m. titled, "A Little Light Under the Sun: The Unstoppable Funky Genius and Cosmic Legacy of George Clinton." One of the premier innovators of funk in the 1970s, Clinton, along with 15 other members of his Parliament-Funkadelic collective, was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame; and he and Parliament-Funkadelic were honored with GRAMMY Lifetime Achievement Awards. Clinton will discuss history, legacy and impact in relationship to his personal archives and history.

On Friday, March 8, at 7 p.m., a second keynote session will feature Wendy & Lisa, award-winning musical duo and longtime members of Prince & the Revolution, in conversation with Timothy Anne Burnside, Museum Curatorial Specialist at the National Museum of African American History and Culture. Wendy Melvoin and Lisa Coleman are an Emmy, Grammy, and Oscar award-winning musical composing duo based in Los Angeles. They began their careers working with one of the most successful bands of the 1980's, Prince and the Revolution, and they've continued to work as a duo releasing original albums and composing for film and television.

A roundtable on Friday, March 8, will continue the exploration of P-Funk with "A Seat at the (Mother)Ship: The Reclamation of Women's Stories in Parliament-Funkadelic." This panel discussion and live oral history will address archival silences and fill archival gaps in the story of P-Funk by centering stories of women who contributed greatly to the legacy of P-Funk but still

don't receive their deserved recognition, even when there's evidence of material culture and other forms of proof. The panel will feature Seth Neblett, author of the forthcoming *Mothership Connected: The Women of Parliament-Funkadelic* (University of Texas Press; American Music Series, 2024) and son of P-Funk vocalist Mallia Franklin; Lynn Mabry, who recorded and toured with Parliament-Funkadelic as a member of that group and of the original Brides of Funkenstein in the late 1970s, before her career in the 1980s and beyond found her with Talking Heads and Sheila E., among others; and Cheryl James, who served as P-Funk's first female road manager during the late 1970s. The discussion will be moderated by DJ Soul Sister Melissa A. Weber, who is curator of the Hogan Archive of New Orleans Music and New Orleans Jazz, a unit of Tulane University Special Collections.

Another key roundtable is scheduled for Saturday, March 9, when PopCon presents "That's a Real F***in' Legacy...to Leave: Critical Karaoke," featuring Karen Tongson, with Raquel Gutiérrez, Joshua Javier Guzmán, Leon Hilton, Jane Hu, Sarah Kessler, Summer Kim Lee and Alice Motion. Critical karaoke is now an archival conference format created by PopCon veteran and English and Comparative Literature professor at UC Davis Joshua Clover at the 2004 conference in Seattle and practiced by legions of PopCon participants over the last two decades. A response to the countless lists of the "greatest songs of all time," the premise of Critical Karaoke is that participants talk about a song that meant something to them at some time in their lives (without making a case for its lasting worth) while the song is playing, and they stop when the song ends.

Most sessions are in person on the USC campus; some virtual programming will also be offered. All sessions are free, but registration is required and space is limited. Audiences will be seated on a first-come, first-served basis. A complete list of sessions, as well as information about registration, scheduling and accommodations, is available at popconference.org.

Pop Conference is generously supported by Critical Minded, a granting and learning initiative cofounded by The Nathan Cummings Foundation and The Ford Foundation to support cultural critics of color in the United States, where they are underrepresented in the coverage of all artistic disciplines.

Conference produced by Michelle Habell-Pallán and Jason King

Associate Producers: madison moore, Karen Tongson, Oliver Wang.

Program Committee: Eddy Francisco Alvarez Jr., Jessica Bisset Perea, Bettina Judd, Oscar Garza, Amy Linden, madison moore, Sonnet Retman, Justin Sayles, Audrey Silvestre, RJ Smith, Melissa A. Weber, Cristina Verán, and Deborah Wong.