



# ROBERT PALMER

(ROBERT ALLEN PALMER)  
HEART ATTACK

**Born:** January 19, 1949

**Died:** September 26, 2003

By the time he hit commercial paydirt in the 1980s, Robert Palmer had paid his dues many times over. Born in England's Batley in Yorkshire, Palmer was raised in Malta (where his serviceman father was stationed), then returned to Yorkshire, joined his first band—the curiously monikered Mandrake Paddle Steamer—and studied graphic design. Moving to London in 1969, he sang with The Alan Bown Set, then blues-rockers Vinegar Joe.

Palmer's subsequent solo career reflected his love of blues and R&B. On debut *Sneakin' Sally Through The Alley* (1974), produced by Little Feat's Lowell George, he was backed by mighty New Orleans funksters The Meters. His sophisticated look (that of a slightly smug hairdresser to the stars) seemed somewhat at odds with his musical loves, though. "The media never really liked him, they didn't trust him," reflected future bandmate John Taylor. "He

was too good to be true...He was too smart, too cute, and dared to live abroad *in the Bahamas!*"

Success remained strictly modest until a 1985 collaboration with ex-Durannies and Chic-ers in supergroup Power Station, and the release of his own *Riptide* of the same year, which saw Palmer go platinum. The runaway success had much to do with the slickly sexy Terence Donovan-directed video for Grammy-winning single "Addicted To Love" (*Billboard* No. 1)—in which Palmer was backed by leggy lovelies in tight-fitting black dresses; like follow-up "I Didn't Mean To Turn You On," it sold a million copies. He'd come a long way from those gritty blues roots, to which he finally returned for 2003's *Drive*.

While visiting Paris with his partner, Mary Ambrose, Palmer died suddenly from a heart attack. He was buried in Lugano, the Swiss city that had become his home.



**LEFT** Palmer onstage performing "Addicted To Love."