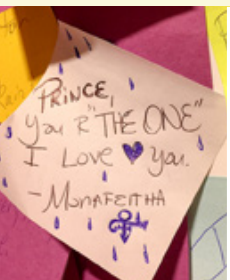




FROM MINNESOTA COLLECTS (MNHS PRESS, 1992). PHOTO BY ERIC MORTENSON/MNHS.



Within hours of Prince's death on the morning of Thursday, April 21, 2016, MNHS staff sprang into action to honor Prince's legacy in Minnesota and beyond. The first social media posts were made at midday. By afternoon, collections and exhibits staff readied the *Purple Rain* costume in MNHS collections for display at the History Center.

Between April 22 and June 19, hundreds of visitors

came to view the suit and memorabilia for free during normal museum hours. Many fans left tributes and remembrances to one of Minnesota's most celebrated and beloved icons on multicolored sticky notes. Media attention was intense. In addition to Minnesota media outlets, *Access Hollywood*, *Newsweek*, *People*, *CNN*, and *MTV* were just some who called or visited. As of May 19, MNHS's Facebook post with photos of Prince's *Purple Rain* suit and the process of preparing and bringing it upstairs to display reached 331,670 people and had 20,331 likes and 4,558 shares.

The Purple One

PRINCE ROGERS NELSON stood only five foot two, but the eclectic musical genius—who died of an overdose of fentanyl, an opioid painkiller, on April 21, 2016, at age 57—was one of Minnesota's artistic giants. Born and raised in Minneapolis, Prince took refuge in music after his parents divorced, and by his early teens he had mastered a multitude of instruments. At age 16 he joined Grand Central, a band started by childhood chum and bassist Andre Anderson (later Cymone). Although the band played mostly cover tunes, Grand Central offered Prince the opportunity to hone his musical chops, especially as a songwriter. After hearing a demo tape by the young prodigy, Warner Bros. signed the 18-year-old to a record deal, and in 1978 Prince released his first album, *For You*.

Fiercely independent, Prince insisted on self-producing his recordings to control the creative process. What transpired was a delicious musical stew of funk, rock, pop, synthpop, and new wave that became known as the Minneapolis Sound. Working largely out of Paisley Park, his sprawling nine-acre home studio in Chanhassen, Minnesota, Prince churned out a flock of classic eighties hits, including "1999," "Delirious," and "Little Red Corvette." In 1984 he achieved megastardom with the release of the album and motion picture *Purple Rain*. Shot largely in Minneapolis, the semi-autobiographical film showcased local haunts like the nightclub First Avenue, where Prince performed in the signature costume (left), now in the collections of the Minnesota Historical Society. The film grossed \$80 million and the album, which won an Oscar for Best Soundtrack, spawned the hit singles "When Doves Cry," "Let's Go Crazy," and "Purple Rain," securing Prince's iconic status in the pantheon of American popular music.

The Minnesota Historical Society preserves more than 50 items associated with Prince, including T-shirts, posters, buttons, concert tickets, record albums, and branded merchandise from his now-closed Minneapolis retail store. Many of these items can be viewed online at www.mnhs.org.

—Adam Scher, senior curator



Visit the digital edition to see exclusive video about the Prince tributes and hear the story of an MNHS staff member who was at a Paisley Park party just days before Prince's death.



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