

Curator's Choice

LIKE HIS MUSIC, Prince's costume from his 1984 film *Purple Rain* is a synthesis of various periods and styles. The ensemble's ruffled, high-collared shirt wouldn't look out of place on the cover of a Regency



romance, while the asymmetry favored in early 1980s design is evident in the faux-mail ornamentation on the coat's right shoulder and the pants' diagonal fly, secured with large white buttons so there's no way to miss it. The faux mail also suggested the masculine-or-feminine, straight-or-gay ambiguities that Prince sought to project. The deep vent at the back of the eye-catching purple trench coat accommodated the energetic spins and splits so typical of Prince's choreography.

Louis Well and Terry Vaughn, African Americans who had designed stage costumes for the R&B/funk/pop supergroup Earth, Wind and Fire, set up a sewing room in the St. Louis Park warehouse where planning for *Purple Rain* was underway. Frenchwoman Marie France assisted with the costume design. For more on Minnesota's late-twentieth-century music scenes, see the article beginning on page 29; to experience music and music making in Minnesota, visit the exhibit *Sounds Good to Me* at the History Center.

The costume and photo were donated to the Minnesota Historical Society by PRN Productions, Inc., Chanhassen.

—Patty Dean, supervisory curator,
MHS museum collections



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