

NEWS

PRINCE REMEMBERED, FROM EUGENE TO MINNEAPOLIS' FIRST AVE, HOME TO *PURPLE RAIN*

On April 21, the day of Prince's death, his music could be heard spilling out of bars all over downtown Eugene. A source tells us that dancers at the Silver Dollar Club were dancing to the Purple One, and Voodoo Doughnut made a "Raspberry Beret" memorial doughnut for 99 cents. At (sub)Urban Projections, the multimedia art festival put on by the city at the Hult Center, a Prince shrine was one of the most popular attractions.

Having grown up in Minneapolis in the '80s, '90s and '00s, I can say Prince's cultural influence permeated the Twin Cities like a fine violet mist, yet his proximity made it easy to take the Minnesota-born musical genius for granted.

That's not to say Minnesotans aren't as fanatical about Prince as the rest of the globe — we are, as has been illustrated this past week with fans flocking to all his stomping grounds, bridges lit up purple and the Twins and the Wild both paying homage — but there was something normalizing, even reassuring, about the Coolest Person on the Planet living in a suburb of a "flyover" state. His legendary recording studio

and party pad, Paisley Park, for example, is in Chanhassen, a pretty regular, mostly white, little city of 23,000.

And Prince wasn't as much of a recluse as the world romanticized him to be. In March, he gave an impromptu performance at the Chanhassen Dinner Theatre. About a month ago, he showed up at the First Avenue nightclub in downtown Minneapolis, where *Purple Rain* was filmed. Appearances like this at his favorite haunts were not rare, even recently.

"It never occurred to me that we would be dealing with Prince's death any time soon," First Ave manager Nathan Kranz tells *EW*. "He was just here last month. He looked great; he was dressed up. He had a date on his arm. He had a good time watching local music."

Kranz says he found out that Prince had passed on his way to work April 21, and when he arrived at First Ave, people had already started to gather around Prince's star painted on the outside of the venue, leaving flowers, balloons, artwork and letters. That night — and for the following two nights — First Ave hosted a last-minute, all-night block party.

"By the time that got rolling, there were 10,000-plus people out on the street," Kranz says. "We were turning away thousands of people every night."

The celebration of Prince's life and legacy doesn't seem to be slowing down.

"MTV is filming here," Kranz says. "It's been crazy for days."

First Ave will host a more official memorial soon. "We have been talking to different people who performed in Prince's band over the years, and people at Paisley Park," he says.

And Kranz sums up what pretty much every Minnesotan, and fan, is experiencing right now: "I feel fortunate that we've gotten to be in Prince's orbit."

If you want to stay in Prince's orbit locally, Corvallis' Carmike 12 and Bijou Art Cinemas, joining cinemas nationwide, are airing *Purple Rain*, and Eugene's David Minor Theater will start screening the cult classic Friday. — *Alex V. Cipolle*

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