



Summary Article: **Prince (1958–)**

From *African American Almanac*

Singer, Songwriter, Producer

Image from: [Prince \(1958–\) in African American Almanac](#)



The son of a jazz pianist, Prince Rogers Nelson was born on June 7, 1958, in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Named after the jazz trio Prince Rogers Trio in which his father was the pianist, Prince by the age of fourteen taught himself to play piano, guitar, and drums. Drawn to many forms of rock and soul, Prince explained that he never grew up in one particular culture. "I'm not a punk, but I'm not an R&B artist either—because I'm a middle-class kid from Minnesota."

It was his eclectic taste that led to Prince's creation of the Minneapolis sound. After forming the band Grand Central in high school in 1973, Prince renamed the group Champagne and eventually recruited the talents of composer Morris Day. In 1978 Prince signed with Warner Brothers and recorded his debut album, *For You*. His follow-up album, *Prince* (1979), featured the hit "I Wanna Be Your Lover." Rooted in the music of Sly and the Family Stone and Jimi Hendrix, Prince released his third album, *Dirty Mind* (1980).

Two years later, Prince achieved superstardom with his album *1999*, an effort that was followed by a spectacular tour composed of Prince and the Revolution, the Time, and the bawdy girl trio Vanity 6. Prince's film soundtrack *Purple Rain* (1984), which received rave reviews for his portrayal of a struggling young musician, grossed \$60 million at the box office in the first two months of its release. Near the end of 1985 Prince established his own record label, Paisley Park, the warehouse/studio located in the wooded terrain of Chanhassen, Minnesota. The same year, Prince released the album *Around the World in a Day*, featuring the hit singles "Raspberry Beret," "Paisley Park," and "Pop Life."

Prince's next film project, *Under the Cherry Moon* (1986), filmed in France, was completed under his direction. The soundtrack *Parade: Music from Under the Cherry Moon*, produced a number of hit singles, including "Kiss" and "Mountains." After reforming the Revolution, Prince released *Sign of the Times* (1987), which included a duet with Sheena Easton, "I Could Never Take the Place of Your Man." Following the album *Lovesexy* (1988), Prince recorded several songs that appeared on the soundtrack for the film *Batman* (1989). This was followed by another film soundtrack, *Graffiti Bridge* (1990).

In September 1992, Prince signed a six-album contract with Warner Brothers. Backed by his new first-rate ensemble, the New Power Generation, Prince embarked on a nationwide tour in April 1993, which proved the most impressive since his commercial breakthrough in the early 1980s. Prince has not only become an owner of his own nightclub, the Grand Slam, he has contributed a set of original music to the Joffre Ballet's production of *Billboards*, which opened in January 1993 to rave reviews.

As a result of a dispute with Warner Brothers Prince denounced his stage name and created a symbol to represent him. He was often referred to as "the artist, formerly known as Prince" which was referenced from 1993 through 2000. He released *Musicology* (2004), which won two Grammys, and

3121 (2006). Prince continues to push convention and produce innovative work.

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