

In 2009 the world mourned the death of Michael Jackson, one of the most successful and influential popular music identities of all time.

While Elvis Presley had been given the title of the “King of Rock”, Michael Jackson became widely known as the “King of Pop”.

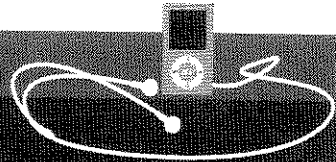
The word ‘pop’ is short for popular. All rock music is essentially popular music, however, the term “pop music” came to refer to a specific type of music which changed in style, but retained its aim. While other genres of rock music began to develop harder, more complicated sounds and started delving into social and political themes, pop music referred to the style that attempted to appeal to the widest audience at any given time.

Pop can be influenced by many different genres of music and therefore the sound of pop music has changed over time, depending on what else is popular. What has remained consistent are the elements that help to make it accessible to a wide audience. These include following trends of the day rather than trying to be progressive, emphasis on producing successful singles rather than longer albums and also a focus on the recording and production of songs rather than live performances. The length of pop songs is another important characteristic. Generally a song length of between 2½ to 3½ minutes provides the ideal length to keep audience attention and yet still develop the themes, which are generally uncomplicated and often associated with love and romantic relationships. The “pop song” also has a fairly standardized form, characterized by a series of verses alternating with a catchy chorus.

Michael Jackson ushered in the golden age of pop music in the 1980s. His album “Thriller” is still the best-selling album of all time. He is also credited with elevating the **music-video** to a genre in its own right; a genre which largely became associated with pop music.

Other pop artists of the 1980’s include Madonna, Bruce Springsteen, and Prince. Madonna has continued to change her style of music in order to remain popular for over twenty years. Since then, well known pop stars have included Mariah Carey, Elton John, Britney Spears and Miley Cyrus.

Fast Facts



Time Span: late 1950s-present day

Influences: Varied

Primary Instruments: electric guitar, bass, drums and vocals

Major Artists: Michael Jackson, Madonna, Britney Spears, Miley Cyrus

Fun Fact



Michael Jackson holds many records. One of these is for the highest-selling single of all time, *We Are the World*. Written with fellow pop-star, Lionel Richie, this song was recorded by 45 of the most famous artists of the 1980s, including Billy Joel, Diana Ross, Cyndi Lauper, Tina Turner and Bruce Springsteen. To remind the artists that they were recording the song to highlight the cause of people starving in Africa, a sign was pinned to the entry of the recording studio which stated “Please check [leave] your egos at the door”. *We Are the World* has raised over 63 million dollars for humanitarian aid.