# The transformative music scene of the 1980s



The 1980s is widely regarded as a transformative decade for music, bringing forth an array of memorable tracks and legendary artists that continue to resonate with audiences today. Numerous trends emerged during this era, alongside the birth of influential music platforms that revolutionised the industry.

One of the seminal works from this period is Michael Jackson’s "Thriller," released in 1982, which remains the best-selling album of all time. It features nine tracks, including the iconic hits "Billie Jean" and "Beat It." Interestingly, "Thriller" was initially set to be titled "Midnight Man." The album also produced a groundbreaking music video that is nearly 14 minutes long and is often seen as a mini-film. Jackson collaborated with significant figures such as Paul McCartney and Eddie Van Halen on this project. After an extensive eight-month production period, "Thriller" won a record-breaking eight Grammy Awards in 1984, solidifying Jackson's reputation as the "King of Pop."

Madonna’s "Like a Virgin," another landmark track of the decade, became her first number-one hit in the US, topping the charts for six weeks following its release. Its controversial debut at the first MTV Video Music Awards in 1984 remains etched in music history. The song, which was not originally composed for her by writers Billy Steinberg and Tom Kelly, sparked discussions about its underlying messages regarding virginity and empowerment. Madonna's influence during the decade was profound, and the album of the same name propelled her into the pop music stratosphere.

MTV, launched on August 1, 1981, heralded a new era of music consumption, starting with "Video Killed the Radio Star" by The Buggles as its inaugural music video. This platform allowed fans to visually engage with their favourite artists, while simultaneously shaping fashion and pop culture trends. The rise of Video Jockeys (VJs) turned them into celebrities, as they showcased emerging talents and introduced diverse music genres to a broader audience.

Prince’s "Purple Rain," released in 1984, was both a top-selling album and the title of an accompanying film that chronicled a musician’s rise to fame. The song has an interesting backstory, having been initially posed to Stevie Nicks for lyrics, which she declined. The project marked a landmark moment in musical history, with Prince becoming the first artist to simultaneously have the number-one movie, album, and single. The success of "Purple Rain" earned him an Oscar for Best Original Song Score.

On July 13, 1985, Live Aid—one of the most significant charity concerts of the decade—took place, simultaneously in London and Philadelphia. Organised by Bob Geldof and Midge Ure to aid famine relief in Ethiopia, the event attracted an audience of 1.9 billion people worldwide, featuring performances from legendary acts such as Queen and U2. Live Aid raised an impressive $127 million and solidified the idea that music could unify people for a common cause.

The 1980s also marked the emergence of hip-hop, a genre that originated in New York City’s Bronx neighbourhood. Initially stemming from local block parties, hip-hop evolved over the decade, gaining mainstream traction, exemplified by the success of groups such as Run-DMC and LL Cool J. By the end of the 1980s, hip-hop had transformed into a cultural phenomenon, influencing fashion, language, and lifestyle.

Cyndi Lauper’s "Girls Just Want to Have Fun," released in 1983, is viewed as a feminist anthem. Originally written by Robert Hazard in a different context, Lauper reimagined it, emphasising themes of empowerment and independence. This single marked the beginning of her successful solo career.

Queen's "Another One Bites the Dust," which became the band’s second number-one hit in the US, illustrates the cross-genre appeal of 80s music, with its disco-influenced bass line, inspired by the band Chic. Its unexpected success redefined the band's potential audience, making it a timeless track.

Finally, the era also witnessed the rise of hair metal, characterised by bands such as Mötley Crüe and Poison, which drew considerable attention thanks to the influence of MTV. With their flamboyant looks and catchy melodies, hair metal bands dominated the airwaves, creating a lifestyle celebrated for its indulgence and rebellion.

This rich musical tapestry of the 1980s continues to impact artists and genres today, remaining a powerful testament to a decade that significantly shaped the landscape of contemporary music. The connection between these artists, their works, and the platforms that presented them encapsulates a spirited era that still resonates with many.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1980s_in_music> - This Wikipedia article provides an overview of the diverse musical genres that emerged in the 1980s, including synth-pop, hair metal, and hip-hop. It supports claims about the decade's influence on contemporary music and the rise of iconic artists like Michael Jackson, Madonna, and Prince.
* <https://www.merchmates.co.uk/blog/music/80s-music/> - This Merch Mates article explores the iconic decade of the 1980s, discussing the rise of synth-pop, new wave, and hair metal. It explains how MTV revolutionized music consumption and emphasizes the influential role of artists like Duran Duran and Depeche Mode.
* <https://mdlbeast.com/xp-feed/music-industry/how-did-80s-music-change-the-world> - This MDLBEAST article delves into how the 1980s music scene was characterized by a diverse range of styles, from pop to rock, and how it continues to inspire contemporary musicians. It highlights the impact of synthesizers and electronic music on the decade's sound.
* <https://www.billboard.com/music/music-news/michael-jackson-thriller-album-1257865/> - This article on Billboard discusses Michael Jackson’s 'Thriller' album, its production, and its groundbreaking music video. It supports claims about the album’s record-breaking achievements and its status as the best-selling album of all time.
* <https://www.mtv.com/video-clips/ige28z/madonna-like-a-virgin-live-mtv-video-music-awards-1984> - This MTV page shows Madonna’s performance of 'Like a Virgin' at the 1984 VMAs, supporting the claim about the song's impact and controversy. It embodies the era's emphasis on music videos and live performances.