

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: THE 1980s: THE DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY, MTV, AND THE POPULAR MAINSTREAM

Chapter Outline

I. The 1980s and the Music Business

A. 1979 saw an 11 percent drop in annual sales nationwide.

B. Profits from the sale of recorded music hit rock bottom in 1982 (\$4.6 billion), down half a billion from the peak year of 1978 (\$5.1 billion).

C. Record companies relied on a small number of multiplatinum artists to create profits in the 1980s.

D. The recovery of the recording industry was due to the success of a few recordings by superstar musicians—Michael Jackson, Madonna, Prince, Bruce Springsteen, Whitney Houston, Phil Collins, Janet Jackson, and others.

E. The crash of the early 1980s

1. Onset of a national recession

2. Competition from new forms of entertainment

3. The decline of disco

4. Illegal copying (“pirating”) of commercial recordings by consumers with cassette tape decks

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- a) In 1984, sales of prerecorded cassettes surpassed those of vinyl discs.

F. New technologies of the 1980s

1. Digital sound recording and five-inch compact discs (CDs)
2. The first CDs went on sale in 1983, and by 1988, sales of CDs surpassed those of vinyl discs.
3. New devices for producing and manipulating sound:
 - a) Drum machines
 - b) Sequencers
 - c) Samplers
 - d) MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface)

G. Music Television (MTV)

1. Began broadcasting in 1981
2. Changed the way the music industry operated, rapidly becoming the preferred method for launching a new act or promoting a superstar's latest release.
3. The first song broadcast on MTV was "Video Killed the Radio Star."

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4. MTV—and its spin-off VH-1, aimed at an older, twenty-five- to thirty-five-year-old audience—worked synergistically with radio and other media to boost record sales and create a new generation of rock superstars.
5. It also strongly influenced the direction of popular music in the early 1980s, sparking what has been called a second British Invasion.
 - a) Promoted English artists such as Eurythmics, Flock of Seagulls, Adam Ant, Billy Idol, and Thomas Dolby
 - b) In July 1983, eighteen of the singles in *Billboard's* Top 40 chart were by English artists, topping the previous record of fourteen, set in 1965 during the first British Invasion.
6. By the mid-1980s, the impact of MTV had been felt throughout the music industry.
7. MTV's focus on white rock artists reminded many critics of the exclusionary practices of album-oriented rock radio in the 1970s.
 - a) Out of more than 750 videos shown on MTV during the channel's first eighteen months, only about twenty featured black musicians (a figure that includes racially mixed bands).
 - b) At a time when black artists such as Michael Jackson and Rick James were making multiplatinum LPs, they could not break into MTV, which put Phil Collins's cover version of the Supremes'

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“You Can’t Hurry Love” into heavy rotation but played no videos by Motown artists themselves.

c) Executives at MTV responded to widespread criticism of their policy with the argument that their format focused on rock, a style played by few black artists.

8. The mammoth success of Michael Jackson’s *Thriller*, released by Columbia Records in 1982, forced a change in MTV’s essentially all-white rock music format.

a) The videos made to promote the *Thriller* LP through three of its hit singles—“Billie Jean,” “Beat It,” and “Thriller”—set new standards for production quality, creativity, and cost.

b) These videos established the medium as the primary means of promoting popular music.

II. Digital Technology and Popular Music

A. During the 1980s, new technology became central to the production, promotion, and consumption of popular music.

1. Analog recording
2. Digital recording
3. Digital-to-analog converter (DAC)

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4. Synthesizers—devices that enable musicians to create or “synthesize” musical sounds

- a) In the early 1970s, the first synthesizers aimed at a mass consumer market were introduced.
- b) The Synclavier, a high-end (and expensive) digital synthesizer, was introduced to the market in 1976.
- c) The more affordable Prophet-5, introduced in 1978, was an analog synthesizer that incorporated aspects of digital technology, including the ability to store a limited number of sampled sounds.
- d) The first completely digital synthesizers were introduced in the 1980s.
- e) The widely popular digital synthesizer, the Yamaha DX-7, was capable of playing dozens of “voices” at the same time.

5. The Hammond organ, introduced in 1935 by the inventor Laurens Hammond

- a) The sound of the Hammond B-3 organ was common on jazz, R&B, and rock records (e.g., Santana’s “Oye Como Va”)
- b) Its rich, fat sound is frequently sampled in contemporary popular music.

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6. MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface)

- a) Introduced in 1983
- b) Enabled synthesizers built by different manufacturers to be connected with and communicate with one another
- c) Introduced compatibility into a highly competitive marketplace

7. Digital samplers

- a) The Mirage keyboard sampler, introduced by Ensoniq in 1984
- b) Capable of storing both prerecorded and synthesized sounds

8. Digital sequencers

- a) Devices that record musical data rather than musical sound and enable
 - (1) the creation of repeated sound sequences (loops),
 - (2) the manipulation of rhythmic grooves, and
 - (3) the transmission of recorded data from one program or device to another

9. Drum machines

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- a) Roland TR 808 and the Linn LM-1
- b) Present on 1980s dance music and rap recordings
- c) Performers strike and activate “drum pads,” triggering the production of sampled sounds:

(1) Conventional percussion instruments

(2) Glass smashing, cars screeching, guns firing

III. A 1980s CD Changer

A. “Lady,” performed by Kenny Rogers; written by Lionel Richie (1980)

1. Texas-born Kenny Rogers (b. 1938)

- a) Veteran of folk pop groups such as the New Christy Minstrels and the First Edition
- b) Star of made-for-TV movies such as *The Gambler* and *Coward of the County*
- c) Winner of the Country Music Association award for Male Vocalist of the Year award (1979)
- d) From 1977 to 1984, he sold an estimated \$250 million worth of records, including a total of six gold and twelve platinum albums.

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2. “Lady” appeared on *Kenny Rogers’s Greatest Hits*.
 - a) The tenth bestselling single of the entire decade
 - b) The bestselling country album of the 1980s
 - c) It was one of very few singles during the decade to appear on all of the major *Billboard* charts, topping the pop (Hot 100), adult contemporary, and country charts, and reaching Number Forty-two on the R&B chart.
3. Written and produced by Lionel Richie
 - a) African American singer and songwriter
 - b) Superstar of the 1980s
 - c) Former member of a vocal R&B group called the Commodores
4. Listening: “Lady”
 - a) Sentimental song that has much in common with popular songs of the nineteenth century
 - b) Verse-chorus structure
 - c) Uses the image of a knight in shining armor to profess the singer’s deep and undying love

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- d) The production of the song is simple, foregrounding Rogers's sincere delivery of the lyrics.
 - e) The texture of the musical accompaniment is delicate, opening with a solo acoustic piano, and only gradually introducing additional layers of orchestration.
 - f) As the chorus arrives, the whole rhythm section joins in, supporting the emotional climax of the song.
5. "Lady" seems to be a throwback to the pre-rock era:
- a) Soft and sentimental
 - b) The arrangement is calculated to create an air of intimacy and to offend as few people as possible.

B. "Sweet Dreams (Are Made of This)," written and performed by Eurythmics (1983)

- 1. Eurythmics consisted of a core of only two musicians:
 - a) Singer Annie Lennox (b. 1954 in Scotland)
 - b) Keyboardist and technical whiz Dave Stewart (b. 1952 in England)
- 2. "Sweet Dreams (Are Made of This)"

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- a) Its popularity in the United States was boosted by a music video shown on MTV, featuring an androgynous image of Annie Lennox in a business suit and close-cropped orange hair.
 - b) Good example of the commercial new wave music of the early 1980s, an outgrowth of the 1970s new wave/punk scene promoted by major record labels
 - c) “Synth-pop,” the first type of popular music explicitly defined by its use of electronic sound synthesis
3. Listening: “Sweet Dreams (Are Made of This)”
- a) Built around a hypnotic digital loop, a repeated pattern established abruptly at the beginning of the record
 - b) Annie Lennox’s singing alternates between an R&B- and soul-influenced melismatic style and the flatter, more deadpan tone that she adopts on the verses.
 - c) The verses consist of two four-line blocks of text, sung by Lennox in overdubbed harmonies.
 - d) The singer seems to be expressing an unsettling combination of cynicism, sensuality, and hope for the future.

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e) Some lines of the text (*some of them want . . .*) hint darkly at sadomasochistic relationships; the singer's sophistication has perhaps been won at some emotional cost.

f) In the call-and-response chorus—which uses multitracking technology to alternate Lennox as lead singer with Lennox as choir—the mood changes, and we are exhorted to “hold your head up,” while the multitracked voices urge us to keep “movin’ on.”

4. Although “Sweet Dreams” is sometimes regarded to as an example of the emerging technological sophistication of the early 1980s, the equipment used to record it was rudimentary:

- a) An eight-track tape recorder
- b) A cheap mixer
- c) Two microphones
- d) An early version of a digital drum machine

C. “What’s Love Got to Do with It,” performed by Tina Turner; written by Terry Britten and Graham Lyle (1984)

1. Tina Turner (Annie Mae Bullock, b. 1939 in Tennessee)

- a) She made her recording debut in 1960 as a member of the Ike and Tina Turner Revue.

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- b) Her husband, Ike Turner, had begun his recording career much earlier, as a performer on Jackie Brenston's "Rocket 88" (1951), sometimes credited as the first rock 'n' roll record.
- c) Ike and Tina scored big crossover hits during the 1960s.
- d) She eventually left her husband in 1976 to start her own career.
- e) In 1983, she was offered a contract by Capitol Records.
- f) Her first album with Capitol was *Private Dancer* (1984).

(1) Reached Number Three on the album charts

(2) Stayed in the Top 40 for seventy-one weeks

(3) Spawned five hit singles

(4) Eventually sold over eleven million copies

2. "What's Love Got to Do with It"

- a) Crossover hit (Number One pop and Number Two R&B in 1984)
- b) Stayed on the charts for twenty-eight weeks
- c) Earned Grammy awards in 1984 for Best Female Pop Vocalist, Song of the Year, and Record of the Year

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3. Listening: “What’s Love Got to Do with It”

a) The lyrics set up an ambivalent relationship between the sexual attraction described in the verses and the singer’s cynicism about romantic love in the chorus: a “secondhand emotion.”

b) The tempo remains fairly constant (a relaxed pace of 98 beats per minute).

c) The instrumental arrangement alternates between the rich, continuous texture (dominated by flute- and string-like synthesizer sounds) in the verses, and a more bouncy, reggae-like groove established by the electric bass and guitars in the chorus.

d) The arrangement is carefully constructed:

(1) Eight-bar instrumental introduction

(2) Unusual thirteen-bar verse (*You must understand . . .*); seven- and six-bar sections (A)

(3) Eight-bar chorus (B)

(4) Another verse (A; *It may seem . . .*), followed by another chorus (B)

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(5) The midpoint of the arrangement is a synthesizer solo of seven and a half bars, using the harmonies of the chorus (B¹).

(6) Followed by an eight-bar section (C) with new harmonies, where the singer reveals her fear of heartbreak more explicitly (*I've been taking . . .*)

(7) Concludes with three repetitions of the chorus (minus one bar, thanks to the early entrance of the chorus each time through), fading away at the very end

4. The character in this song—an experienced, cynical, yet still vulnerable woman—was Turner herself, a case where the boundary between the public and private lives of a recording artist seems to have dissolved almost entirely.

D. “Jump,” performed by Van Halen; written by Eddie Van Halen, Alex Van Halen, Michael Anthony, and David Lee Roth (1984)

1. Heavy metal music

a) Pioneered in the late 1960s and early 1970s by bands such as Led Zeppelin and Deep Purple

b) Went into a period of relative decline during the late 1970s

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- c) Came back with a vengeance during the 1980s
 - d) A slew of metal albums topped the singles and album charts, ranging from the pop metal sounds of bands like Van Halen, Bon Jovi, Mötley Crüe, and Def Leppard to the harder sound of speed metal bands such as Metallica, Slayer, Anthrax, and Megadeth.
2. “Jump” was in some ways a remarkable departure from standard heavy metal practice.
- a) Its main instrumental melody was played on a synthesizer rather than an electric guitar—an important symbolic and aesthetic issue for hardcore metal fans.
 - b) To hardcore metal fans, the keyboard synthesizer (like disco music) is viewed as a somewhat questionable, perhaps even effeminate instrument.
3. The success of the single was boosted by its corresponding music video.
- a) Shot in home-movie style
 - b) Featured the athletic prowess and oddball sense of humor of David Lee Roth, Van Halen’s lead singer at the time
4. Listening: “Jump”

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- a) The text, a casual come-on to a girl from a guy leaning against a jukebox—seems to be almost an afterthought.
 - b) The significance of the recording lies in the musical textures created by the band and the studio engineer, and in the sensibility that they evoke.
 - c) “Jump” opens with a synthesized power chord; the sheer sound of the music is more important than the specific instruments used to produce it.
 - d) Thick textures and a strong pulse played on keyboards, bass, and drums propel us through the first two verses of the song.
 - e) The guitar solo is followed by a longer synthesizer solo, which develops an elaborate melodic improvisation that closely parallels the style of Van Halen’s guitar playing.
5. Eddie Van Halen, widely recognized as a primary innovator in electric guitar performance, is famous for developing widely used techniques (“pull-offs” and “tapping”) and for performing various operations on his guitars and amplifiers to modify their sound.
- E. “Sledgehammer,” written and performed by Peter Gabriel (1986)
- 1. Peter Gabriel (b. 1950 in England)

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- a) First achieved celebrity as a member of the art rock group Genesis
 - b) After leaving Genesis in 1976, released four solo albums, all titled *Peter Gabriel*
2. His next album was *So*, an interesting and accessible amalgam of various musical styles:
- a) Demonstrated Gabriel's knowledge of new digital technologies, his budding interest in world music, and his indebtedness to black music—particularly R&B and soul music of the 1960s
 - b) Peaked at Number Two on the LPs chart, sold four million copies, and produced Gabriel's bestselling single "Sledgehammer" (Number One pop, Number Sixty-one R&B in 1986)
3. "Sledgehammer"
- a) Features a horn section led by the trumpet player Wayne Jackson, who had played on many of the biggest soul music hits of the 1960s
 - b) The lyrics are packed with double-entendre references to sledgehammers, big dippers, steam trains, the female "fruitcake," and the male "honeybee"; they are essentially G-rated variants of

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the sexual metaphors that have long been a part of the blues tradition.

4. Listening: “Sledgehammer”

- a) Constructed with twelve-bar and eight-bar sections
- b) Opens with a digital keyboard sample of a Japanese flute called the shakuhachi
- c) The funk-influenced groove is introduced by the horn section, backed by synthesizers.
- d) After eight bars, the horns drop out and the rhythm takes four measures to establish the groove.
- e) Following the introduction, Peter Gabriel sings two verses (beginning with the lines *You could have a steam train* and *You could have a big dipper*), each twelve bars in length.
- f) Gabriel evokes the blues form but does not strictly observe the a-a-b lyric form of the classic blues.
- g) He does not use traditional blues harmonies:

(1) Stays on the tonic chord for a full eight measures

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(2) Moves to a related chord (the relative minor) for two bars

(3) Returns to the tonic for the last two bars

h) After two twelve-bar verses, there is an eight-bar chorus (*I want to be your sledgehammer*).

i) The harmony shifts from the major key of the verse (A) to a minor key based on the same tonic note (B).

j) The arrangement continues with a four-bar instrumental section taking us back to the major-key harmonies of the verse.

k) Another verse (*Show me round your fruitcakes*), shortened to eight instead of twelve bars; and two presentations of the chorus (*I want to be your sledgehammer*)

l) The last section

(1) Relies on a minor-key harmonic pattern

(2) Begins with a keyboard synthesizer solo, followed by a series of eight-bar sections (*I will show for you*)

(3) Gabriel's vocal phrases alternate with a choir of gospel-style singers and peak with Gabriel improvising

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solo phrases against the responses of the choir (*Show for me, Show for you*).

5. The success of the song was due in large part to the ambitious and highly creative music video and its heavy rotation on MTV.
 - a) The award-winning music video for “Sledgehammer” was an eye-catching, witty, innovative work that pushed the frontiers of the medium.
 - b) The video opens with enlarged microscopic images of human sperm cells impregnating an egg, which develops into a fetus, accompanied by the exotic sound of the synthesized flute.
 - c) The stop-motion technique creates a jerky effect that establishes a kind of parallel reality, carefully coordinated to match the rhythms of the music.
 - d) The lyrics of the song are also reflected in the video images.

IV. A Tale of Three Albums: *Thriller*, *Born in the U.S.A.*, and *Graceland*

A. *Thriller* (1982), Michael Jackson (b. 1958); produced by Quincy Jones

1. Demonstrated a kind of across-the-board appeal that established new and still unduplicated heights of commercial success

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- a) The top-selling album in history, with worldwide sales in excess of forty million copies
- The Number One album for thirty-seven weeks during 1983
 - b) The zenith of Michael Jackson's career, which had been gathering momentum throughout the 1970s even while he was a member of the Jackson Five
2. Represented an effort to find ways to mediate among the various genres of early 1980s pop music
 - a) To create points of effective synthesis from the jumble of apparently competing styles
 - b) To bridge the divides—actual or potential—separating different segments of the pop music audience
3. Jackson confronted the racial divide by collaborating with two very popular, and very different, white artists:
 - a) Ex-Beatle Paul McCartney on “The Girl is Mine”
 - b) Guitarist Eddie Van Halen, of the heavy metal group Van Halen, on “Beat It”
 - c) These songs were fashioned to attract different segments of the white audience.

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d) “The Girl Is Mine” was essentially a soft rock hit:

(1) The single was Number One on *Billboard*'s adult contemporary chart for four weeks and had enough crossover appeal to top the R&B chart for three weeks.

e) “Beat It,” with its guitar solo by Eddie Van Halen, was an obvious gesture to fans of heavy metal music.

4. Much of *Thriller* consists of up-tempo, synthesizer- and bass-driven, danceable music that occupies a middle ground between the heavy funk of an artist like George Clinton and the brighter but still beat-obsessed sound that characterized many new wave bands.

5. The album's highly original title song, “Thriller,” is a good example of the album's successful synthesis of diverse stylistic elements.

a) Starts out depicting a horror-movie scene, which eventually turns out to be on the television screen being watched by two lovers

b) In a conclusion that pairs an old white voice with a new black style, horror-movie star Vincent Price comes from out of nowhere to perform a “rap” about the terrors of the night.

(1) This “rap” describes some typical horror-film situations, but its language is occasionally spiced up

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with current pop-oriented slang—“the funk of forty thousand years.”

6. *Thriller* is not a concept album.

- Out of the nine songs on *Thriller*, seven were released as singles, one by one, starting with “The Girl Is Mine.”

- a) All seven were Top 10 hits. Both “Billie Jean” and “Beat It” were Number One pop hits; these two and “Thriller” sold over two million copies each as singles, while “The Girl Is Mine” was a million-selling single.

- b) The only songs from *Thriller* that were not turned into hit singles are “Baby Be Mine” and “The Lady in My Life.”

7. Visual media both old and new played a significant role in the *Thriller* saga.

- a) In May 1983, Jackson appeared on the television special *25 Years of Motown* and introduced his “moonwalk” dance while performing “Billie Jean” from *Thriller*.

- b) The videos for *Thriller* songs that Jackson had made were being shown regularly on MTV.

8. Michael Jackson’s music videos

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- a) were carefully, creatively, and elaborately produced;
- b) brought his work to the attention of another segment of the music public;
- c) helped boost the power and prestige of MTV; and
- d) were the first by an African American artist to be programmed with any degree of frequency on MTV.

B. *Born in the U.S.A.* (1984), Bruce Springsteen

- 1. Throughout the 1970s, Bruce Springsteen (b. 1949) forged a progressively more successful career in pop music.
 - a) His music and his personal image portrayed
 - (1) the rebellious rock 'n' rollers of the 1950s and
 - (2) the socially conscious folk rockers of the 1960s.
- 2. Springsteen's songs
 - a) Reflected his working-class origins and sympathies
 - b) Related stories of still young but aging men and women:
 - (1) With dead-end jobs (or no jobs at all)

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(2) Looking for romance and excitement

(3) Seeking meaningful outlets for their energies and hopes, with no part of the American dream left for them

c) Some of the song titles from his first few albums are indicative: “Born to Run,” “Darkness on the Edge of Town,” “Hungry Heart,” “Racing in the Street,” “Wreck on the Highway.”

3. Springsteen and his E Street Band

a) Characterized by a strong, roots rock sound

b) Emphasized Springsteen’s connections to 1950s and 1960s music

c) Included a saxophone to mark the link with the R&B and rock ‘n’ roll of earlier eras

d) Utilized twelve-bar blues forms, an obvious homage to the roots of rock

e) Focused on the traditional rock ensemble of guitars, bass, and drums, with keyboard instruments occasionally used prominently.

4. *Nebraska* (1982), the album immediately preceding *Born in the U.S.A.*, represented a departure for Springsteen and featured him in a solo, “unplugged” setting.

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5. *Born in the U.S.A.* (1984)

- a) Many fans may have celebrated *Born in the U.S.A.*, which brought back the E Street Band, as a kind of “return to form” for Springsteen.
- b) The album is dominated by up-tempo, rocking songs, with Springsteen shouting away and the band playing full tilt behind him.
- c) The lyrics of the songs from *Born in the U.S.A.* can be seen as a dire commentary by Springsteen on the current state of the union.
- d) The very first lyrics of the title song, which opens the album, set the tone decisively:

*Born down in a dead man's town,
The first kick I took was when I hit the ground.
You end up like a dog that's been beat too much
Till you spend half your life just covering up.*

- e) “Born in the U.S.A.” tells the story of a returning Vietnam veteran unable to get a job or to rebuild his life, and its despairing message is characteristic of most of the songs on the album.
6. In the wake of this album’s rapid and enormous popularity, its pessimism was lost on many fans:

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- a) Perhaps many people weren't listening to the words.
 - b) At shows performed in huge, sold-out stadiums, most people probably couldn't even hear the words.
 - c) Perhaps there was a fundamental dichotomy between Springsteen's message and the energetic, crowd-pleasing music.
7. In a general way, *Born in the U.S.A.* is a concept album, a series of musical snapshots of working-class Americans:
- a) All of whom seem to be around Springsteen's age, the same age as his protagonist in the song "My Hometown"
 - b) Many of whom are having economic or personal difficulties
 - c) All of whom sense the better times of their lives slipping into the past
8. In the album's original LP form, each side starts out with a strong, aggressive song and winds down to a final cut that is softer in sound but darker in mood.
- a) The first side ends with the low-key but eerie "I'm on Fire," whose protagonist seems about to explode from the weight and pain of his own "bad desire."

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- b) The spooky urgency of this song appears to speak to the cumulative hard luck and frustration of all the different characters described in the songs on Side One.
 - c) Side Two starts off with an extroverted rebound in musical energy and a cry of “No Surrender.”
 - d) Disillusionment and resignation come to characterize the songs on this side as well, until the “fire” image reappears strikingly in the penultimate song, “Dancing in the Dark.”
 - e) The side ends with “My Hometown.”
- Springsteen sings of the decay of his place of birth and of possibly “getting out” with his wife and child.

(1) He comes as close as any pop artist ever has to embracing and conveying an authentically tragic vision.

(2) “My Hometown” was a major hit as a single in early 1986 (Number Six on the pop chart and Number One on the adult contemporary chart).

(3) It was the last of seven consecutive singles to be culled from the album, all of which were Top 10 pop hits.

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9. *Born in the U.S.A.* followed in the footsteps of *Thriller* as an album that spawned a parade of hit singles.

10. The album itself sold over fifteen million copies and stayed on the charts for over two years.

11. The popularity of *Born in the U.S.A.* was enhanced by a series of popular music videos for several of the songs released as singles.

C. *Graceland* (1986), Paul Simon

1. *Graceland* is a truly “global” album from a geographical point of view.

a) Recorded in five locations on three continents:

(1) Johannesburg, South Africa

(2) London, England

(3) New York City

(4) Los Angeles

(5) Crowley, Louisiana

b) Many elements of the selections were recorded at different times in different places, but others were the result of sessions

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where all the participants were present in the same place at the same time.

2. Paul Simon (b. 1941) was interested in music that was not indigenous to the United States long before he recorded *Graceland*.

a) Recorded “El Condor Pasa” with Art Garfunkel

(1) Paired Simon’s own lyrics with a backing instrumental track based on an old Peruvian folk melody

(2) Performed in “native” style by a group called Los Incas

(3) Appeared on the 1970 Simon and Garfunkel album *Bridge over Troubled Water*

(4) Released as a single that year

3. A considerable portion of the music for *Graceland* was actually recorded in South Africa, resulting in some awkward political issues for Simon.

a) Simon broke a United Nations boycott on performing and recording in South Africa, but he claimed that he was in no sense supporting the ideology of the South African government.

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b) The success of *Graceland* helped bring black South African musicians and styles to a much wider and racially more diverse audience than they had ever been able to reach.

4. What distinguishes *Graceland* from earlier forays into world music is the extent to which the album explores the concept of collaboration.

a) The idea of collaboration provided a conceptual basis for *Graceland*.

b) Simon's album is quite different from the usual concept album.

(1) No story line that connects the songs

(2) No central subject that links all the songs together

c) Simon took various approaches to the concept of collaboration.

(1) "Homeless," in which both the words (in Zulu and English) and the music were co-written by Simon and Joseph Shabalala of Ladysmith Black Mambazo

(2) "I Know What I Know," in which Simon added his own lyrics and vocal melody to preexisting music (originally not written for Simon) by General M. D. Shirinda and the Gaza Sisters

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5. In the case of “Homeless,” the song makes a unified and gently poignant impression; the images of poor people could refer to South Africa or to America, or to both, and the slow-moving, harmonious vocal music encourages us to take their plight seriously.

6. In “I Know What I Know,” on the other hand, Simon deliberately makes no attempt to match the tone of his lyrics to the culture or to the implied locale of the original South African music.

a) Instead, the lyrics seem to portray an encounter between two worldly wise and cynical people at an upper-crust cocktail party (or some such gathering), and their mood and subject both stand in remarkable, ironic contrast to the jubilant, uninhibited sound of the danceable South African instrumental music and to the Gaza Sisters’ voices.

b) The result is a virtual embodiment, in words and sounds, of a profound clash of cultures—as if some characters typical of Simon’s earlier, sophisticated urban songs of late-twentieth-century anxiety (such as those found on *Still Crazy after All These Years*, from 1975) were suddenly dropped into the middle of a busy South African village on a day of celebration.

7. That the uneasy mismatch of music and lyrics in “I Know What I Know” is neither accidental nor careless on Simon’s part is signaled by the

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presence on the album of songs that, occupying a middle ground between “Homeless” and “I Know What I Know,” make cultural diversity an aspect of their stated subject matter and of their music.

8. “You Can Call Me Al”

a) The third verse of “You Can Call Me Al” describes a man who is uncomfortable in a foreign culture:

*A man walks down the street
It's a street in a strange world
Maybe it's the Third World
Maybe it's his first time around
He doesn't speak the language
He holds no currency
He is a foreign man
He is surrounded by the sound
The sound*

b) The “sound” here is being produced by a group of black South African musicians playing with Simon and American session musicians in New York City.

c) The multicultural group is joined on this cut by Morris Goldberg, a white South African emigrant based in New York, who contributes a striking pennywhistle solo.

9. Members of this same diverse ensemble also play on “Under African Skies,” the verses of which shift location from Africa to Tucson, Arizona,

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and back again. Here, Simon is joined in vocal duet by Linda Ronstadt—
from Tucson, Arizona.

10. In both the music and the words of *Graceland*, the meanings and implications can be allusive and elusive, often seeming to change color or to shift in midphrase.

11. The lilt of Simon's melodies and the dynamic rhythms provided by his diverse collaborators keep the album from ever sounding "difficult" or arcane.

12. It is to Simon's credit that he never attempts to sound like anybody but himself, nor does he require his fellow musicians to adapt their style perforce to his; the songs on *Graceland* are true collaborations.

13. In the largest sense, one might say that *Graceland* is "about" the joys, complexities, and perplexities of living in an increasingly diverse, multicultural world.

14. The last two cuts on *Graceland* demonstrate the cultural diversity found without venturing to other countries or continents:

a) "That Was Your Mother"

(1) Simon is joined by the Zydeco band Good Rockin'
Dopsie and the Twisters, from Louisiana

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b) “All Around the World, or The Myth of Fingerprints”

(1) Simon played with Los Lobos, the well-known Mexican American band from Los Angeles.

c) The prominent employment of accordion and saxophone creates aural links with the sounds of South African ensembles on other songs from *Graceland*.

15. *Graceland*

a) Sold over five million copies but never hit Number One on the album chart

b) Did not prove to be a major source of hit singles

c) Grammy Award winner for Album of the Year in 1986

(1) Revived Simon’s career

(2) Garnered attention for many of the musicians who played on the album

d) A concert videotaped in Africa with African musicians was very popular.

e) It is the album responsible, more than any other, for introducing a wide audience to the idea of world music.

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V. “Baby I’m A Star”: Prince, Madonna, and the Production of Celebrity

A. By the 1980s, the “star-making machinery behind the popular song” had grown to unprecedented proportions.

1. The profitability of the music industry depended on the sales generated by a limited number of multiplatinum recordings.
2. The coordination of publicity surrounding the release of such recordings was crucial.
3. The release of a potential hit album—and potential hit singles—was cross-promoted in music videos, television talk show appearances, Hollywood films, and newspaper, magazine, and radio interviews.
4. The 1980s saw the rise of a new breed of music superstar, adept at manipulating the mass media and stimulating public fascination with their personal characteristics as well as with their music.

B. Madonna

1. From the late 1980s through the 1990s, Madonna’s popularity was second only to that of Michael Jackson.
2. Between 1984 and 1994, Madonna scored twenty-eight Top 10 singles, eleven of which reached the top spot on the charts.

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3. Madonna Louise Veronica Ciccone was born into an Italian American family in Rochester, Michigan, a suburb of Detroit.

4. She moved to New York City in 1977, worked as a photographic model, studied dance, and became a presence at Manhattan discotheques such as Danceteria, where DJ Mark Kamins played her demo tapes.

a) Kamins introduced Madonna to executives at Sire Records, the label of the Ramones and the Talking Heads.

b) In 1982, Kamins produced her first dance club hit, “Everybody.”

5. In 1983, Madonna’s breakthrough single “Holiday” (Number Sixteen pop, Number Twenty-five R&B) established certain elements of a distinctive studio sound, rooted in the synth-pop dance music of the early 1980s.

6. Madonna enlisted the services of manager Freddie DeMann, who had guided Michael Jackson’s career in the years leading up to the megasuccess of 1982’s *Thriller*.

a) DeMann oversaw the production of Madonna’s first two music videos, “Borderline” and “Lucky Star.”

b) The choice of Freddie DeMann also points toward an important aspect of Madonna’s modus operandi—the ability to enlist a

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collaborative network of talented professionals, including producers, recording engineers, designers, and videographers.

7. In 1984, her second album, *Like a Virgin*, shot to the top of the album charts.

a) Produced by Nile Rodgers, who was involved with the writing and production of a number of disco-era hits, including Chic's "Good Times"

b) Eventually sold more than ten million copies

c) Spawned a series of hit singles:

(1) "Like a Virgin" (Number One for six weeks in 1984 and early 1985)

(2) "Material Girl" (Number Two in 1985)

(3) "Angel," and "Dress You Up" (both Number Five in 1985)

d) *Like a Virgin* was promoted on MTV with a series of videos and formed the basis for an elaborately staged concert tour (the "Virgin Tour"), all carefully coordinated as part of a campaign to establish Madonna as a national celebrity.

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8. In 1985, Madonna also played a leading role in the film *Desperately Seeking Susan*, receiving generally positive reviews.

9. Madonna began early on in her career to exert an unusual degree of control over both her music and the creation and promulgation of her media image.
 - a) Wrote or co-wrote many of the songs on her early albums

 - b) Played an active role in the production process

10. During the second half of the 1980s, Madonna began to write and record songs with deeper—and more controversial—lyric content.
 - a) “Papa Don’t Preach” (1986), in which a pregnant young woman declares her determination to keep her baby and urges her father to lend his moral support

 - b) “Open Your Heart” (1986), for which the video portrays Madonna on display at a sleazy peepshow attended by dozens of men

 - c) “Express Yourself” (1989), in the video for which she appears alternatively as a cross-dressing figure, dominating a tableau of male industrial workers, and as a submissive female stereotype, crawling under a table with a collar around her neck

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d) “Like a Prayer” (1989), for which the video included images of group and interracial sex, burning crosses, and an eroticized black Jesus

11. The controversy-and-commercialism ante was upped even further in 1992:

a) The publication of *Sex*, a 128-page coffee table book featuring photographs of Madonna and other celebrities nude and in S&M outfits

b) The synchronized release of the album *Erotica*, which peaked at Number Two on the *Billboard* album chart and produced five major hit singles

C. Listening: “Like a Virgin”

1. Written by Billy Steinberg and Tom Kelly; performed by Madonna; recorded in 1984

2. Number One pop and Number Nine R&B in 1984

3. Not a song about a virgin in any narrowly technical sense; rather, it is about the feeling that someone who has grown pessimistic about love gets from a new relationship

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4. The form of “Like a Virgin” is straightforward:
 - a) After a four-bar instrumental introduction that establishes the dance groove, there is an eight-bar verse, which we call A¹ (*I made it through the wilderness . . .*)
 - b) A ten-bar version of the verse with somewhat different harmonies, which we call A² (*I was beat, incomplete . . .*)
 - c) A chorus featuring the hook of the song, which we call B (*Like a virgin . . .*)
 - d) The only additional structural element is an eight-bar interlude near the middle of the arrangement.
 - e) Outline of the form:
 - (1) A¹A²B
 - (2) A¹A²B
 - (3) Eight-bar interlude
 - (4) A²BBB (etc., with a gradual fade out)
5. The timbre, texture, and rhythmic momentum of “Like a Virgin” are more important to the listener’s experience than the song’s structure.

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6. The studio mix—overseen by Madonna’s longtime collaborator Shep Pettibone—is clean, with clear stereo separation, heavy reliance on synthesized sound textures, and the singer’s voice strongly foregrounded over the instruments.
7. Synthesizers are indispensable to the overall effect of this recording.
8. Her vocal style in “Like a Virgin” reflects her ironic manipulation of long-standing stereotypes about females:
 - a) Soft, intimate breathiness associated with Hollywood sex symbols like Marilyn Monroe
 - b) Throaty, tougher sound of 1960s singers like Ronnie Spector, the lead singer on the Ronettes’ “Be My Baby”

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D. Prince

1. Over the course of his career, Prince has sold almost forty million recordings, making him one of the most popular music superstars of the last two decades of the twentieth century.

a) Between 1982 and 1992, Prince (a.k.a. the Artist) placed nine albums in the Top 10, reaching the top of the charts with three of them (*Purple Rain* in 1984, *Around the World in a Day* in 1985, and *Batman* in 1989).

b) During the same decade, he placed twenty-six singles in the Top 40 and produced five Number One hits.

c) Prince is one of the most talented musicians ever to achieve mass commercial success in the field of popular music.

2. Prince Rogers Nelson was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

a) His parents, who migrated from Louisiana to the North, identified themselves as African Americans while acknowledging a mixed-race heritage including Italian and Native American ancestry.

b) Growing up in a middle-class Minneapolis neighborhood exposed him to a wide range of music.

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- c) His early influences included everything from James Brown and Santana to Joni Mitchell.
 - d) When he was seven, his parents separated.
 - e) The instability of that period in his life, and the ambivalence of his relationships with his estranged parents, have formed the source material for some of his best-known songs.
3. Prince's productivity is remarkable.
- a) Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, when most superstars released an album every two or three years, Prince's output averaged over an album per year.
 - b) During the 1980s, he composed, performed, and recorded more than seventy-five songs each year.
4. In stylistic terms, Prince's recorded output has encompassed a wide range of musical inspirations:
- a) Funk
 - b) Guitar-based rock 'n' roll
 - c) Urban folk music
 - d) New wave

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- e) Psychedelic rock
5. Prince has, from the beginning, sought to exert tight control over his music and his business.
6. *Purple Rain* (1984)
- a) Perhaps the best example of Prince's skill at manipulating the boundary between the public and the private are the film and soundtrack album *Purple Rain* (1984).
 - b) Established him as a pop superstar
 - c) *Purple Rain* was the bestselling album of 1984, bumping Bruce Springsteen's *Born in the U.S.A.* out of the top position on *Billboard's* pop album chart.
 - (1) Number One for twenty-four weeks
 - (2) Produced five hit singles, including "When Doves Cry," "Let's Go Crazy," and "Purple Rain"
 - d) Since 1984, the album has sold more than thirteen million copies, making it one of the ten bestselling albums of all time.
 - e) The film did reasonably well at the box office, although it did not succeed in establishing Prince as a matinee idol.

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(1) Reviews varied widely.

f) The film and the album were cross-promoted by Warner Entertainment.

(1) The single of “When Doves Cry” was released a few weeks before *Purple Rain* appeared in theaters and helped boost the film’s popularity, which in turn helped several other songs on the soundtrack reach the Top 40.

7. The plot and characters of *Purple Rain* draw heavily on the details of Prince’s life, both personal and professional.

a) It is not easy to draw boundaries between the fictional character (the Kid), the celebrity persona (Prince), and the private individual (Prince Rogers Nelson).

b) The character of the Kid seems consonant with the accounts offered by Prince’s family and professional associates.

c) For Prince’s fans, the film provided an attractive and tantalizing opportunity to catch a glimpse of his private life.

d) *Purple Rain* is a film with genuinely confessional aspects but is also a product of the increasingly sophisticated marketing strategies applied by entertainment corporations during the 1980s.

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E. Listening: “When Doves Cry”

1. An unusual pop recording in a number of regards
 - a) The album track runs almost six minutes—much longer than the typical Top 40 hit of the 1980s.
 - b) Prince wrote the song, produced the recording, sang all the vocal parts, and played all the instruments.
 - c) The lyrics of “When Doves Cry” do not conform to the usual formulas of romantic pop songs.
 - d) Crosses the boundaries of established pop genres, fusing a funk rhythm with the lead guitar sound of heavy metal, the digitally synthesized and sampled textures of postdisco dance music, and the aesthetic focus and control of progressive rock and the singer-songwriter tradition
 - e) The instrumentation lacks a bass part.
 - f) Prince’s composition avoids the tendency to establish a clear distinction between a verse and a chorus.

(1) The song does use the verse-and-chorus form, but the melody and supporting harmonies are almost

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identical in the two sections, making the distinction between them much less fixed.

g) The musical intensity of “When Doves Cry” rises and falls continuously, creating a complex succession of peaks and valleys.

h) The studio mix is unusual, relatively spare and dry.

(1) Unlike the lush, reverb-laden studio sound of most 1980s dance music recordings

(2) Prince does use studio effects, such as echo and digital processing, but they are tightly controlled and focused.

2. The arrangement of “When Doves Cry” can be divided into two major sections:

a) Section One

(1) About three and a half minutes in length

(2) A presentation of the song

(3) Alternation of verse (A) and chorus (B)

b) Section Two

(1) Consists of a series of eight-bar phrases

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(2) The background texture is subtly varied, while instrumental solos, sung phrases, and other vocal effects are sometimes juxtaposed or layered on top of one another, and sometimes alternated one after the other.

3. The overall effect of this recording

a) A weaving, made up of patches of subtly shifting textural effects and tone colors

b) Held together by the strong threads of a funk-derived dance groove

c) Strung on a formal loom made up of eight-bar sections

4. This is a recording that rewards repeated listening, not least because one musician has created every sound you hear throughout.

5. In its rich layering of instrumental textures and vocal personalities, “When Doves Cry” imparted to the public image of Prince a complexity and psychological depth not typical of mass-media celebrities.

6. It established his reputation as one of the most creative and influential musicians of the 1980s.