

Pop and Alternative Styles

“When I was young, there was a lot of respect for clowning in rock music - look at Little Richard. It was a part of the whole thing, and I always also believed that it released the audience.”

-BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN

The eighties were a great time for rock fans who wanted to be entertained by their favorite singers with a variety of video images and dancing. Cable television and video stations such as MTV allowed fans to see their favorite stars performing any time of the day or night. Many talented rock singers, particularly those who were also good dancers, became superstars overnight when their performances were viewed as well as heard by their fans: Prince, Madonna, and the King of Pop, Michael Jackson, are only some of the most prominent of those stars.

Another trend of the early eighties was a pop style called New Romanticism, which started in British nightclubs of the late-seventies and popularized a kind of flamboyantly androgynous image in the eighties. New Romanticism included such bands as Duran Duran (early in their career), the Culture Club, and Bow Wow Wow. Different from the androgynous look of some punk and metal performers of the seventies, the New Romantics wore makeup, but dressed in frilly, lacy, shirts and jackets influenced by nineteenth-century Victorian fashions. Other looks were soon added to the style. New Romanticism didn't last long, but it added an important new look and pop musical style to the decade.

Female makeup and long, full hairdos also became popular among heavy-metal bands whose songs were usually about drinking and partying as a way of life. Metal bands whose style was a direct outgrowth of glam bands of the seventies came to be called hair bands because of their long, fluffy hairdos. Hair bands included Mötley Crüe, Twisted Sister, and Poison.

Other musicians who wanted to counter the extreme lightness of pop music but were not as angry or aggressive as punk bands played music that included some characteristics of punk such as a steady, pounding beat and pulsating, repeated bass notes, but otherwise played music that was more melodic than punk and sang songs that lacked punk's anger. Some of those bands were given the awkward heading of alternative rock in the United States. Their music represented an "alternative" to what the musicians saw as the silliness of many pop styles, but the bands were so diverse in style and image themselves that even now the term *alternative* is impossible to generalize about. Bands that could be called alternative in the eighties include R.E.M., U2, and the Smiths and Morrissey as a soloist. In later decades those same performers continued to be popular as more mainstream rock artists than as alternatives to anything else.

Video Television

Performers on variety television shows in the past could boost their record sales by their fans having the opportunity to see them perform other than in live concerts. In general, however, record and tape sales had dropped by 10 percent from 1978 to 1979. Sales of videos, video games, and other home-tech products, however, were growing. During the late seventies and early eighties, a few people in the

radio/video business were beginning to see that there were possibilities for music television beyond the individual shows of the past. Cable TV seemed to be the best vehicle for such a project, but it was still very new and in few areas of the country. Because it required cables to be installed under- or aboveground, it took several years to expand the service nationwide.

Robert Pittman had had much success as a program director for radio stations in Chicago and

New York. He supervised production of a television music program called *Album Tracks* that showed short rock videos and found the show to be quite popular. It occurred to him that a television channel that showed rock-related shows twenty-four hours a day might be a possibility. He gathered videos from a variety of record companies and used them, along with a crew of **veejays**, as the basis for a new cable station, Music Television, or MTV. Its first program was televised on August 1, 1981. The show was immediately popular among the small numbers of people who were able to receive it, and some of the first people to see real benefits from the station were the artists and bands whose videos were shown. Their record sales went up dramatically from having been on MTV.

Within a year, MTV was clearly a success and growing. The British company EMI took a big step in funding the production of three very expensive videos of songs from Duran Duran's *Rio* (1981) album. Album sales increased dramatically after the videos were put on MTV. An article on MTV in *Time* magazine said, "*Rio* was being sold out at half the record stores in Dallas and gathering dust in the other half. A check of the local television listings showed that parts of the city that were wired for cable and carrying MTV were the very same parts where the album was flourishing." Other groups such as the Stray Cats and Men at Work similarly gained much larger followings from being featured on MTV during those first months.

MTV's popularity grew along with that of its stars. It had been on three hundred cable systems in 1981, and that had expanded to almost eighteen hundred in only two years. Part of the reason for the great success of the channel was that it geared its music to the tastes of the large rock-pop audience. On the other hand, that particular market caused them to reject many African American artists' videos, and critics began to question that point. The perfect African American artist to satisfy the musical tastes of MTV's audience had just seen his second solo album reach number one. That was **Michael Jackson** (1958–2009), and the solo album was *Thriller* (1982).

This book cannot possibly include information on every major rock-related star whose career was aided by MTV. The few whose careers and music are discussed in this chapter display the variety of styles that were widely popular during the era.

Michael Jackson

Michael Jackson had been a child star at Motown records in the late sixties when he sang lead in his all-sibling group the Jackson Five. He also recorded

solo at Motown, but he primarily worked with his brothers. After the family, except for Jermaine, left the Motown Company, Michael continued to sing in his brothers' group, renamed simply the Jacksons. Michael Jackson emerged as a solo star when his first solo album, *Off the Wall* (1979), had four top-ten hits. His music was funky and fun, and he was a terrific dancer and entertainer. His *Thriller* videos on MTV helped the album continue to sell extremely well and also helped MTV out of the bind of having too few African American artists. Sales of the album, which was already a hit and also boosted by appearances on MTV, went to over forty-five million copies worldwide, the best-selling album to that time. The album was number one in the United States for thirty-seven weeks and number one as well in Britain and many other western European countries. By this time, Michael Jackson was truly the King of Pop, and MTV was there to let the world of cable viewers know.

“I don't believe in stylizing or branding any type of music. I think a great artist should be able to just create any style. . . . Just wonderful music where



Michael Jackson in 1983

anybody can sing it from the Irish farmer to a lady who scrubs toilets in Harlem. If you can whistle it and hum it that's the most important thing."

—Michael Jackson

"Billie Jean" was on Jackson's *Thriller* album. The single was number one on the pop charts for seven weeks. Jackson danced to "Billie Jean" on the twenty-fifth anniversary of Motown in 1983, and his inclusion of a "moonwalk" (inspired by break dancers who often employed that same technique) was the hit of the show. It was reported that the famous dancer Fred Astaire actually phoned Michael Jackson after seeing the show on television and said, "You're one hell

of a mover." A listening guide to "Billie Jean" is included here.

Jackson had been very generous in donating to charities of various kinds, and he co-wrote "We Are the World" (1985) with Lionel Richie. His *Bad* (1987) album broke his own record of four hit singles on an album by including five number one hit singles. The follow-up albums, *Dangerous* (1991) and *HIStory: Past, Present and Future, Book One* (1995), also sold well but did not outdo his previous successes.

Michael Jackson's career was already well established and only aided by MTV. His youngest sister, Janet Jackson (born in 1966), was just beginning her career in the early eighties. Her talents as a singer would most likely have given her much success without videos on MTV, but her looks and dancing abilities helped her achieve superstardom as part of the MTV generation.

Listening Guide

"Billie Jean"
as recorded by Michael Jackson
(1983)

Features: The drums play a strong backbeat.

Even beat subdivisions are kept throughout.

Tempo: The tempo is approximately 118 beats per minute, with four beats in each bar.

Synthesized orchestral chords sometimes play on beats one and the half-beat after two. Other orchestral background includes synthesized strings and horns.

Form: The recording begins with a fourteen-bar instrumental introduction that begins with drums. A bass enters at the third bar. The song is based on eight-bar sections, with the first and third verses, and the first and last three choruses extended to twelve bars through repetitions of sections of text. The form can be outlined as the instrumental introduction (fourteen bars), verse 1 (twelve bars), verse 2 (eight bars), bridge (eight bars), chorus (twelve bars), verse 3 (twelve bars), verse 4 (eight bars), bridge (eight bars), chorus (eight bars), chorus (twelve bars), instrumental chorus (twelve bars), chorus (twelve bars), chorus (twelve bars). The recording ends with a fade-out.

Backup vocals support Jackson's lead vocals through repetitions of text.

Lyrics: The song is a cautionary tale about promiscuity, where the singer feels trapped by the allegation he has fathered a child, even though he does admit that the baby has his eyes.

Billboard pop charts: number one for seven weeks;
Billboard rhythm and blues charts: number one for nine weeks; British hit singles: number one

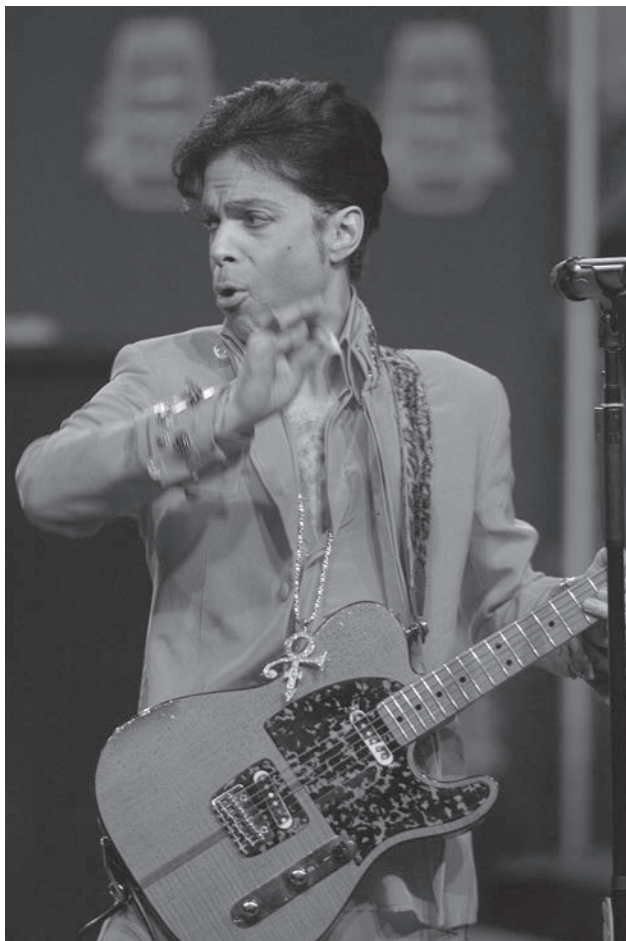


Check out the Spotify playlist to hear this Listening Example!

Prince

Another African American performer to provide MTV with popular videos and gain much audience appeal as a result was **Prince** Rogers Nelson (born in 1958). Both soul and funk are important elements in his music. Prince wrote and produced his own first album of erotic dance music when he was only eighteen years old. His father, John Nelson, was a jazz musician whose stage name was Prince Rogers, and his mother was a singer. Although the young Prince never had formal music lessons, music and instruments were readily available to him, and he eventually learned to play many instruments, including piano, guitar, and drums. Prince wrote his own music and played his own instrumental parts on almost all the tracks on his first five albums, although he kept some of his old friends such as bass player André Cymone (André Anderson, who later had his own solo career) for occasional support in the studio and to back him on tour.

Prince's style basically combined funk with rock, but it also showed the influences of new



Prince (2007)

wave, disco, and rap. His songs merely toyed with eroticism until his 1980s *Dirty Mind* album, which was too explicit to get any airplay. Its mixture of funk and pop music with fuzztone guitar still attracted a large audience, despite the lack of radio publicity.

A listening guide to Prince's first top-ten hit single, "Little Red Corvette" from his first top-ten hit album, *1999* (1982), is on page 279. It reached number six on the pop charts and number fifteen on the rhythm and blues charts. It was number thirty-four its first time on the British charts and reached number two when it was reissued in 1985.


Prince decided to add a backup band he called the Revolution for his next project, *Purple Rain* (1984), which included an album, film, and concert tour. That project clearly established Prince as a major star. Five top-forty hit singles were released from the album, and it won three Grammys and an Oscar for Best Original Song Score. The movie (directed by Albert Magnoli) was Prince's acting debut and gave fans an insightful look at a very human celebrity who, in the film, lets his stardom ruin him. Prince added Sheila E. to sing backup vocals on the *Purple Rain* soundtrack and gave her career a boost by contributing to her first solo album, *The Glamorous Life* (1984), and having her open his *Purple Rain* concerts. In 1985, Prince established his own record label, Paisley Park (distributed by his former record company, Warner Brothers), and continued to produce movie soundtracks and other albums with much success. Later soundtracks included music for the films *Under the Cherry Moon* (1986) and *Batman* (1989).

“Very simply, my spirit directed me to do it. And once I did it, a lot of things started changing in my life. . . . One thing is people can say something about Prince, and it used to bother me. Once I changed my name, it had no effect on me.”

—Prince, when asked why he changed his name

Prince's career experienced many ups and downs during the nineties. His new band, the New Power Generation, worked well with him on *Diamonds and Pearls* (1991) and *The Symbol Album* (1992),

Listening Guide

<p>“Little Red Corvette” as recorded by Prince (1982)</p>		<p>the vocals sometimes relax into uneven subdivisions.</p>
Tempo:	<p>The tempo is approximately 126 beats per minute, with four beats in each bar.</p>	<p>The drums play a strong backbeat through much, but not all, of the recording.</p>
Form:	<p>After about nine bars of introduction, the form is based on eight-bar sections. The sections are ordered as follows: ABAAB Instrumental CBBBDBBBB.</p> <p>The B sections are made up of a four-bar phrase that is repeated. The repeated phrases function as refrains. They usually repeat the same lyrics, but the lyrics are varied and drop out at times during some of the repeated B sections at the end of the recording.</p> <p>The instrumental section is based on the B section and features a guitar solo.</p> <p>The C section is eight bars long; the D section is sixteen bars long.</p>	<p>The instrumental background is rather full and features an electronic organ.</p> <p>Prince plays all the instrumental parts and sings the lead vocal except for the addition of a guitar soloist and two backup singers.</p> <p>The recording begins by slowly building up volume out of silence and ends by fading out very slowly.</p>
	<p>Lyrics:</p>	<p>The singer analogizes a promiscuous girl to a red Corvette sports car. He advises the girl to find monogamy (a love that will last) before her body fails like a car that is driven too roughly.</p>
Features:	<p>Even beat subdivisions are used through most of the recording, but</p>	<p><i>Billboard</i> pop charts: number six; <i>Billboard</i> rhythm and blues charts: number fifteen; British hit singles: number thirty-four</p>
		<p>Check out the Spotify playlist to hear this Listening Example!</p>

both of which included hit singles. The New Power Generation also included rapper Tony M (Anthony Mosely), adding a hip-hop connection to Prince's widely diverse style. Prince followed these successes by changing his name to an unpronounceable symbol, baffling all but his most dedicated fans. "Since then he has been called "Formerly" or "The Artist," both names being shortened versions of the "the artist formerly known as Prince." His recordings of the midnineties showed that his career was on a downswing. He went back to calling himself Prince and continued to record and tour into the two-thousands.

Madonna

Roles played by female performers changed by the midseventies and continued to evolve in the eighties. In the fifties and early sixties, female singers generally portrayed meek and sweet personalities as had female pop singers before them. By 1964, Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las had a bit of a "tough" image, but that was more a reflection of her relationship with the "leader of the pack" than it was a reflection of her own personality. In the late sixties, Janis Joplin and Grace Slick displayed some independence, but they both showed vulnerability



Madonna

at times. The feminist revolution and the sense of individual freedom of the punk movement came together to change these perceptions in the stage personality of Patti Smith, who went so far as to invite a woman to visit her room when she sang the male lyrics to “Gloria.” Several punk and new-wave groups had women as instrumentalists, including the Velvet Underground with Maureen Tucker as drummer, Talking Heads with Tina Weymouth as bassist, and the Pretenders with Chrissie Hynde as guitarist, writer, and singer. On the West Coast in the midseventies, Ann and Nancy Wilson assumed the leadership of Heart, and the Runaways formed as a quintet of tough and independent young women who were out for a good time and didn’t care how they got it. From the Runaways, guitarist/singer Joan Jett continued this sense of independence with the Blackhearts, lead guitarist Lita Ford went on to a solo career, and bassist/singer Micki Steele joined the female quartet the Bangles.

“Ultimately, I want my music to be reviewed, not whether my rib cage is too small or not. . . . Men are allowed to not meet

the conventional standards of beauty and still be celebrated. It’s much harder for women.”

—Madonna

Other female singers of the late seventies and beyond played less tough but still more realistic roles than had most of their counterparts twenty years earlier. Blondie’s Deborah Harry was cold and detached, and Madonna made it clear that she was an individual who did not care what other people thought, as long as she got what she wanted. Singer/songwriter Tracy Chapman, on the other hand, managed to express a great deal of independence while being anything but tough or cold. Her music and image made a new statement for women in general, and, perhaps more important, for African American women.

Of all of those female performers, **Madonna** (Madonna Louise Ciccone, born in 1958) gained the most commercial appeal and success, with the help of MTV. Her debut album, *Madonna* (1983), hit the charts in both Britain and the United States, and many successful albums and singles followed. The dance orientation of her music was influenced by her longtime involvement with dance. Madonna’s lead role in *Desperately Seeking Susan* (1985) launched her career as a movie star and led to other movies and a live theater debut in *Speed the Plow* (1988) on Broadway in New York. Many of Madonna’s video and movie roles play up her sex symbol image, but in her hit recording “Papa Don’t Preach” she portrayed a young woman in need of her father’s approval. A listening guide to that recording is on page 281. It reached number one on the pop charts in both the United States and Britain.

New Romanticism

The term *romanticism* is often used to refer to the nineteenth century in European art and music because that was a time when many poets and other creative artists broke away from the reasoned view of the world characteristic of the previous era and began to stress individuality, emotion, and exotic thoughts and images in their works. The new romanticism movement in pop music of the eighties also did exactly that. Many of the performers made reference to the nineteenth century by dressing in ruffled, lacy shirts common during the reign of Queen Victoria in England (1819–1901), but the “romantic” ideas of the performers in the style allowed them to dress in any number of other ways.

Listening Guide

“Papa Don’t Preach”
as recorded by Madonna (1986)

Features: Even beat subdivisions are maintained throughout the recording.

Tempo: The tempo is approximately 126 beats per minute, with four beats in each bar.

A synthesized string orchestra plays the first eight bars of the introduction and then adds to the background in the remainder of the recording.

Form: After a sixteen-bar introduction, the form is structured as follows:
 AABCABC Instrumental BCC₁
 Instrumental.

The drums enter at the ninth bar of the introduction, playing a strong backbeat through the rest of the performance.

The A and B sections are eight bars each, except for the third B section that is extended with two extra bars of lyrics that add emphasis to the last vocal phrase about the singer’s being in love.

In addition to the drums, rock instruments used include electric bass, keyboards, both acoustic and electric guitars, and percussion.

The ten-bar C sections are eight-bar phrases followed by two bars of extension stressing the singer’s decision to keep her baby. The C section begins with the words of the title, “Papa Don’t Preach,” and functions as a refrain.

Backup vocalists support the lead vocal in the final C₁ section.

Lyrics: The singer is telling her father that she is pregnant, in love with the baby’s father, and planning to marry him and keep her baby. She knows that her father does not like her boyfriend, and begs him to not preach to her, but just give them his blessing. She also asks for advice, but nothing in the song seems to indicate that she is prepared to accept it.

The first instrumental section (within the text of the song) is based on the A section.

The sixteen-bar C₁ section is made up of the first four bars of the C section sung through four times.

Billboard pop charts: number one for two weeks; British hit singles: number one

The final instrumental is sixteen bars based on the C section. It fades out by the final bar.



Check out the Spotify playlist to hear this Listening Example!

New romanticism is sometimes also referred to as “Blitz music” because the movement started in British clubs, the most famous of which was Billy’s and The Blitz. The early bands included Ultravox, Visage, Duran Duran, Spandau Ballet, and the Culture Club. Makeup and androgynous clothing were often part of the look, as was particularly the case

with **Boy George and the Culture Club**. George (George Alan O’Dowd, born in 1961) was flamboyant about both his dress and his lifestyle. He and his friend Marilyn (Peter Robinson) worked as coatroom attendants at The Blitz until George began to sing with various different new romantic bands and then started his own with new friends,

Listening Guide

***“Karma Chameleon”
as recorded by Boy George and
the Culture Club (1983)***

Tempo: The tempo is about 184 beats per minute, with four beats in each bar.

Form: After a ten-bar instrumental introduction, the song has sixteen-bar sections that repeat and contrast in the pattern A B A B C inst. A B B B B. The instrumental section after “C” is eight bars long. The A sections are verses with new lyrics in each. The B sections are refrains with the same text in each. The C section serves as a contrast to the rest of the song.

Features: The instrumental introduction starts with a rhythm pattern that contrasts with the regular four-beat bar rhythm of the rest of the song. That beginning pattern repeats one time after two bars of what will become the regular pattern play. The total amount of time for the introduction fits into ten bars.

The drums play a strong backbeat and even beat subdivisions.

The accompanying instruments are guitar, bass, and drums, but enhanced electronically for the recording. They also include a harmonica-like solo instrument.

Group vocals accompany the solo singer (Boy George) by either singing with him, but softer to stay in the background, or singing nonsense syllables to accompany him.

The recording fades out at the end of the final “B” section.

Lyrics: In the words of Boy George:
“The song is about the terrible fear of alienation that people have . . . the fear of standing up for one thing. It’s about trying to suck up to everybody. Basically, if you aren’t true, if you don’t act like you feel, then you get Karma-justice. That’s nature’s way of paying you back”.

Billboard pop charts: number one for three weeks;
British hit singles: number one



Check out the Spotify playlist to hear this Listening Example!

bassist Mikey Craig, drummer Jon Moss, and guitarist Roy Hay. When they formed their own band, they called it Culture Club because the members were Irish, African-British, Jewish, and Anglo-British, representing several cultural backgrounds. Culture Club’s debut album had three top-ten hits in the United States, matching a record previous held by only the Beatles. Their huge international hit “Karma Chameleon” came from their second album. A listening guide to that recording is above.

Many of the bands in the new romantic movement either disbanded or changed their styles and moved on with their careers playing other music

by the mideighties, but new romantic music and dress was sometimes featured on individual nights in clubs that brought back “retro” styles. A “romo” movement in the midnineties had a very short lifespan. For its devotees, romanticism was fun while it lasted.

Hair Bands

Androgynous hairdos and makeup made a new appearance on heavy-metal stages with such eighties performers as Mötley Crüe (from Los Angeles) and Twisted Sister (from New Jersey). The long, full

Listening Guide

“Nothin’ But a Good Time”
as recorded by *Poison* (1988)

The drums maintain a strong backbeat.

Tempo: The tempo is approximately 130 beats per minute, with four beats in each bar.

A twenty-four-bar instrumental section ends with the opening riff played twice.

Form: The instrumental introduction is composed of a four-bar riff played four times and then extended two more bars. The form is based on eight-bar phrases, although the two phrases that begin with the song title have an additional one-bar extension. Each phrase begins with two eighth-note pickups.

The instrumental section features solo guitar.

Lyrics: The song presents the point of view of someone who resents having to work so hard to get enough money to have a good time.

Billboard pop charts: number six

Features: Uneven beat subdivisions are used throughout the recording.



Check out the Spotify playlist to hear this Listening Example!

hairdos and makeup and songs about drinking and partying gave heavy metal a new, lighter image than it had had in the past.

“One time we saw some hookers, but when we got closer we realized it was Motley Crue”

—James Hetfield, *Metallica*, 1989

Poison had their own hairdresser in their drummer Rikki Rockett (Richard Ream, born in 1961). The band formed in Pennsylvania but relocated to Los Angeles where they became one of the most successful L.A. glam bands during the style’s heyday in the late eighties. A listening guide to one of their top-ten hits, “Nothin’ But a Good Time,” is above. The recording reached number six on the U.S. pop charts. Poison’s commercial success was partially due to their versatility. Another hit from the same album (*Open Up and Say . . . Ahh!*), “Every Rose Has Its Thorn,” was a ballad.

Poison’s next two albums also sold well, and the band was still together in the two-thousands, but by that time the elaborate costumes and stage theatrics

of both glitter and glam (hair bands) had begun to give way to the growing popularity of alternative groups whose looks and staging generally avoided such glitz.

Alternative Rock

While punk and new wave were still being played by a number of bands during the mid- to late eighties, their influences had also spread to new bands that used punk’s pounding beat in a pulsating bass but did not otherwise show characteristics typical of the style. One such band, **R.E.M.**, came from Athens, Georgia, and redefined southern rock for the eighties. Not only did R.E.M. not stress complicated or highly technical instrumental solos but they did not even place Michael Stipe’s vocals in the position of prime importance. Their drummer, Bill Berry, usually maintained a strong backbeat, and on top of that the sound of Peter Buck’s guitar often overlapped the bass lines played by Mike Mills, so that no one part stood out clearly from another. Stipe had some of Bob Dylan’s and Lou Reed’s ability to maintain a low, dronelike vocal quality, but unlike them he allowed himself to blend in with

the instruments. Especially in the early phase of the group's career, Stipe's lyrics were difficult to understand, and the band's overall sound was almost a single layer of texture without the clear divisions between parts found in most rock music.

“When you're talking about *Destiny's Child*, where you can sell 10,000,000 more records if you get the right video and promotional push, that is where you need a major label. If you're talking about someone who is playing . . . a smaller artist, there is almost no need for a record company. Essentially, I think a lot of things are going to go through MP3, the Net.”

—Peter Buck of R.E.M.

In R.E.M.'s later music, particularly their *Document* album (1987), Stipe separated his vocals from the texture of the band more than he had in the past. One reason may have been because *Document* contained many songs that made political statements he wanted understood. R.E.M.'s *Out of Time* (1991) album included “Losing My Religion.” The album, that single, and its video all won 1992 Grammy awards. For *Out of Time*, R.E.M. expanded their instrumentation to include mellotron, harpsichord, pedal-steel guitar, mandolin, bowed strings, horns, and even a female vocal group. R.E.M. announced their breakup in 2011.

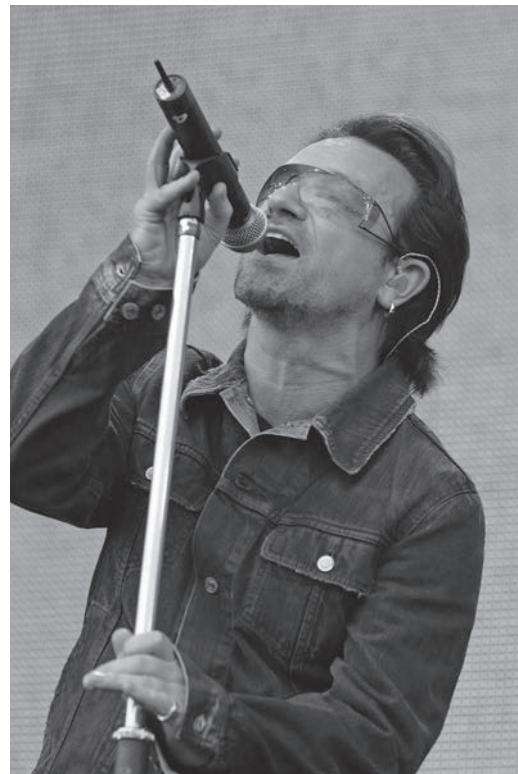
The Dublin-based band U2 emerged as a symbol of optimism and peace for the eighties, and like R.E.M., they did not stress the solo styles of individual instrumentalists but instead worked together to craft a thick instrumental timbre to which vocals were added. Drummer Larry Mullen Jr. and singer/lyricist Bono Vox (Paul Hewson) were both born and raised in Ireland, but their guitarist/keyboardist, “The Edge” (David Evans), was originally from Wales, and bass player Adam Clayton was from England. The members of U2 grew up listening to such New York punk bands as Television, the Patti Smith Group, and the Ramones, but to create their own sound they took the rhythm and blues soulfulness of their countryman Van Morrison, the personal commitment of Bruce Springsteen, and the careful use of electronics to

fill out, but not overcomplicate, their basic guitar, bass, and drums instrumentation.

“I'd like to think that U2 is aggressive, loud, and emotional. I think that's good. I think that the people who I see parallels with are people like John the Baptist or Jeremiah. They were very loud, quite aggressive, yet joyful, and I believe they had an answer and a hope. In that sense, I think we have a love and an emotion without the flowers in our hair, and we have an aggression without the safety pins in our noses.”

—Bono

As has been the case with many other bands whose careers have lasted for any period of time, U2's song themes changed as the group members grew older and their interests and concerns changed. In all their music, U2 made a conscious



Bono of U2

effort not to be trendy, but instead attempted to make honest, meaningful statements, many of which became passionate cries for both personal and political peace.

The Joshua Tree (1987) was a compassionate album that included songs of a personal nature, tributes to specific people and events, and songs that made general statements in support of the work done by Amnesty International. (The album insert even included addresses for those who might want to join the organization.) *The Joshua Tree* was also produced by Eno, whose style is obvious in the album's clean electronic background effects and the presence of a new-wave-influenced

repeating pulse in the bass. This style is apparent in "With or Without You," as discussed in the listening guide below. The recording was number one on the U.S. pop charts for three weeks; it was number four in Britain. Bono has done much to aid impoverished people the world over and was recognized for that work, along with philanthropists Bill and Melinda Gates, in sharing the 2005 "Person of the Year" award given by *Time* magazine.

Many British groups and solo artists who were considered alternative in the United States enjoyed pop chart success in Britain. One such band was the Smiths. In the United States, they maintained an

Listening Guide

"With or Without You" as recorded by U2 (1987)

Tempo: The tempo is about 108 beats per minute, with four beats in each bar.

Form: The recording begins with a twelve-bar instrumental introduction. The first four bars feature very soft arpeggio patterns on the synthesizer backed by drums. An eighth-note pulse played on the bass enters at the fifth bar. The form is based on eight-bar periods in which the A periods each have new lyrics, the B's repeat the words in the song title, and the C's repeat lyrics about giving of oneself. The first B period is only four bars long, but the rest are eight bars. The form is organized as follows: AABABCACBBB.

An instrumental section occurs between the second B period and the first C, but it does not include the fast, technical solos typical of other rock styles; instead, it serves as a break or an interlude between the vocal periods.

Features: Even beat subdivisions are maintained throughout the recording. The bass plays repeated notes at each half-beat, which was typical of much punk and new wave, except that the speed of the beat (and also the halfbeat) is much slower than in most punk or new wave. The drums maintain a backbeat throughout the recording. An ethereal or otherworldly background sound is played on a synthesizer. The recording uses crescendos and **decrescendos** for a dramatic effect. It begins very softly, gradually builds in volume, then softens rather suddenly only to rebuild and then fade out.

Lyrics: The song is a statement of pained love, in which the singer expresses both the wish to be with his lover and the realization that the feeling is not reciprocated.

Billboard pop charts: number one for three weeks; British hit singles: number four



Check out the Spotify playlist to hear this Listening Example!

alternative following with more airplay on college radio stations than on commercial ones and had no singles or albums that charted in the top forty. The Smiths' most noticeable member was singer/lyricist **Morrissey**, whose James Dean–like image and pensive, introverted songs often described loneliness and seclusion. Morrissey's choice of a fifties-style image was not surprising because the Smiths were from Manchester, where American fifties artists and images had been popular for decades. Earlier groups or solo artists from the Mersey area of England (which includes Liverpool) had been greatly influenced by Buddy Holly's fifties image, including the Beatles, the Hollies, and Elvis Costello. The Smiths' musical direction was primarily controlled by guitarist/songwriter Johnny Marr, whose layered guitar tracks provided full but catchy support for Morrissey's vocals. Marr left the

Smiths to give himself the freedom to work on various projects with other singers. Morrissey followed the breakup of the Smiths with a successful solo career, releasing one album a year beginning with *Viva Hate* (1988). His choices of backup musicians varied from album to album, at times including former members of the Smiths. As can be heard in "Everyday Is Like Sunday," he also had grown fond of the fullness provided by a synthesized orchestral background sound. During his solo career, Morrissey's song themes expanded to include subjects of worldwide concern, including problems in the economy and fear of nuclear war. The listening guide to "Everyday Is Like Sunday" is below. The recording was in the British top ten for six weeks, but it did not enter the top forty in the United States, where Morrissey remained an alternative rock artist.

Listening Guide

**"Everyday Is Like Sunday"
as recorded by Morrissey (1988)**

The drums maintain a strong backbeat.

Tempo: The tempo is approximately 116 beats per minute, with four beats in each bar.

The electric bass keeps an eighth-note pulse most of the time. The bass pulse often repeats a single note as was common in much new-wave music of the late seventies.

Form: The form repeats and contrasts as follows: Introduction ABAABACAB Instrumental AA.

Each section is eight bars long except the C section, which has sixteen bars.

A guitar is sometimes featured, but a great deal of the instrumental background is played by a full-sounding synthesized orchestra.

The second, fourth, and fifth A sections begin with the title words "everyday is like Sunday" and function as refrains.

Lyrics: The theme is the banality of all events, even apocalyptic ones. The singer imagines a postnuclear war world that is just another gray Sunday in an English coastal town.

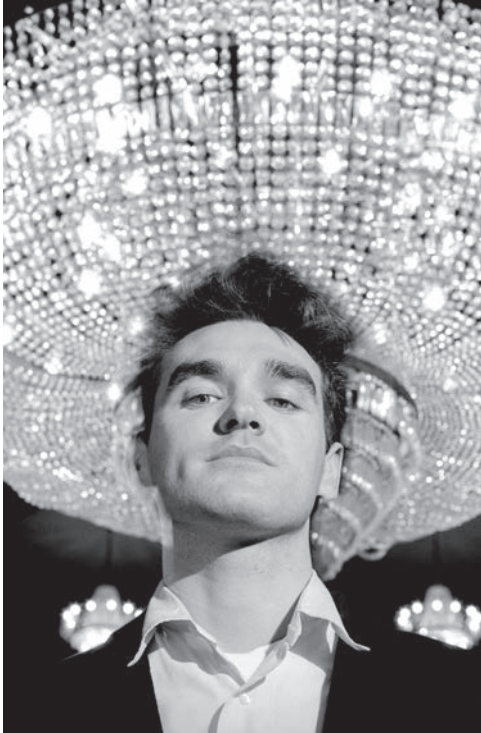
The second instrumental A section fades out to end the recording.

Features: The instruments maintain even beat subdivisions, but Morrissey's vocals sometimes lapse into uneven subdivisions.

British hit singles: number nine



Check out the Spotify playlist to hear this Listening Example!



Morrissey in the mideighties

Summary

Where most fans depended on the radio to hear music in previous decades, the development and widespread use of cable television in the eighties brought about a new interest in the visual aspects of rock performances. Those visual aspects included carefully choreographed dance routines and dress and makeup styles that fans

could imitate to show their identity with performers. MTV and other video channels made some of the strongest performers become superstars overnight. CD sales showed marketing executives how important the videos were, creating an incentive for video producers to create yet more impressive products that were as much visually interesting as they were about the sound of the music. Dance choreography and execution were enormously important to Madonna, Michael Jackson, and other performers' popularity. Other performers, such as the new romantic bands, played lyrical pop-styled music wearing variations of late Victorian and other types of exotic outfits and makeup. Again, the image was as important as the sound. Hair bands played heavy-metal music, but sang lyrics about drinking and partying and wore their puffy, long hair in very feminine styles. The effect was a great contrast with the images of horror created by early heavy-metal bands.

The term *alternative* was attached to bands that played a harder edged kind of music and had a more traditional look, because they were seen as an "alternative" to the large-scale spread of the pop styles of the day. Even so, many artists called alternative in the eighties became part of mainstream rock music in later decades.

discussion questions

Is video television still important today, or have Web sites such as YouTube completely overtaken the role it played in the eighties?

The term *alternative* is still used today. To what are bands in that category an alternative?