

## ***Pop week!***

Fast facts:

Timeline: began in the mid-1950's, with the word "pop" being used first in 1926 to describe music with "popular appeal"

Artists: Michael Jackson, Madonna, Adele

Pop music developed from rock and roll, jazz and funk, with the 1950's and 60's allowing for more artistic freedom for recording artists. This was because new technology and a boom in the economy meant that labels had money to invest in artists and artists in turn had a chance to express themselves musically and make a living from it. The invention of "pop stars" meant that people became famous for things beyond just their music, making dancing, singing and general public image part of their product and appeal. There were few real instruments involved and backing tracks were instead made up of a lot of synthesised instruments. Pop music couldn't have taken the route it did without new developments in recording and mastering technology, and artists could be pickier about which labels they wanted to sign to based on the kind of career they wanted to have.

One of the most famous figures of early pop, who later became called "the King of Pop", was Michael Jackson. Born into a musical family in America, Michael's father began the careers of his sons early, forming 5 of them into a band called "The Jackson 5". Michael quickly became the centre of attention, and began his solo career in 1971. His 6<sup>th</sup> studio album, "Thriller" (the cover of which is pictured here), was a massive success, and his videos for "Thriller", "Beat It" and "Billie Jean" changed the face of the music industry. Music videos became an art form, and Michael was credited with breaking down racial barriers through



his music. His music was massively influenced by funk and jazz music, and he was known for being an incredible dancer as well as an amazing vocalist. You can find the video for Thriller here (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4V90AmXnguw>). When you watch it, pay attention to how much of a story he tells through the music video, it's almost like a movie!

Since we've now spoken about the King of Pop, it seems only appropriate now to talk about the Queen of Pop, Madonna. She earned that name in the 1980's, having moved from her home town to New York in 1978 to pursue a career in modern dance. Madonna began her solo career in 1982 after a few years performing with bands, and in 1983 she exploded onto the global stage with her debut solo album, titled "Madonna". The sound of her music was carefully crafted to be totally new and original, and was hugely influenced by electronic



Madonna in her music video for  
"Vogue"

dance music, making it hugely successful as music for clubs and dancing. In the years following her first album she had numerous incredibly successful singles, including "Like a Prayer", "Material Girl" and "Vogue". The last one of those singles is probably her most famous music video, and she became, like Michael Jackson before her, a world-wide sensation for her dancing and singing. You can find the video

here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GuJQSAiODqI>

There is no question that America has produced a huge number of commercially successful pop stars since the 60s, but the UK also has some fairly massive pop stars to its name, one of which is Adele. Adele was born in Tottenham in 1988, and rose to stardom with her debut album, 19 (named so because she was 19 years old when it was released). It entered the British charts at number 1 and was written almost exclusively by Adele herself, making her one of the first singer-songwriters to gain levels of success comparable to other pop stars of the time. Adele released 21 two years later and, due to 19 also re-entering the charts at the same time, became the first living artist to have two top-five hits in both the Official Singles Chart and the Official Albums Chart simultaneously since the Beatles in 1964. Her singles "Rolling in the Deep" and "Someone Like You" were massive hits, and cemented her place as a formidable pop star on the international stage. She is known for having a very different approach to stardom from other people, remaining very down to earth and having chats with her audience of thousands at sold out shows on her tours. Listen to her hit single "Hello" from her most recent album "25" here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YQHsXMgIC9A>

