

Barbie™

POWER & STYLE



PIONEER OF
HER TIME

GLOBAL
BEAUTY

DISCO
FASHION





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Bob Mackie, the legendary designer to the stars, and Mattel collaborator, has dazzled for over 50 years with his extravagant and daring creations.

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BARBIE BIO



BLACK BARBIE

• 1980 •

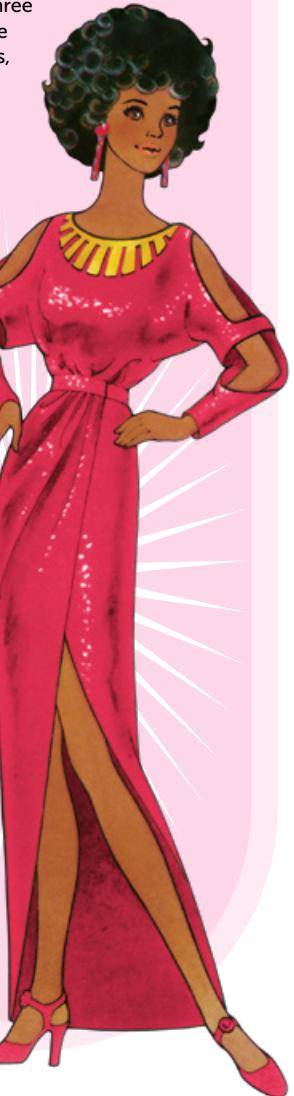
★ FULL NAME: *Black Barbie*.

★ THE INSPIRATION: The glamour of late-1970s musical icons.

★ HER STYLE: Sophisticated, modern, and dazzling—like a true star.

★ DESIGN: By Kitty Black Perkins, a lead fashion and concept designer for Barbie dolls.

★ DEBUT: In 1980, featuring a bodysuit, removable skirt, jewelry (three interchangeable pairs of earrings, a necklace, and a ring), an Afro pick, and heels.





"I had a sense that it was going to be well received," said Kitty Black Perkins, the creator of the *Black Barbie* doll, on the doll's 40th anniversary. "I had no idea it was going to be as groundbreaking as it is now, but if you look at the history of Barbie, the reason Barbie is number one is because she was the very first of her kind. When we did *Black Barbie*, she too became the very first of her kind."



STORY OF AN ICON

PIONEER of her Time

THE LAUNCH OF THE BLACK BARBIE DOLL IN 1980 MARKED A MILESTONE FOR MATTEL — FOR THE FIRST TIME, BLACK GIRLS HAD A BARBIE DOLL THEY COULD TRULY SEE THEMSELVES IN. IT SET THE FOUNDATION FOR THE BRAND'S LONG-TERM COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVE REPRESENTATION

R

Before her debut, the dark-skinned dolls in the Barbie line lacked distinctive and authentically representative features reflective of Black identity and culture. Francie (1967), Christie (1968), and Cara (1975) were introduced in the '60s and '70s as Barbie's friends, but it wasn't until 1980 that a Black doll was officially named Barbie.

The visionary behind the Black Barbie doll was designer Kitty Black Perkins, who joined Mattel in 1976. Three years later, she was given the assignment to design the first Black Barbie. Drawing inspiration from music icons of the era, Perkins gave the doll a glamorous, authentic look. "When I designed it, I wanted her to be the complete opposite of the traditional blonde Barbie, in that I wanted her to have different skin tones, and short, natural textured black hair instead of Barbie doll's long, blonde locks. I wanted her to have a slim silhouette instead of the traditional ball gowns," she explained in 2020, during the doll's 40th anniversary celebration.



Disco music — a major cultural force at the end of the '70s — also played a key role in shaping the *Black Barbie* doll's design. The era's glittering glamour and bold style are reflected in her look: confident, sophisticated, and undeniably radiant.



STAR DESIGNER

Kitty Black Perkins, the creator of the *Black Barbie* doll, worked at Mattel as a lead fashion and concept designer for over 25 years. Her iconic work includes the 1997 *Fashion Savvy Barbie* and the 1999 *Brandy* doll, among others. Left: With two of her creations in 1991. Right: One of the outfits included in the 2010 reproduction of the *Black Barbie* doll, released as part of the *My Favorite Barbie* series. Below: Packaging from the 2010 reproduction.



The music industry was another key influence. "I love Diana Ross and the Supremes, and every time I saw them on TV or in concert, I was just in awe of the way they dressed – the dignity, the fashion, and everything that they would wear was just special to me."

Introducing the Black Barbie doll in 1980 wasn't just a design decision — it was a cultural milestone. More than just a toy, she became a powerful symbol of Black beauty and identity in popular culture. "The African-American community was really looking for something they could identify with — something that made their children feel proud," Perkins remembers. "I think we achieved that with Black Barbie doll."★



A MILESTONE

The *Black Barbie* doll's legacy and cultural impact became the focus of *Black Barbie: A Documentary* (2023), directed by Lagueria Davis. The film tells the story of the doll's launch in 1980 and emphasizes the work of three pivotal Mattel employees: Stacey McBride-Irby, Beulah Mae Mitchell, and Kitty Black Perkins, who were instrumental in the doll's creation.

Featuring interviews with influential figures such as producer Shonda Rhimes, ballerina Misty Copeland, and Olympic fencer Ibtihaj Muhammad, the documentary highlights the cultural impact *Black Barbie* had on society, especially how it helped Black girls feel seen, represented, and valued during that time.



A look back at...



Actress Sally Field wins the Academy Award for Best Actress for *Norma Rae*



The Shining, directed by Stanley Kubrick, premieres



Singer John Lennon is assassinated outside his New York City home



The video game *Pac-Man* is launched in Japan



Gloria Gaynor wins the Grammy for Best Disco Recording with *I Will Survive*

FASHION BREAKDOWN

Black Barbie | 1980



Pure Versatility

Her long drop earrings can be swapped for 70s-style hoops or subtle studs

@ sereinne_

Fashion Expert & Designer



Warm Glow

Her makeup is soft and natural, with thin, arched brows and a golden-toned cut crease that highlights the eyes and lashes. Her lips are finished with a caramel hue, a popular trend during the 1970s.



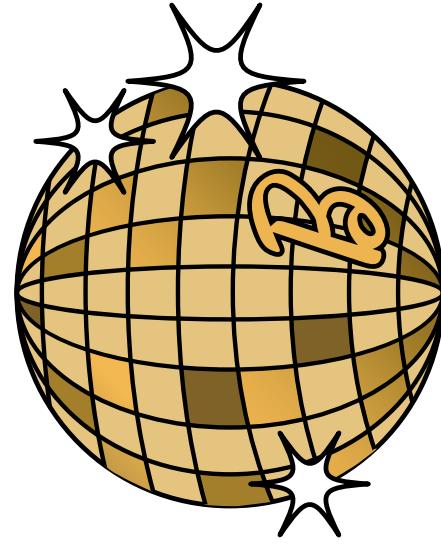
Afro Chic

Her beautiful, short, curly black hair celebrates the popularity of the afro in the seventies. Includes a pick to shape and add even more volume to her hair.



Wrap & Snap Design

The striking bodysuit is paired with a wrap skirt that fastens with a button. The design offers a sleek, modern silhouette, with a slit that can be styled at either the front or back.



Disco Style

Her outfit is rooted in disco culture – a fitted knit bodysuit with a boat neckline, long sleeves featuring cutouts, and an open back. The neckline is accented with a bold graphic design in a metallic finish that mimics golden foil. The bodysuit tapers at the waist and ends in a culotte cut, giving the illusion of a sleek blouse paired with micro-shorts when worn alone.



Stylish Steps

Her red high-heeled shoes set her apart from previous Barbie dolls. They feature soft plastic straps that wrap around the ankles and an embossed detail on the upper, giving the heels a more refined, intricate finish.





The pop superstar broke racial and gender barriers, becoming one of the first Black women to achieve global musical success.

INSPIRING WOMEN

Diana Ross

SINGER + ACTRESS

The Supremes' ability to connect with audiences and influence fashion helped the pop group transcend music, becoming a symbol of the Motown era. Below: The limited-edition *Diana Ross Barbie* doll by Bob Mackie, released in 2003.



With her unmistakable voice and unmatched stage presence, Diana Ross has shaped a career spanning more than six decades. She stands as one of the most influential and successful artists in music history, with over 100 million records sold worldwide.

Born in Detroit, Michigan, Ross showed a passion for music from an early age. At 15, while studying at Cass Tech High School with dreams of becoming a fashion designer, she joined the girl group The Primettes. Two years later, the group rebranded as The Supremes under the legendary Motown label, with a new lineup including Ross, Mary Wilson, and Barbara Martin.

The Supremes became a pop phenomenon in the U.S. and one of the most successful girl groups of all time, with over a dozen Billboard number-one hits — including "Where Did Our Love Go" (1964), "Baby Love" (1964), and "Stop! In the Name of Love" (1965). Ross shone as the group's lead vocalist, and her glamorous style — all sequins and sparkle — cemented her status as a fashion icon and later, a muse for the Black Barbie doll.

In 1970, Ross launched her solo career with the album *Diana Ross*, a massive success featuring classics like "Ain't No Mountain High Enough" and "Reach Out and Touch



Ross with her children Rhonda Ross, Tracee Ellis Ross, Ross Naess, and Evan Ross, along with producer Berry Gordy—with whom she had a relationship and shares daughter Rhonda—at the 1995 Soul Train Awards.



(Somebody's Hand)." Her distinctive sound, blending pop, soul, and R&B, helped shape a musical legacy and sealed her status as a musical icon of her generation. She continued her momentum throughout the decade with hit albums like *Lady Sings the Blues* (1972), which also served as the soundtrack to the biopic of the same name, where Ross portrayed the legendary Billie Holiday — a performance that earned her an Academy Award nomination for Best Actress. She went on to star in *Mahogany* (1975) and *The Wiz* (1978), a reimagining of *The Wizard of Oz*.

Ross's career in the 1980s was marked by artistic reinvention, major collaborations, and commercial success. In 1980, she released *Diana*, a chart-topping album that featured disco anthems like "Upside Down" and "I'm Coming Out," reaffirming her dominance in the disco and pop music scene. Her duet "Endless Love" (1981) with Lionel Richie became one of the decade's most iconic ballads. From there, she continued releasing albums almost annually, solidifying her reputation as a global entertainment legend.

In the 2000s, Ross continued to evolve. She released *I Love You* in 2006 and embarked on numerous international tours. In 2021, she released her 25th studio album, *Thank You*, and earned a Grammy nomination in 2023.

Ross's influence goes far beyond music and fashion. She was a pioneer in the visibility of Black women in entertainment, and her impact continues to inspire generations of artists — from Beyoncé to Lizzo. She has received countless honors, including the Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award in 2012 and the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2016. ★



The cover of *Diana*, Ross's 1980 self-titled album and the best-selling record of her career. Below, Ross receives the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Barack Obama in 2016.



You can't just sit there and wait for people to give you that golden dream. You've got to get out there and make it happen for yourself."

Diana Ross



Her glamorous and sophisticated style—including collaborations with designers like Bob Mackie—crowned her as an undisputed fashion queen. Here, performing at Caesars Windsor in 2023.

Bob Mackie



B

Bob Mackie is one of the most iconic and recognizable fashion designers in entertainment history. Often nicknamed "The Sultan of Sequins," he rose to fame with dazzling, theatrical designs that blend luxury, showmanship, and extraordinary attention to detail. His creations include some of the most unforgettable looks in pop culture, known for their bold, provocative style.

Born in Monterey Park, California, Mackie began his career as a design assistant in the film industry, working alongside Hollywood legend Edith Head. This early experience taught him the art of crafting glamorous, elaborate costumes for the big screen.

In the 1960s, Mackie joined the team of costume designer Ray Aghayan and transitioned to television, kicking off a decades-long career that would define the visual style of some of the biggest stars in entertainment. His breakout project was *The Carol*

MASTERS OF STYLE



The legendary designer in his studio in 1990 — his style continues to inspire designers and artists around the world. Below: With Diana Ross, wearing one of his creations in New York. During the '70s, Mackie designed some of her most memorable stage outfits and album covers, blending drama and elegance.



Above: The 1990 *Bob Mackie Gold* Barbie doll. Right: Actress Ann-Margret in a sparkling Mackie original, 1980. Below: Cher stuns in one of her most iconic looks, a Mackie design, at the 1986 Academy Awards, alongside actor Don Ameche.



Burnett Show, where he began in 1967 and designed some of TV's most iconic looks. At the same time, he became Cher's personal designer, creating a series of daring, over-the-top outfits for *The Sonny & Cher Comedy Hour*. These looks helped establish Cher's status as a fashion trailblazer, breaking norms with a glamorous and audacious flair.

Mackie also designed for powerhouse performers like Tina Turner, Elton John, Barbra Streisand, and Diana Ross. His signature use of sequins, feathers, and crystals defined the extravagant style of the '70s and '80s — making him a favorite among celebrities. In the 1990s,

Mackie brought his personal style to the world of dolls. He designed over 40 special-edition Barbie dolls, many of which have become sought-after collectibles among fans and fashion lovers alike.

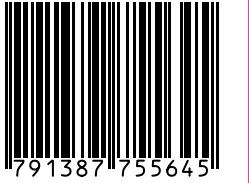
But Mackie didn't just dress stars — he helped shape their public personas and reimagine what glamour could be. Over the course of his career, he has won nine Emmy Awards, a Tony, and earned three Oscar nominations for costume design. In 2019, he received the Geoffrey Beene Lifetime Achievement Award from the CFDA, honoring his lasting legacy in the world of fashion.★

COLLECTOR'S EDITION

Barbie™



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