



# Cat's in the Cradle

"**Cat's in the Cradle**" is a 1974 folk rock song by Harry Chapin from the album *Verities & Balderdash*. The single topped the US *Billboard* Hot 100 in December 1974. As Chapin's only number-one song, it became the best known of his work and a staple for folk rock music. Chapin's recording of the song was nominated for the 1975 Grammy Award for Best Male Pop Vocal Performance and was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame in 2011.<sup>[5]</sup>

## Composition and background

"Cat's in the Cradle" is narrated by a man who becomes a father in the first verse. He is repeatedly too busy with his work to spend time with his son, despite his son looking up to him and promising he will grow up to be just like him. When the son graduates from college, he declines his father's offer to relax with him and instead asks for the car keys. In the final verse, the now-retired father calls his adult son and asks to spend some time together, but the son is now too busy with his own work and family, to spend time with his dad, and the father realizes his son has indeed grown up to be just like him.

The song's lyrics began as a poem written by Chapin's wife, Sandra "Sandy" Gaston; the poem itself was inspired by the awkward relationship between her first husband, James Cashmore, and his father, John, a politician who served as Brooklyn borough president. She was also inspired by a country music song she had heard on the radio.<sup>[6]</sup> Chapin also said the song was about his own relationship with his son, Josh, admitting, "Frankly, this song scares me to death."<sup>[7]</sup>

## Reception

*Cash Box* called it "a tender story of a father and his son and a perfect representation of how roles change in the relationship over the years," stating it was a "lyrical delight."<sup>[8]</sup> *Record World*

### "Cat's in the Cradle"



Side-A label of the U.S. vinyl single

#### Single by Harry Chapin

from the album *Verities & Balderdash*

B-side	"Vacancy"
Released	October 1, 1974
Recorded	1973
Studio	Connecticut Recording Studios, Bridgeport, Connecticut
Genre	Folk rock <sup>[1][2]</sup> · soft rock <sup>[3][4]</sup>
Length	3:29 (single) 3:45 (album version)
Label	Elektra
Songwriter(s)	Harry Chapin Sandra Chapin
Producer(s)	Paul Leka
<b>Harry Chapin singles chronology</b>	

said that the song "deals with the preoccupations plaguing parenthood" and that it "bridges the generation gap by pointing up mutual faults."<sup>[9]</sup>

"WOLD" (1973)	"Cat's in the Cradle" (1974)	"What Made America Famous?" (1974)
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## Charts

### Weekly charts

Chart (1974–1975)	Peak position
Australia (Kent Music Report) <sup>[10]</sup>	6
Canada Top Singles ( <i>RPM</i> ) <sup>[11]</sup>	3
Canada Adult Contemporary ( <i>RPM</i> ) <sup>[12]</sup>	1
US <i>Billboard</i> Hot 100 <sup>[13]</sup>	1
US Adult Contemporary ( <i>Billboard</i> ) <sup>[14]</sup>	6
US <i>Cash Box</i> Top 100 <sup>[15]</sup>	1

### Year-end charts

Chart (1974)	Position
Canada Top Singles ( <i>RPM</i> ) <sup>[16]</sup>	99

Chart (1975)	Position
Australia (Kent Music Report) <sup>[17]</sup>	51
US <i>Billboard</i> Hot 100 <sup>[18]</sup>	38

## Certifications

Region	Certification	Certified units/sales
United States (RIAA) <sup>[19]</sup>	Gold	1,000,000 <sup>^</sup>
<sup>^</sup> Shipments figures based on certification alone.		

## Ugly Kid Joe version

In 1992, American hard rock band Ugly Kid Joe included a cover of the song, renamed **"Cats in the Cradle"** (without the apostrophe), on their debut album, *America's Least Wanted*. The cover was issued as a single in 1993 and experienced commercial success, becoming a top-10 hit in numerous countries.

### Critical reception

AllMusic editor Stephen Thomas Erlewine remarked on the band's "revamped" version of the song.<sup>[21]</sup> Mary Lynn White from *Calgary Herald* said their version "proves you're deep too."<sup>[22]</sup> Jason Fliegel from *The Cavalier Daily* felt the band has redone the song "in its own unique style".<sup>[23]</sup> Deborah Frost of *Entertainment Weekly* called it a "scarily straight" cover.<sup>[24]</sup>

**"Cats in the Cradle"**



Single by **Ugly Kid Joe**

from the album *America's Least*

Steve Hochman of *Los Angeles Times* said, "Turning Harry Chapin's "Cat's in the Cradle" into a power ballad was a bad idea to begin with; making it sound neither snotty nor particularly sincere only compounds the error."<sup>[25]</sup> Tom Ford from *Toledo Blade* wrote that they "do an excellent job", "adding power to the sing-song chorus, and a crashing finale that removes its coffeehouse patina."<sup>[26]</sup>

## Commercial performance

"Cats in the Cradle" peaked at number six on the US *Billboard* Hot 100, giving Ugly Kid Joe their highest-charting single on the ranking. The song also reached number three on the *Billboard* Album Rock Tracks chart and number 11 on the Top 40/Mainstream chart. The single sold 500,000 copies domestically, earning a gold certification from the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA). In Canada, the song peaked at number one on *The Record*'s singles chart and at number 11 on the *RPM* 100 Hit Tracks chart. Outside North America, the cover topped Australia's *ARIA* Singles Chart for a

<i><b><u>Wanted</u></b></i>		
<b><u>Released</u></b>	1993	
<b><u>Genre</u></b>	Hard rock <sup>[20]</sup>	
<b><u>Length</u></b>	4:01	
<b><u>Label</u></b>	<u>Mercury</u>	
<b><u>Songwriter(s)</u></b>	<u>Harry Chapin,</u> <u>Sandra Chapin</u>	
<b><u>Producer(s)</u></b>	<u>Mark Dodson</u>	
<b><u>Ugly Kid Joe singles chronology</u></b>		
"So Damn Cool" (1992)	<b>"Cats in the Cradle"</b> (1993)	"Busy Bee" (1993)
<b><u>Music video</u></b>		
"Cats in the Cradle" ( <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B32yjbCSVpU">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B32yjbCSVpU</a> ) on <u>YouTube</u>		

week and reached the top five in Iceland, Ireland, Norway, New Zealand, Sweden and Switzerland. In the United Kingdom, "Cats in the Cradle" charted at number seven on the UK Singles Chart.

## Charts

### Weekly charts

Chart (1993)	Peak position
Australia (ARIA) <sup>[27]</sup>	1
Austria (Ö3 Austria Top 40) <sup>[28]</sup>	7
Belgium (Ultratop 50 Flanders) <sup>[29]</sup>	20
Canada ( <i>The Record</i> ) <sup>[30]</sup>	1
Canada Top Singles ( <i>RPM</i> ) <sup>[31]</sup>	11
Canada Adult Contemporary ( <i>RPM</i> ) <sup>[32]</sup>	21
Europe (Eurochart Hot 100) <sup>[33]</sup>	16
France (SNEP) <sup>[34]</sup>	28
Germany (Official German Charts) <sup>[35]</sup>	10
Iceland (Íslenski Listinn Topp 40) <sup>[36]</sup>	2
Ireland (IRMA) <sup>[37]</sup>	3
Netherlands (Dutch Top 40) <sup>[38]</sup>	14
Netherlands (Single Top 100) <sup>[39]</sup>	12
New Zealand (Recorded Music NZ) <sup>[40]</sup>	4
Norway (VG-lista) <sup>[41]</sup>	2
Portugal (AFP) <sup>[42]</sup>	8
Sweden (Sverigetopplistan) <sup>[43]</sup>	4
Switzerland (Schweizer Hitparade) <sup>[44]</sup>	5
UK Singles (OCC) <sup>[45]</sup>	7
US <i>Billboard</i> Hot 100 <sup>[46]</sup>	6

### Year-end charts

Chart (1993)	Position
Australia (ARIA) <sup>[49]</sup>	8
Canada Top Singles ( <i>RPM</i> ) <sup>[50]</sup>	79
Europe (Eurochart Hot 100) <sup>[51]</sup>	40
Germany (Official German Charts) <sup>[52]</sup>	25
Iceland (Íslenski Listinn Topp 40) <sup>[53]</sup>	32
Netherlands (Dutch Top 40) <sup>[54]</sup>	65
Netherlands (Single Top 100) <sup>[55]</sup>	70
New Zealand (Recorded Music NZ) <sup>[56]</sup>	24
Switzerland (Schweizer Hitparade) <sup>[57]</sup>	26
UK Singles (OCC) <sup>[58]</sup>	74
US <i>Billboard</i> Hot 100 <sup>[59]</sup>	61

### Decade-end charts

Chart (1990–1999)	Position
Canada (Nielsen SoundScan) <sup>[60]</sup>	45

Chart (1993)	Peak position
US Mainstream Rock <i>(Billboard)</i> <sup>[47]</sup>	3
US Mainstream Top 40 <i>(Billboard)</i> <sup>[48]</sup>	11

## Certifications

Region	Certification	Certified units/sales
Australia <span>(ARIA)</span> <sup>[49]</sup>	Platinum	70,000 <sup>^</sup>
United States <span>(RIAA)</span> <sup>[61]</sup>	Gold	500,000 <sup>^</sup>
^ Shipments figures based on certification alone.		

## Release history

Region	Date	Format(s)	Label(s)	Ref.
United States	1993	7-inch vinyl · cassette	Mercury	
United Kingdom	March 1, 1993	7-inch vinyl · 12-inch vinyl · CD · cassette		<sup>[62]</sup>

## Elsewhere in popular culture

Rapper Darryl "DMC" McDaniels was inspired to rewrite "Cat's in the Cradle" and perform it as "Just Like Me," featuring Sarah McLachlan. The song was released from DMC's album *Checks Thugs and Rock n Roll* in March 2006; it tells the story of his birth and adoption.<sup>[63][64]</sup>

The song is used in the St. Patrick's Day episode of the American version of *The Office*, when Dwight uses the song to guilt trip his coworker Jim Halpert into going home to his wife and child; the attempt is almost successful, playing on the clear theme of the relationship between father and son in the song. Ultimately, Dwight's attempt backfires.

In season 4, episode 7 of *How I Met Your Mother*, Barney Stinson, who was abandoned by his father as a child, performs an emotional rendition of the song at a karaoke bar.

In the movie *Shrek the Third*, Donkey starts singing the song as their boat departs after Shrek finds out Fiona is pregnant.

In the video game *Grand Theft Auto V*, the original version can be heard playing in the background when the player visits the Diamond Casino and Hotel. It is also featured on the in-game radio station Los Santos Rock Radio.

The song was used in a 1993 anti-terrorism advert Public Service Advert in Northern Ireland that plays on the song's theme of a father who neglects his son in order to show a terrorist neglecting his family and his son turning out to be like his father and suffering the consequences in dying by going down the same life path. The video ends with the slogan "Don't Suffer It, Change It" and the number of the confidential telephones that were in operation at the time to report terrorist activity in Northern Ireland.<sup>[65][66]</sup>

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## External links

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- [Lyrics at The Harry Chapin Archive](http://www.harrychapin.com/music/cats.shtml) (<http://www.harrychapin.com/music/cats.shtml>)
  - [Guitar Tabs and Chords at Fretbase](https://web.archive.org/web/20090315065918/http://www.fretbase.com/songs/1917-cats-in-the-cradle) (<https://web.archive.org/web/20090315065918/http://www.fretbase.com/songs/1917-cats-in-the-cradle>)
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