

= Mercy , Mercy ( Don Covay song ) =

" Mercy , Mercy " ( sometimes referred to as " Have Mercy " ) is a soul song first recorded by American singer / songwriter Don Covay in 1964 . It established Covay 's recording career and influenced later vocal and guitar styles . The songwriting is usually credited to Covay and Ron Alonzo Miller , although other co @-@ writers ' names have also appeared on various releases .

In late 1964 , the song became a hit , reaching number one on the Cash Box R & B chart and number 35 on the Billboard Hot 100 . Several artists have recorded " Mercy , Mercy " , including a well @-@ known version by the Rolling Stones in 1965 . More recently , Covay 's original version has received attention as one of Jimi Hendrix 's first recordings as a sideman .

= = Recording and composition = =

In 1964 , after years of writing and recording songs for several record labels , Don Covay was again in search of a record deal . A recording session was arranged for May 13 , 1964 , at the A1 Recording Studio in New York City , operated by Atlantic Records co @-@ founder Herb Abramson . New York radio station WWRL disc jockey Nathaniel " Magnificent " Montague provided financing for the session . Covay has given differing accounts about the recording . In one , " Mercy , Mercy " was recorded the day following a well @-@ received performance by Covay and his band the Goodtimers the previous night . For the session , various members of the Goodtimers have been mentioned , including guitarist Ronald Alonzo Miller ( also suggested as the bassist ) , backup singer George " King " Clemons , bassist Horace " Ace " Hall , drummer Bernard Purdie , guitarist Bob Bushnell , guitarist Jimmy Johnson , and a young Jimi Hendrix .

Music critic Richie Unterberger describes " Mercy , Mercy " as a " soul tune with a gospel overlay in the pleading tone of the lyrics " . It opens with the refrain , sung by Covay with a higher @-@ register harmony :

Covay 's vocal is described as " impassioned " and " assured " . Music historian Peter Guralnick notes that the guitar part " established a new guitar dominated soul sound " . It plays a prominent role , beginning with the chorded lead @-@ in , which music writer Keith Shadwick describes as " rhythmic patterns that are tasteful modifications of the motifs favored by Curtis Mayfield and Jimmy Johnson ? and there have been suggestions that it is Johnson himself on the record " . Covay recalled that the song was recorded in one or two takes and additional single @-@ note fills at the fade @-@ out suggest a second guitarist or an overdub .

= = Releases and charts = =

Rosemart Records released " Mercy , Mercy " , with the artist name " Don Covay and the Goodtimers " , as a single by in August 1964 . Producer Abramson 's former label Atlantic picked up the distribution and it entered the Billboard Hot 100 on September 5 , 1964 . The single reached number 35 during a stay of ten weeks on the chart . It was also a best seller in the R & B market , reaching number one on the Cash Box R & B chart ( Billboard 's R & B chart was suspended at the time ) .

An original pressing of the Rosemart single lists the composers as " Covay @-@ Miller " . The performing rights organization BMI shows the writers as " Donald Covay " and " Ronald Alonzo Miller " . However , different releases list " Covay @-@ Ott " , including Covay 's Mercy ! album ( Atlantic SD ? 8104 ) and the Atlantic UK single ( AT.4006 ) ( Horace Ott played keyboards on and is credited with several songs on Mercy ! ) . Additionally , Miller is sometimes identified as " Ronald Norman Miller " , a Motown composer , and " Ronald Dean Miller " , a later R & B songwriter . BMI does not list " Mercy , Mercy " among Ott 's or the other Miller 's songwriting credits .

= = Hendrix involvement = =

Beginning in 2002 , it has become generally accepted that Jimi Hendrix contributed a guitar part to "

Mercy , Mercy " . According to backup singer Clemons :

Curtis Knight , Jimmy [ Jimi Hendrix ] , and I all used to live in the same apartment building ? around 81st Street [ near the A1 Studio ] ... Don Covay came around shopping for a record deal . He used to go down to the Harlem clubs looking for somebody to use ... on songs he was looking to sell to Atlantic [ Records ] . He 'd say , ' I got this tune I want you to help me with ... come on down to the studio ... Can you sing this part ? Can you play this part ? ' .

Covay has sometimes identified Hendrix as a participant and on others does not mention him . According to Hendrix biographer Steven Roby , Hendrix " arrived at A1 Studio [ and ] was asked to play a simple Curtis Mayfield @-@ like R & B riff and not overstep his boundaries at the song 's dramatic pause " . However , Shadwick feels the song 's guitarist " certainly enjoys a prominent role ? and perhaps this does suggest a regular band @-@ member performing a well @-@ learned routine rather than a last minute substitution " . Music writer David Malvinni describes Hendrix 's performance : " Hendrix deftly combines chords with a melodic line in a style that later will come to full development in his classic ' Little Wing ' " .

According to Clemons , Hendrix performed " Mercy , Mercy " at several small clubs before Covay 's single was released . Booker T. & the M.G. ' s guitarist Steve Cropper recalled meeting Hendrix at the Stax Records studio in Memphis in 1964 , when Hendrix mentioned that he had played on Covay 's " Mercy , Mercy " :

That about knocked me to my knees ... because that was one of my favorite records at the time . I hadn 't worked with Don [ Covay ] yet , but I asked Jimi to show me that great lick he played . [ Later ] Jimi took my guitar and started playing that sucker upside down [ Cropper played a right @-@ handed guitar , while Hendrix played left @-@ handed ] . I laughed and told him , ' I can 't learn that lick by looking at it that way ' .

Cropper 's recollection is supported by a 1968 Rolling Stone interview with Hendrix : " He [ Cropper ] showed me how to play lots of things and I showed him how I played ' Have Mercy ' or something like that " . Cropper later recorded an instrumental version of the song with Booker T. & the M.G. ' s for their 1965 Soul Dressing album .

Hendrix performed " Mercy , Mercy " with Curtis Knight and the Squires in 1965 . A live version with Knight on vocals , was recorded at George 's Club 20 in Hackensack , New Jersey ; it later appeared on the German bootleg album Mr. Pitiful ( Astan 201019 ) , released about 1981 with Curtis Knight manager Ed Chalpin listed as the producer . Hendrix also performed the song in 1966 with his band Jimmy James and the Blue Flames at the Cafe Wha ? in Greenwich Village . In England later that year , Noel Redding recalled that it was one of the first songs that he played at his audition for the Jimi Hendrix Experience ; it was also the first song performed during Mitch Mitchell 's audition ( Redding had initially auditioned with drummer Aynsley Dunbar ) .

During the Experience 's first performances during a short tour of France in October 1966 and before they worked up some original material , they played the song along with a few other R & B cover songs during their 15 @-@ minute opening sets . A performance by the Experience at the Flamingo Club in London on February 4 , 1967 , was recorded and has been issued on several bootleg albums . Hendrix announces the song as " very straight Top @-@ 40 R & B rock ' n ' roll record ... a little thing called ' Have Mercy ' ... ' Have Mercy on Me , Baby ' " . The three and a half minute song features more elaborate and driving guitar work , although remains focused on chording .

= = Rolling Stones version = =

The Rolling Stones recorded their interpretation of " Mercy , Mercy " during their early American recording sessions , when they were beginning to emerge from their blues- and R & B @-@ cover band roots . Their first attempt came during their second session at the Chess Records studio in Chicago in November 1964 . This version , which Malvinni calls " workmanlike " , remains unreleased . On their third Chess visit , they recorded the final version of the song . The session took place on May 10 and 11 , 1965 , with engineer Ron Malo .

The Stones generally follow Covay 's arrangement , but Unterberger notes the guitar work : " [ they

] really upped the guitar wattage , as heard in the memorable opening section of interwoven guitars and , more particularly , in the booming low fuzz guitar riffs that underpin the verses " . Malvinni comments on the song 's development since the first attempt :

[ Guitarist Keith ] Richards had absorbed the guitar part , and he gives an original , strident , and more improvisatory interpretation of the Hendrix part , and one with more rhythmic confidence than his first take on the song . In general , with a slightly overdriven ( distorted ) timbre and daring verve , Richards takes the song in the direction of rock .

Mick Jagger 's vocal for the song has been compared to Covay 's . AllMusic critic Steve Huey notes " [ he ] clearly modeled his vocal on Covay 's original , which apparently had a lasting impact on the way Jagger subsequently used his voice " . Guralnick calls Covay 's style a " formative influence " on Jagger , who was " gaining confidence as a soul @-@ rock vocalist " .

The song was not released as a single , however , it was used as the lead track on the Rolling Stones ' Out of Our Heads American album . Released on July 30 , 1965 , it became their first number one album in the US . The album , released in the UK on September 24 , 1965 , reached number two in the UK and includes the song as the second track . The group was filmed performing the song during their first appearance with Mick Taylor in Hyde Park on July 5 , 1969 , which was later included on the 2006 Stones in the Park expanded DVD .

= = Other renditions = =

Several other musical artists have recorded " Mercy , Mercy " , including : Cliff Bennett and the Rebel Rousers , the Chocolate Watchband , Los Yorks , Jeff Lynne , Wilson Pickett , Alan Price Set , the Remains , Phoebe Snow , the 13th Floor Elevators , the Wailers , and Gary U.S. Bonds , Jeff Lynne , Chuck Jackson and Todd Rundgren for the album Celebrating the Music of Don Covay .