

= La Isla Bonita =

" La Isla Bonita " ( English : The Beautiful Island ) is a song by American singer Madonna from her third studio album True Blue ( 1986 ) . It was released as the album 's final single on February 25 , 1987 by Sire Records . The instrumental version of the song was first offered to Michael Jackson before Madonna both accepted it and wrote the lyrics and melody . " La Isla Bonita " is noted for being the first Madonna song to have a Latino influence in it , with arrangements of Cuban drums and Spanish guitar , maracas , harmonicas and a mix of synthesized and real drumming . The lyrics of the song tell about a beautiful island and was a tribute to the beauty of the Latin people according to Madonna .

Following its release , " La Isla Bonita " received positive appreciation from critics . It also achieved worldwide popularity , topping the record charts in countries such as Austria , Canada , France , Germany and Switzerland . It became Madonna 's fourth number @-@ one single in the United Kingdom , giving her the record for most number @-@ one singles among female artists . In the United States , it reached number four on the Billboard Hot 100 chart .

In the accompanying music video , Madonna portrayed two opposite characters ? a pious girl and a passionate Latina . The Latin style and the flamenco red dress she wore became a trend later . The song is one of the most performed live songs by Madonna , appearing in six of her world tours , the most recent being on the Rebel Heart Tour ( 2015 ? 16 ) . Madonna has regularly performed the song in its Spanish form , sometimes with tribal or folk songs and remixes to accompany it . The song has been covered by a number of artists including Mexican recording artist Byanka ( 1988 ) and French recording artist Alizée for her album Psychédélices ( 2008 ) .

= = Writing and inspiration = =

" La Isla Bonita " was written by Madonna , Patrick Leonard and Bruce Gaitsch . The song was previously written as a lament for the town of San Pedro in the island of Ambergris Caye in Belize and was offered to Michael Jackson for his Bad album , who , according to Gaitsch , turned it down . While working with Leonard on the True Blue album , Madonna accepted it in Jackson 's place and wrote the song 's lyrics and melody , thus earning herself a co @-@ writing credit .

" La Isla Bonita " was the first Madonna song to employ Spanish motifs , going so far as to include Spanish lyrics . The Spanish theme would reoccur throughout her career , manifesting itself in lyrics for " Who 's That Girl " ( 1987 ) , " Spanish Eyes " ( 1989 ) , " I 'm Going Bananas " ( 1990 ) , the Spanish version of " You 'll See " ( 1995 ) called " Verás " , " Be Careful ( Cuidado Con Mi Corazón ) " ( 1999 ) which was a duet with Ricky Martin , " Lo Que Siente La Mujer " ? the Spanish version for " What It Feels Like for a Girl " ( 2001 ) , " Sorry " ( 2005 ) and " Spanish Lesson " from Hard Candy ( 2008 ) . Madonna described the song as her tribute to the " beauty and mystery of Latin American people " . According to her " Latin rhythms often dominate our uptempo compositions . It 's like we 're possessed . We both think that we were Latin in another life . "

= = Composition = =

" La Isla Bonita " is a Hispanic styled pop song . It is one of the characteristic works of the collaboration between Madonna and Patrick Leonard . The single mixes the sound of different instruments like Cuban drums and Spanish guitar , maracas and harmonicas and a mix of synthesized and real drumming . The song is written in the key of C ? minor and is set in the time signature of common time like most pop songs , moving at a moderate tempo of 95 beats per minute . The song starts with a musical introduction performed on a Cuban drum , before descending into synthesized beats and Spanish guitar fusion . Madonna sings the chorus in the same G ? 3 to C ? 5 range . After the second chorus there is a Spanish guitar interlude whence Madonna 's voice expands to F ? minor as she sings " I want to be where the sun warms the sky " and then comes down to a C ? minor when she sings " loves a girl " . There is another musical interlude with a harmonica and the song , after another chorus , ends with fading out and Madonna 's voice uttering

the words " El dijo que te ama ( He said he loves you ) " .

The phrase " La Isla Bonita " translates to " The Beautiful Island " in English . The song has four lines sung in Spanish , a theme which Madonna later incorporated in her 1987 single " Who 's That Girl " . The lyrics begin by describing Madonna as a tourist who prays " that the days would last , they went so fast " simultaneously isolating the other Latin people as them ( " you can watch them go by " ) . In her book *Women and popular music* , author Sheila Whiteley said that the chorus of the song places its emphasis on the incantatory present participle ( " Tropical the island breeze , all of nature wild and free , this is where I long to be " ) . The song draws connotations from the supplicant before its explicit focus on the chorus .

The title and first line of the song refer to an island called San Pedro , held by some to be Ambergris Caye in Belize , referencing the town of San Pedro , which has since adopted the song 's title as the town 's principal nickname . However , Gaitsch has mentioned that at that time , Madonna was spending time in a U.S. town of the same name , and both Madonna and her then husband Sean Penn were good friends with a poet called San Pedro and novelist Charles Bukowski . Madonna herself has not clarified this in any interview . Instead , she referred the song as being a tribute to Latin America and its people , along with an island and to herself . In 2014 , while working on her thirteenth studio album *Rebel Heart* with producer Diplo , Madonna recorded a dubplate of " La Isla Bonita " with new lyrics for his *Major Lazer* project . Diplo premiered the full version of it in March 2015 during his show on BBC Radio 1 .

= = Critical reception = =

In a review for the album *The Immaculate Collection* , David Browne of *Entertainment Weekly* compared the song with the moves of Carmen Miranda on MTV . *Slant Magazine* music critic Sal Cinquemani , in a review for the *True Blue* album , called the song one of Madonna 's greatest , most influential and timeless songs . Author Maury Dean in his book *Rock ' n ' Roll Gold Rush* praised the song saying , " Madonna coos a Spanish lullaby . Sizzly romance blooms among the cozy sheltering palms . Tough tunes for most males to shrug off . "

Rikky Rooksby , in his book *The Complete Guide to the Music of Madonna* called the song " a little escapism " . Dawn Keetley in his book *Public Women , Public Words* called the song one of Madonna 's most perfect songs capturing her inner emotional life . William McKeen called the song " tranquil " and " Up on the Roof type imaginary escapes from the city snarl , the kind of Latin @-@ flavored sweets that Blondie could never resist . " Ken Barnes of *Creem* wrote the song is " no " *Open Your Heart* " , but its lilting ( yet reflective ) quality transcends the south @-@ of @-@ the @-@ border cliches . "

Jon Pareles of *The New York Times* said that " La Isla Bonita " was one of Madonna 's " friendlier " love songs . Don McLeese of the *Chicago Sun @-@ Times* believed that the song was the best song on the album , as well as the most memorable . Meanwhile , Steve Morse of *The Boston Globe* believed that it was one of her " prettier " songs . Joey Guerra of *Houston Chronicle* , while reviewing Madonna 's *Sticky & Sweet Tour* , called the song a true retro one . Marty Racine , from the same newspaper , believed that the song was one that stood out on the album . *Los Angeles Daily News* , when discussing Madonna 's style of music , believed that " La Isla Bonita " was a song that was " pointing in [ a ] welcome direction . "

= = Chart performance = =

" La Isla Bonita " debuted at number 49 and reached a peak of number four on the *Billboard Hot 100* chart in May 1987 . The song was Madonna 's second number one single on the *Adult Contemporary* chart , following 1986 's " *Live to Tell* " . It became the 11th consecutive top @-@ five hit for Madonna , a feat surpassed only by the Beatles and Elvis Presley . The single also found success on the *Hot Dance Singles Sales* chart , where it peaked at number one . In Canada , the song debuted at number 74 for the issue dated April 4 , 1987 and reached the top of the chart in its tenth week on the issue dated June 6 , 1987 , remaining on the chart for 25 weeks . It placed at

number 22 on the RPM Year @-@ end chart for 1987 .

In the United Kingdom , " La Isla Bonita " topped the UK Singles Chart for two weeks , giving Madonna her fourth number @-@ one single on the chart . She became the female artist with the most number @-@ one singles in the British chart history ? a record that has since been maintained by Madonna to date . The single was certified silver by the British Phonographic Industry ( BPI ) for shipment of 250 @,@ 000 copies of the single . According to the Official Charts Company , the song has sold 435 @,@ 000 copies in the UK .

" La Isla Bonita " was Madonna 's first number one song in France , where it spent three weeks at the top spot in July 1987 . It was certified gold by the Syndicat National de l'Édition Phonographique ( SNEP ) for shipment of 500 @,@ 000 copies . " La Isla Bonita " remains Madonna 's best @-@ selling single in France , selling over 771 @,@ 000 copies . Across Europe , it became her fourth number one hit from True Blue , topping the Eurochart Hot 100 for three weeks in 1987 . The song also peaked atop the charts in Switzerland , Belgium and Austria along with reaching the top @-@ five in Ireland , Italy , Netherlands , Norway and Sweden , and the top @-@ ten in Spain .

= = Music video = =

The music video was set in Los Angeles and was directed by Mary Lambert , who directed a number of Madonna 's 1980s videos , including those for " Borderline " , " Like a Virgin " and " Like a Prayer " . Benicio del Toro appeared in the video as a background character . The video first appeared on MTV on March 29 , 1987 . It starts with showing a number of Latin people dancing in a Spanish barrio as Madonna watches them from her window . She plays two different characters in the video : a boyishly @-@ dressed Catholic woman and a colorful Flamenco dancer . The characters are quite opposite in their portrayal , which is emphasized by two opposing settings for the characters . Firstly , the video shows a sparsely decorated room with an altar and pictures of Hispanic people on the wall . Madonna plays a pale @-@ looking pious girl wearing a white petticoat and her short hair brushed back . She cries in her room and reluctantly ignores the invitation of the Latinos in the street to join them .

The austerity and the passivity of the first character is however contrasted vividly with the passion and activity of the second character . Madonna in this portrayal wears a red voluminous extravagant Spanish style dress , which shows off her décolletage , with a middle parting in the skirt , while wearing red carnations in her hair . Complementing this passionate look , the second setting features a bright red room with red candles and candelabra . While the spiritual and submissive Madonna watches the Latinos and prays in her room , the passionate Madonna dances and leaves the room to join the dancers in the streets .

While both settings seem to suggest that Madonna 's characters live in the barrio and may be Latina themselves , the portrayal of Madonna in the dancing scenes ( lush , flashy , colorful ) contrasts with the Latinos in the street ( sparsely worn out dresses ) . She dances around and even flirts but does not get really involved with them as the last scene shows Madonna dancing off the screen . The video symbolizes the link between Latino culture and Catholicism . The two characters symbolize the restrained and passionate side of Catholicism , which author Rettenmund has described as Madonna 's take on the religion .

The Latinos in the video are portrayed as stereotypes as nonchalant people , unemployed adults , school deprived children and a crumbling barrio . However , the music video was critically appreciated for its utilization of Hispanic fashion as an icon of beauty and romanticism . Collen McDanell , in his book Material Christianity , noted Madonna 's use of Catholic objects in the video like the candlestands and home shrines , thereby giving them a new meaning according to her own . Author Douglas Kellner noted , " such ' multiculturalism ' and her culturally transgressive moves turned out to be highly successful moves that endeared her to large and varied youth audiences " . Madonna 's Spanish look in the video became popular and appeared in the fashion trends at that time in the form of boleros and layered skirts accessorizing with rosary beads and crucifix like the video .

= = Live performances = =

Madonna has performed " La Isla Bonita " on most of her world tours including the 1987 Who 's That Girl World Tour , the 1993 Girlie Show World Tour , the 2001 Drowned World Tour , the 2006 Confessions Tour , the 2008 @-@ 09 Sticky & Sweet Tour and the 2015 ? 16 Rebel Heart Tour . She also sang it at the 2007 Live Earth benefit concert in London . In the Who 's That Girl tour , " La Isla Bonita " was performed as a part of the encore . Madonna came out on the stage in a bright red flamenco dress like the video and performed the song , assisted by her backup singers Niki Haris , Donna De Lory and Debra Parson . A Latino dancing with Angel Ferreira was also included . Two different performances of the song on this tour can be found on the videos : Who 's That Girl : Live in Japan , filmed in Tokyo , Japan , on June 22 , 1987 , and Ciao Italia : Live from Italy , filmed in Turin , Italy , on September 4 , 1987 . In the 1993 Girlie Show tour Madonna performed the song on top of a rising platform , after " I 'm Going Bananas " . She was dressed in a blue and white striped shirt while Haris and De Lory wore a similar outfit , but in black and red . One of the musicians walked around bare chest playing the acoustic guitar .

During her 2001 Drowned World Tour , Madonna performed " La Isla Bonita " in the Latin segment of the show , wearing a revealing black senorita 's dress and trousers , hair tied back and playing a Spanish guitar . She asked the crowd to join her while singing " olé ola " with the song . In the Confessions Tour , Madonna appeared on the stage in a purple white leotard with open hair and started singing the song . In the middle of the performance , she was joined by her backup dancers who , along with the singer , walked the length of the stage singing the chorus . The performance ends with Madonna lying down on the stage . The video backdrops showed a tropical paradise like the island San Pedro mentioned in the song .

Madonna performed " La Isla Bonita " during the 2007 Live Earth benefit concert at Wembley Stadium in London where she was joined by members of gypsy punk band Gogol Bordello for a crazed hoedown version of the song . Gogol Bordello had previously joined her on the 2006 Confessions Tour where the song was played as a dance / tribal remix with interventions from Eugene Hütz and Sergey Ryabtsev from Gogol Bordello . The song was once again added to the set list of her 2008 ? 09 Sticky & Sweet Tour , as part of the Gypsy segment of the show , featuring the Arkady Gips band and the Romani @-@ Gypsy folk song " Lela Pala Tute . " The performance had Madonna wearing a short black skintight dress and knee @-@ high boots with pink fluorescent beads and necklaces . Along with " Lela Pala Tute " , there was a Mediterranean Street party with Greek dancing , another gypsy song called " Doli , Doli " and a flamenco solo performance . A flamenco version of the song was performed on the third section of the Rebel Heart Tour ( 2015 ? 16 ) . For the wardrobe , Madonna enlisted a Spanish tailoring company from Zaragoza for creating two bullfighter traje de luces costume , along with a cape and matador related costumes for her backing dancers . Jordan Zivitz of Montreal Gazette praised the performance for being " one of the only hits to retain its original form " .

= = Cover versions and popular culture appearance = =

French pop singer Alizée has performed " La Isla Bonita " during her first promotional tours in Europe in 2003 . In 2008 , a new studio version was recorded and included on the special edition of her album , Psychédélices , in Mexico . The song so far has gone on to become Alizée 's first top ten single on the Mexico national top ten airplay chart along with reaching number two in her native France . Indie psychedelic folk singer @-@ songwriter Jonathan Wilson recorded a cover for the 2007 Madonna tribute compilation Through the Wilderness .

In 1999 , female singer Deetah used elements of the song in her single " El Paraíso Rico " . The song was sampled by rapper Black Rob , in his 1999 song " Spanish Fly " ( included in his Life Story album ) featuring Jennifer Lopez . In the chorus of the song , Lopez sings the part which samples " La Isla Bonita " . Rapper Andre Nickatina sampled the song in " Son of an Angel " , which is featured on his 2001 album Unreleased . In 2004 , rapper Mase sampled and interpolated it for his song " My Harlem Lullaby " . A cover has also been performed by Finnish power metal band Twilight

Guardians on their record Sin Trade .

On the Family Guy episode " The Father , the Son , and the Holy Fonz " when discussing Madonna at the end , one of the characters , Peter Griffin , calls her a liar for singing about a nonexistent place ( La Isla Bonita ) stating that he could not find it in a map . American artist Britney Spears recorded a track titled " Love 2 Love U " , which heavily samples " La Isla Bonita " . The track leaked on December 2 , 2011 . The song was also covered in the Fox TV show , Glee in the episode " The Spanish Teacher " . It was sung by Naya Rivera who plays the character Santana Lopez and Ricky Martin who guest stars in the episode . It was filmed and recorded in January , then was broadcast in February 2012 .

= = Formats and track listing = =

= = Credits and personnel = =

Madonna ? lyrics , producer , vocals

Bruce Gaitsch ? guitars ( Spanish and acoustic guitar )

Patrick Leonard ? drum programming , keyboards , lyrics , producer

Johnathan Moffett ? drums

Paulinho da Costa ? percussion

Michael Verdick ? audio mixing , engineer

Credits adapted from the album 's liner notes .

= = Charts = =

= = Certifications = =