

= Like a Virgin (song) =

" Like a Virgin " is a song by American singer Madonna . It is the title track from her second studio album Like a Virgin (1984) , and was released on November 6 , 1984 , by Sire Records as the first single from the album . The song appears on the greatest hits compilation albums The Immaculate Collection (1990) and Celebration (2009) . It was written by Billy Steinberg and Tom Kelly and produced by Nile Rodgers ; Steinberg said that the song was inspired by his personal experiences of romance . " Like a Virgin " was chosen for Madonna by Michael Ostin of Warner Bros. Records after listening to a demo sung by Kelly . However , Rodgers initially felt that the song did not have a sufficient hook and was not suitable for Madonna , but subsequently changed his opinion after the hook was stuck in his mind .

Musically " Like a Virgin " is a dance @-@ oriented song , composed of two hooks . Madonna 's voice is heard in a high register while a continuous arrangement of drums are heard along the bassline . The lyrics of the song are ambiguous and consist of hidden innuendo . In sexual terms , the lyrics can be interpreted in different ways for different people . " Like a Virgin " received positive reviews from contemporary as well as old critics , who frequently called it as one of the defining songs for Madonna . It became her first number @-@ one single on the Billboard Hot 100 , while reaching the top of the charts in Australia , Canada , and Japan , and the top @-@ ten of the other countries .

The music video portrayed Madonna sailing down the canals of Venice in a gondola , as well as roaming around a palace wearing a white wedding dress . With the video , scholars noted Madonna 's portrayal of a sexually independent woman , the symbolism of the appearance of a man with lion 's mask to that of Saint Mark , and the link between the eroticism of the video and the vitality of the city of Venice . Madonna has performed the song in six of her concert tours , most recent being the Rebel Heart Tour in 2015 . Most of the time , her performances of " Like a Virgin " were associated with strong reaction and uproar from the media .

" Like a Virgin " has been covered by a number of artists and has appeared in or been referenced in feature films such as Reservoir Dogs , Moulin Rouge ! and Bridget Jones : The Edge of Reason . Family groups sought to ban it as they believed the song promoted sex without marriage . On the other hand , Madonna 's public persona of an indomitable , sexually unashamed , supremely confident woman was widely accepted by the younger generation who emulated her style and fashion . Scholars have credited " Like a Virgin " as the song which cemented her position as a pop culture icon .

= = Background = =

" Like a Virgin " was written by Billy Steinberg and Tom Kelly . In an interview with the Los Angeles Times , Steinberg explained that the song was not only not written for Madonna , it was not even written for a female singer but was inspired by his personal experiences . He elaborated : " I wasn 't just trying to get that racy word virgin in a lyric . I was saying ... that I may not really be a virgin ? I 've been battered romantically and emotionally like many people ? but I 'm starting a new relationship and it just feels so good , it 's healing all the wounds and making me feel like I 've never done this before , because it 's so much deeper and more profound than anything I 've ever felt . "

Kelly recorded the demo , and invited Michael Ostin of Warner Bros. Records ' A & R department to his house to listen to it . Steinberg and Kelly played four or five tunes for Ostin , and further discussed " Like a Virgin " ? they were not sure for which artist the song would be suitable . Due to meet with Madonna the next day to discuss her second album , Ostin intended on playing the demo to her , believing the lyrics and the groove of the song were perfect for Madonna . " When I played it for Madonna she went crazy , and knew instantly it was a song for her and that she could make a great record out of it , " Ostin recalled . In 2009 , Rolling Stone interviewer Austin Scaggs asked Madonna what her first impressions were after listening to the demos of " Like a Virgin " and " Material Girl " . Madonna replied :

I liked them both because they were ironic and provocative at the same time but also unlike me . I

am not a materialistic person , and I certainly wasn 't a virgin , and , by the way , how can you be like a virgin ? I liked the play on words ; I thought they were clever . They 're so geeky , they 're cool . I never realised they would become my signature songs , especially the second one .

= = Recording and production = =

In mid @-@ 1984 , Madonna met producer Nile Rodgers at the Power Station studios (now Avatar Studios) in New York . Rodgers initially did not want Madonna to record " Like a Virgin " , as he felt that the lyric ' like a virgin ' was not a terrific hook ; according to him it was not an all @-@ time catch phrase . Rogers dismissed the song after hearing the demo , which he thought sounded " really stupid and retarded " . Later , Rogers had second thoughts : " It 's weird because I couldn 't get it out of my head after I played it , even though I didn 't really like it . It sounded really bubble @-@ gummy to me , but it grew on me . I really started to like it . [...] But , my first reaction to it was , ' This is really queer . ' " Rodgers credits Madonna with recognizing the song 's potential . He later said : " I handed my apology to Madonna and said , ' you know ... if it 's so catchy that it stayed in my head for four days , it must be something . So let 's do it . ' " Hence the song was finally recorded . Steinberg reflected on the recording process and commented that :

When Madonna recorded it , even as our demo faded out , on the fade you could hear Tom saying , " When your heart beats , and you hold me , and you love me ... " That was the last thing you heard as our demo faded . Madonna must have listened to it very , very carefully because her record ends with the exact same little ad @-@ libs that our demo did . That rarely happens that someone studies your demo so carefully that they use all that stuff . We were sort of flattered how carefully she followed our demo on that .

Jason Corsaro , the record 's audio engineer , persuaded Rodgers to use digital recording , a new technique at the time which Corsaro believed was going to be the future of recording because test pressings always sounded consistent . To ensure this , Corsaro used a Sony 3324 24 @-@ track digital tape recorder and a Sony F1 two @-@ track for the 12 @-@ bit mix . Madonna recorded the lead parts in a small , wooden , high @-@ ceilinged piano room at the back of Studio C , also known as Power Station 's " R & B room " . Corsaro then placed gobos around her while using the top capsule of a stereo AKG C24 tube microphone , with a Schoeps microphone preamplifier and a Pultec equalizer . Once the track met with everybody 's approval , Robert Sabino added the keyboard parts , playing mostly a Sequential Circuits Prophet @-@ 5 , as well as some Rhodes piano and acoustic piano , while Rodgers also played a Synclavier . Madonna , although not required , was present every minute of the recording sessions and the mixing process , Corsaro commented : " Nile was there most of the time , but she was there all of the time . She never left " .

= = Composition = =

Composed as a dance @-@ oriented song , the intro of " Like a Virgin " consists of two hooks . According to the sheet music published at Musicnotes.com by Alfred Publishing , the song is set in common time , with a moderately dance @-@ groove tempo of 118 beats per minute . It is composed in the key of F major with Madonna 's voice ranging from the tonal nodes of low @-@ tone G3 to high @-@ tone C5 . According to Rikky Rooksby , the bassline on the intro is a re @-@ working of the three @-@ note bass motif present in the Four Tops ' 1965 song " I Can 't Help Myself (Sugar Pie Honey Bunch) " , where Chuck Berry provided the chord arrangement . The bassline also has some similarity with Michael Jackson 's " Billie Jean " especially during the second verse . Madonna sings the song in her high register while drum arrangement by Tony Thompson is heard alongside the bassline , which is also supported by a synthesizer arrangement , giving it a circular progression through all the seven diatonic chords of I ? IV ? VIIo ? III ? VI ? II ? V ? I.

Regarding the lyrics , Madonna had commented : " I like innuendo , I like irony , I like the way things can be taken on different levels . " This statement highlighted the ambiguity of the lyrics of the song , which is hung on the word ' like ' . Rooksby interpreted the meaning of the song in different ways to different people . He said that for women who were really virgins , the song encouraged them to

hold their composure before they engaged in their very first sexual act . For sexually experienced girls , the song meant that they would be able to re-live the feelings of their first sexual encounter all over again . For the boys , the song presented a narcissistic image of them making the girl forget her past encounters and enjoy the sexual act as if for the first time .

= = Critical reception = =

" Like a Virgin " is one of Madonna 's most famous singles , and was met with predominantly positive critical reception . Stephen Thomas Erlewine from Allmusic said that " Like a Virgin " was a definitive statement . He added that the song , and " Material Girl " from the same album , made Madonna an icon . He added that both overshadowed the rest of the record , " because they are a perfect match of theme and sound . " Debbie Miller from Rolling Stone commented that Madonna 's voice " doesn 't have the power or range of , say , Cyndi Lauper , but she knows what works on the dance floor . " In 2014 , Ryan Reed , also writing for Rolling Stone , called the song a " classic " .

Dave Karger from Entertainment Weekly , while reviewing the album in 1995 , felt that the song came off a bit repetitious and immature when compared to the present context . Jim Farber from Entertainment Weekly felt that the song raised the " madonna @-@ whore " ante . Sal Cinquemani from Slant Magazine called the song a classic . Alfred Soto from Stylus Magazine felt that the song was chic in its style . Katie Henderson from The Guardian commented that the song was saucy in nature . Michael Paoletta from Billboard commented that the song sustained a " fevered dance @-@ rock momentum . "

In 2000 , " Like a Virgin " , was honored by Rolling Stone and MTV , as the fourth song on their list of the " 100 Greatest Pop Songs " . It was voted ten on VH1 's 100 Best Songs of the Past 25 Years . The song was listed at ninety @-@ five on Billboard Hot 100 All @-@ Time Top Songs . In 2003 , Madonna fans were asked to vote for their ' Top 20 Madonna singles of all @-@ time ' , by Q magazine . " Like a Virgin " was allocated the fifth spot on the list .

= = Chart performance = =

" Like a Virgin " became Madonna 's first of 12 number @-@ one hits on the Billboard Hot 100 , where it debuted at number 48 on the issue dated November 17 , 1984 . The song reached number one on the Billboard Hot 100 chart the week of December 22 , 1984 and remained there for six weeks . " Like a Virgin " was certified gold by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) on January 10 , 1985 , for shipping a million copies across United States ? the requirement for a gold single prior to 1989 . The song also reached number @-@ one on the Hot Dance Music / Club Play chart , and was her first top @-@ ten entry on the Hot R & B / Hip @-@ Hop Songs chart at position nine . It placed at two on the year @-@ end chart for 1985 , with Madonna becoming the top pop artist for the year . In Canada , the song debuted on the RPM Singles Chart at number 71 on the RPM issue dated November 24 , 1984 , and reached the top of the chart on January 19 , 1985 . It was present on the chart for a total of 23 weeks and ranked thirty @-@ five on the RPM Year @-@ end chart for 1985 .

The song debuted on the UK Singles Chart on November 17 , 1984 at number 51 , and peaked at number three on January 12 , 1985 ; it spent a total of 18 weeks in the chart , and was certified gold by the British Phonographic Industry (BPI) for shipment of 500 @,@ 000 copies across United Kingdom . According to Official Charts Company , the song has sold 780 @,@ 000 copies there . Across Europe , the song peaked within the top @-@ ten of the charts of Austria , Belgium , France , Germany , Ireland , Italy , Netherlands , Norway and Switzerland . " Like a Virgin " became Madonna 's first number @-@ one song on the Australian Kent Music Report chart and on the Japanese International Singles Chart . It peaked at number @-@ two on the New Zealand Singles Chart , number 15 on the Swedish charts and peaked the Eurochart Hot 100 Singles .

= = Music video = =

== Development ==

The music video , directed by Mary Lambert , who worked with Madonna in her video for " Borderline " , was shot in Venice , Italy and partly in New York City in July 1984 . Madonna was portrayed as a knowing virgin , a figment of the pornographic mind , as she walked through marble rooms , wearing a wedding gown . It alternated with scenes of a provocative @-@ looking Madonna on board a gondola . She commented , " [Mary] wanted me to be the modern @-@ day , worldly @-@ wise girl that I am . But then we wanted to go back in time and use myself as an actual virgin . " The video starts with Madonna boarding on a boat from the Brooklyn Bridge and travels to Venice . As she steps down into the city , she moves like a stripper and undulated sinuously . She wears a black dress and blue pants with a number of Christian symbol embedded jewelry around her neck . She sings the song at full volume as she watches a lion walking between the columns of the Piazza San Marco of Venice and along the statute of Saint Mark .

A number of game @-@ playing involving carnival masks , men , lions , werelions are portrayed with allusions to eighteenth @-@ century practices and Saint Mark . Sheila Whiteley , author of *Women and popular music : sexuality , identity , and subjectivity* , felt that Madonna 's image signified a denial of sexual knowledge , but also portrayed her in simulated writhing on a gondola , thus underpinning the simulation of deceit . The intrusion of a male lion , confirmed the underlying bestial discourse of both mythological fairy tale and pornographic sex . Whiteley observed that in the video , Madonna 's lover wears the lion 's mask and while cavorting with him , Madonna sheds the veneer of innocence and shows her propensity for wild animal passions . Having instilled desire , metaphorically she turns her lover into a Beast . Madonna commented about shooting with the lion :

" The lion didn 't do anything he was supposed to do , and I ended up leaning against this pillar with his head in my crotch ... I thought he was going to take a bite out of me so I lifted the veil I was wearing and had a stare @-@ down with him and he opened his mouth and let out this huge roar . I got so frightened my heart fell in my shoe . When he finally walked away , the director yelled ' Cut ' and I had to take a long breather . But I could really relate to the lion . I feel like in a past life I was a lion or a cat or something . "

== Reception and analysis ==

With the video , scholars noted the expression of Venetian vitality in it . Author Margaret Plant (2002) commented : " With the lion of Saint Mark and the virginal city to the forefront , old sacrosanct Venice was propelled into a pop world of high @-@ energy gyration , and endless circulation . " She also noted that Saint Mark was a symbol of a time when sexual crime was punished severely in Venice and acts of rape , homosexuality and fornication incurred the loss of a nose , a hand or sometimes life itself . Madonna appeared to challenge such brutality and stretch the boundaries of tolerance in the video . As the lion @-@ man carried Madonna to the Venetian palace , it symbolized an instance of the Saint taking the simulated Virgin , where Madonna became a symbol for La Serenissima , the Republic itself .

Plant also noted that Madonna , in the video , restored the energy and eroticism of Venice , which had its name taken from Venus in familiar elision . As she exchanged her blue top for a black one during the video , Madonna demonstrated her mastery and bravery of the city , which had a reputation of turning out its visitors as victims . Carol Clerk (2002) commented that with the video , " Madonna 's days as a cheap and cheerful video star were over . She was moving into serious spectacle . "

In 1985 , a live music video of " Like a Virgin " from The Virgin Tour filmed in Detroit , was used to promote Madonna Live : The Virgin Tour video release . This version was nominated for Best Choreography at the 1986 MTV Video Music Awards . The live performance of " Like a Virgin " from the Blond Ambition World Tour in Paris , France was released as a music video on May 9 , 1991 to promote the documentary film *Truth or Dare* . This version was nominated for two awards at the 1991 MTV Video Music Awards in the categories of Best Female Video and Best Choreography .

This video was ranked at position sixty @-@ one on VH1 's 100 Greatest Videos .

= = Live performances = =

Madonna performed " Like a Virgin " at the first MTV Video Music Awards in 1984 , where she appeared on stage atop a giant wedding cake dressed in a wedding dress , adorned with the infamous " Boy Toy " belt buckle , and veil . The climax of her risqué performance found her " humping " and rolling around on the stage . To this day , the performance is noted as one of the most iconic and biggest performances in MTV 's history .

The song has also been included in seven of Madonna 's ten concert tours . For The Virgin Tour in 1985 , Madonna again donned wedding attire and performed a straight version of the song featuring a quotation from Michael Jackson 's similar @-@ sounding Motown @-@ style single , " Billie Jean " . Balloons floated out towards the audience as she rolled around the stage , carrying a wedding bouquet in her hand . The performance was included in the VHS release Madonna Live : The Virgin Tour recorded in Detroit , Michigan . In the 1987 Who 's That Girl World Tour , the song was given a lighthearted comedic theme and included quotations from The Four Tops ' " I Can 't Help Myself (Sugar Pie Honey Bunch) " . Madonna took off her outfit piece by piece , until she was standing in a black corset , and ended the performance while flirting with a young male dancer who played her bridegroom . 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 .

For the 1990 Blond Ambition World Tour , the song was re @-@ invented with a middle @-@ eastern arrangement and risqué choreography which found Madonna wearing a gold corset , while simulating masturbation on a red silk bed , accompanied by two male dancers who wore the infamous cone bras designed by Jean @-@ Paul Gaultier . The performance garnered a lot of attention , particularly when police in Toronto , Canada , threatened to arrest Madonna and charge her with indecency unless she altered the performance . Madonna refused and the show went ahead unaltered . The threatened arrest failed to materialise . Two different performances were taped and released on video , the Blond Ambition : Japan Tour 90 , taped in Yokohama , Japan , on April 27 , 1990 , and the Blond Ambition World Tour Live , taped in Nice , France , on August 5 , 1990 . During The Girlie Show World Tour in 1993 , Madonna wore a tuxedo and adopted a Marlene Dietrich @-@ like persona , singing the song with a thick German accent . She sang the word ' virgin ' as ' (w) irgin ' , while including a quotation from Dietrich 's signature tune , " Falling in Love Again (Can 't Help It) " . The overplayed accent and three @-@ quarter time signature gave the performance a sense of parody . Dietrich 's look in the 1930 film Morocco inspired the whole performance . The performance was included on The Girlie Show : Live Down Under home video release , recorded on November 19 , 1993 at Sydney , Australia .

In April 2003 , while promoting her ninth studio album American Life , an impromptu acoustic performance of the song was done by Madonna at New York 's Tower Records . Madonna 's performance of " Hollywood " at the 2003 MTV Video Music Awards recreated the 1984 performance of " Like a Virgin " . The performance started with Britney Spears emerging from a giant cake singing the first few lines . She was later joined by Christina Aguilera and both of them writhed on the stage while singing . Madonna appeared on the cake dressed as a groom and sang " Hollywood " , and ultimately kissed both Spears and Aguilera on the mouth . The performance was met with strong reaction from media .

During the Confessions Tour in 2006 , the song was given a horse riding theme . Madonna wore a tight , black body suit , and performed the song atop a studded leather S & M carousel horse , while X @-@ rays of her broken bones , the result of a horse @-@ riding accident on her forty @-@ seventh birthday , flashed on the screens behind her . The performance was included on The Confessions Tour live album , released in 2007 . In 2008 's Sticky & Sweet Tour , Madonna sang the song in Rome and dedicated the song to Pope Benedict XVI , commenting " I 'd like to dedicate this song to the Pope , I know he loves me " and saying that she is a child of God . She asked the audience to sing along with her . The song was again performed on The MDNA Tour (2012) ,

during the third section of the show . " Like a Virgin " was stripped down to a simple Burlesque @-@ version played on the piano , featuring elements of the soundtrack " Evgeni 's Waltz " from the film , W.E. On the Rebel Heart Tour (2015) , a bass @-@ heavy version of " Like a Virgin " ended the second act of the show . Jim Farber of Daily News described it as the show 's " most stunning move " , adding that " [Madonna] appeared on the gaping stage entirely alone , dancing with a freedom and innocence that made her , at 57 , seem once again new . "

= = Cover versions = =

In 1985 , The Lords of the New Church recorded " Like a Virgin " for their compilation album Killer Lords . Gary Hill from Allmusic called the composition as " very funny and obnoxious " . The same year , " Weird Al " Yankovic parodied the song with his single " Like a Surgeon " from the album Dare to Be Stupid . Eugene Chadbourne from Allmusic commented : " Turning the tacky Madonna hit inside out and upside down , Yankovic comes up with a hilarious satire of the medical profession . " In 1991 , Glaswegian band Teenage Fanclub covered " Like a Virgin " on their second album , The King . The song also appears on the soundtrack of the 2001 film Moulin Rouge ! and is sung by the characters Harold Zidler , played by Jim Broadbent , and The Duke of Monroth , played by Richard Roxburgh . In 2004 , The Meat Purveyors covered the song in a bluegrass medley , pairing it with Madonna 's " Lucky Star " and " Burning Up . "

In the 2004 film Bridget Jones : The Edge of Reason , the title character teaches the song to women in a Thai prison , after becoming annoyed that they are singing the song badly . She tells them , " Madonna is nothing if not a perfectionist ! " In one of the episodes of the TV show Grey 's Anatomy , the character of Cristina Yang hums the song during surgery to take the focus off herself . However , when her assisting surgery , Lexie Grey starts singing along , Christina looks venomously at her until she quiets down . Katy Perry , Travis Barker and DJ AM covered the song at the 2008 MTV Video Music Awards . In 2009 , the song was namechecked in the Train hit single " Hey , Soul Sister " with the lyric " I believe in you / Like a virgin you 're Madonna / And I 'm always gonna wanna blow your mind " . The song was covered in the 2010 Glee episode " The Power of Madonna " by the cast , including Jonathan Groff , Jayma Mays , Lea Michele , Cory Monteith , Matthew Morrison , and Naya Rivera , during a dream sequence by their characters . The same year , Elton John performed a cover version of " Like a Virgin " at the Rainforest Fund Benefit Concert .

On September 9 , 2011 , Vanessa Carlton posted a link to a snippet of her stripped @-@ down cover of the song in her Twitter account . In 2012 Korean girl group 2NE1 released a cover of the song for their debut Japanese album Collection . In 2012 , JoJo performed a cover version of " Like a Virgin " at the LACMA for the Harvard Westlake Charity . The same year , Peruvian singer Wendy Sulca recorded a spanglish version . In 2014 , Cristina Scuccia , a singing nun who won that year 's The Voice of Italy season , released a ballad version of the song as her debut single , a cover that Madonna herself praised .

= = Legacy = =

" Like a Virgin " is listed in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame 's list of " 500 Songs That Shaped Rock And Roll " . After the song and its video were released , " Like a Virgin " attracted the attention of family organizations who complained that the video and the song , promoted sex without marriage and undermined family values , offering an unsavoury image of Madonna as a whore . Outraged moralists condemned her as a sex kitten and sought to ban the song and the video . Conservatives were angered that Madonna dared to portray religious symbolism and the virginal wedding attire in a sexual context . Clerk noted the song attracted an unprecedented level of attention from social groups compared to any female singer 's song . " The main problem was that most of them listened superficially to the lyric of the song , imagining that it detailed or called on an innocent 's sexual initiation . " While one section of the population were outraged at the scandal , others were taking joy at the very notion of a virginal Madonna , who retorted by saying ,

I was surprised by how people reacted to " Like a Virgin " because when I did that song , to me , I

was singing about how something made me feel a certain way ? brand @-@ new and fresh ? and everyone interpreted it as I don 't want to be a virgin anymore . Fuck my brains out ! That 's not what I sang at all . " Like a Virgin " was always absolutely ambiguous .

Biographer Andrew Morton noted that most of Madonna 's admirers were females , who were born @-@ and @-@ brought @-@ up with an image of old @-@ fashioned stereotypes of women as virginal brides , or as whores , or with feminist values that rejected the use of a woman 's looks for her self @-@ advancement . Author William McKeen of Rock and roll is here to stay : an anthology commented that with the song , Madonna became the last word in attitude and fashion for young girls of that time . He compared that image of Madonna with that of Barbie . McKeen explained that Madonna intermixed middle @-@ class ideas of femininity with examples of what femininity meant to her , which was having equal opportunity . She offered an aggressive sexuality that implied it was acceptable for women not only to initiate relationships , but also enjoy them .

In addition , according to Morton , at a time when eighties fashions were promoting flat @-@ chested , stick @-@ thin women as ideals of beauty , the more curvaceous Madonna made average girls feel that it was fine to be in the shape they were . A new word called ' Madonna wannabe ' was introduced to describe the thousands of girls who tried to emulate Madonna 's style . University professors , gender @-@ studies experts and feminists earnestly started discussing her role as a post @-@ modernist style and cultural icon . According to author Debbi Voller , " Like a Virgin " gave rise to the icon Madonna .

In the opening scene of the 1992 film Reservoir Dogs , written and directed by Quentin Tarantino , Mr. Brown (played by Tarantino himself) insists that " Like a Virgin " is a " metaphor for big dicks " . When Madonna met Tarantino at a party after the film was released , she gave him an autographed copy of her Erotica album , signing " Quentin : it 's about love , not dick " .

= = Track listing = =

= = Credits and personnel = =

Madonna ? vocals
Billy Steinberg ? songwriter
Tom Kelly ? songwriter
Nile Rodgers ? producer , drum programming , guitar
Bernard Edwards ? bass
Tony Thompson ? drums
Rob Sabino ? bass synthesizer , assorted synthesizers
Jellybean Benitez ? 12 " remixer
Credits adapted from the album liner notes .

= = Charts = =

= = Certifications = =