

= Sooner or Later ( Madonna song ) =

" Sooner or Later " is a song recorded by the American singer Madonna from her soundtrack album *I'm Breathless* . Written by American composer Stephen Sondheim and produced by Madonna and Bill Bottrell , the song was used in the parent film , *Dick Tracy* . " Sooner or Later " was composed to evoke the theatrical nature and style of the film . A 1930s jazz ballad with piano , drum , double bass , and horns , the track conjures up the atmosphere of a smoky nightclub . Madonna sings in her lowest register accompanied by a variable pitch .

Critical response to the track was positive , with reviewers deeming it as an important addition to Madonna 's music catalog . At the 63rd Academy Awards held on March 25 , 1991 , the song won an Oscar for Best Original Song , awarded to Sondheim . Madonna attended the ceremony along with singer Michael Jackson as her date , and performed " Sooner or Later " onstage , being inspired by the look of actress Marilyn Monroe . She later included it in the set list of her 1990 *Blond Ambition World Tour* .

= = Background = =

In 1990 , Madonna was part of the film *Dick Tracy* starring as Breathless Mahoney ? a new role introduced for her ? with Warren Beatty playing the title character . Madonna told *Premiere* magazine that initially she had waited for Beatty to call her for the film . When Beatty did not reciprocate , the singer decided to involve herself voluntarily . She pursued the part of Mahoney , but offered to work for minimum wages to avoid favoritism . *Dick Tracy* was the ninth @-@ highest grossing film in the US in 1990 , and number twelve globally . The film also received positive reviews from critics . Roger Ebert from the *Chicago Sun @-@ Times* praised the matte paintings , art direction and prosthetic makeup design , stating : " *Dick Tracy* is one of the most original and visionary fantasies I've seen on a screen " .

By the 1980s record labels started to release albums that were closely associated with a film , thereby gaining double promotion . These were mostly termed as soundtracks although many of them were not related to the film . After the filming for *Dick Tracy* was over by May 1989 , Madonna started working on the soundtrack . She had begun recording three songs by Stephen Sondheim for the film ? " Sooner or Later " , " More " and " What Can You Lose " ? which would be part of the album , but also had to write and develop new songs comparable in style to the previous . She produced the entire album , including the Sondheim songs . " I want people to think of me as a musical comedy actress . That 's what this album is about for me . It 's a stretch . Not just pop music , but songs that have a different feel to them , a theatrical feel " , she said at the time .

= = Composition = =

According to Rikky Rooksby , author of *The Complete Guide to the Music of Madonna* , the harmonic and melodic styles of the songs she developed with Sondheim were more " complex " than her usual recordings , hence Madonna found it difficult and demanding . She spoke about the " wilderness " of the tunes , saying that she was not confident of doing justice to the songs , and neither was Sondheim . But he kept on encouraging the singer so that the recording sessions would not be affected . Madonna also recruited producer Patrick Leonard and engineer Bill Bottrell to help her with the project . She and Leonard toiled to create music that would fit the style and production of the film , set in the era of the *Untouchables* law enforcement .

" Sooner or Later " was composed as a 1930s jazz ballad with comping piano , brushed drum sounds , double bass and horns . Rooksby described the track as " conjuring the atmosphere of a smoky nightclub " . Madonna sings in her lowest range as the melody shifts continuously . It opens with a " lazy " clarinet solo and portrays the singer as a kind of sexual magnate . " I always get my man " , she sings " If you 're on my list it 's just a question of when " . The song is set in the time signature of common time with a moderate tempo of 75 beats per minute . It is composed in the key of B ? major with Madonna 's voice spanning from F3 to B ? 4 . The song follows a basic sequence

of B ? 9 ? B ? 6 / F ? B ? 9 ? B ? 6 / F as its chord progression . In the film , " Sooner or Later " is the signature song of Breathless and was primarily performed during a montage just after Dick Tracy has placed a microphone in Alphonse " Big Boy " Caprice 's boardroom and operator .

= = Critical reception = =

Lucky Lara from Manila Standard Today listed the Sondheim songs as highlights from the album , commenting how they fit Madonna 's " nasal voice as a glove " , and their addition to Madonna 's catalogue of songs would give her " the edge in future career moves " . According to Lara , with " Sooner or Later " , Madonna " shows off a side to her singing that audiences haven 't heard yet , and what a side it is . She proves to her critics that she isn 't just the glitter and trash of the dance club scene , and that she can belt it out nearly as well as the best of them " . According to Ray Boren from Deseret News " is very much a period piece , with an intimate club feel " . Another positive review came from Mark Coleman from Rolling Stone , who described the song as Madonna 's " breathy emotionality " , observing that Madonna did not whisper the line " I always get my man " , rather sang it aloud , bringing " conviction to a somewhat generic line " . According to Jon Pareles of The New York Times , songs including " Sooner or Later " are " typical Sondheim , with agile wordplay and devious chromatic harmonies " .

At the 63rd Academy Awards held on March 25 , 1991 , the song won an Oscar for Best Original Song , awarded to Sondheim who did not attend the ceremony . In the award ceremony the song was listed as " Sooner or Later ( I Always Get My Man ) " .

= = Live performances = =

On the 1990 Blond Ambition World Tour , Madonna performed " Sooner or Later " atop of a piano , as a chanteuse with a piano player in a cabaret . The wardrobe for the performance consisted of a green and white couture corset , with conical bra cups , beaded fringing and striped sequined embroidery , designed by Jean Paul Gaultier , underneath a long black robe . On his review of the concert , Richard Harrington from The Washington Post , opined Madonna " acquitted herself quite well on ' Sooner or Later ' " . 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 .

At the 1991 Academy Awards , Madonna appeared with singer Michael Jackson as her date and performed " Sooner or Later " . According to journalist Liz Smith , Madonna had promised to perform at the award show if either " Sooner or Later " or " More " was nominated in the Best Original Song category . She wore a long , tight , white dress designed by Bob Mackie and covered in sequins and pearls . On her neck she wore \$ 20 million worth of jewelry from Harry Winston . Taraborrelli recalled that Madonna had appropriated every move and mannerisms of Marilyn Monroe for the performance , making it a tribute to the actress . When she appeared onstage , there was technical difficulty resulting in the mike not appearing from below the ground , and a stage @-@ hand passing it to her . According to Madonna 's brother Christopher Ciccone , she was quite nervous during the performance ; " Had she been singing to an audience of screaming fans , she wouldn 't have been at all nervous . But this time she was performing in an auditorium full of established actors and actresses , a group of people to which she really didn 't belong , who didn 't respect her as an actress but whose respect she desperately wanted to win " .

Janet Maslin from The New York Times criticized Madonna 's performance , saying that the singer " vamped awkwardly through [ the song ] , managing to seem even waxier in action than she did seated beside Michael Jackson in the audience . " In retrospective reviews , Billboard ranked it as the seventh " most awesome " Oscar performance of all time , saying that " Madonna gave a performance that took us back to the glamorous days of old Hollywood . "

= = Credits and personnel = =

Credits adapted from I 'm Breathless album liner notes , Sire Records and Warner Bros. Records .