

= Rather Die Young =

" Rather Die Young " is a song recorded by American singer Beyoncé for her fourth studio album , 4 (2011) . Composed by Beyoncé , Jeff Bhasker , Luke Steele , the song 's development was motivated by the fact that Beyoncé wanted a song that would help people through both their painful and happy moments . " Rather Die Young " is an R & B @-@ soul power ballad that is instrumentally complete with synthesizers , a piano , a strummy guitar , and heavy drums , which were inspired by the work of the American band Earth , Wind & Fire . Lyrically , the song talks about the inability to fight what the heart wants . The female protagonist sings to an indifferent love interest , whom she likens to American actor James Dean and tells him that she prefers to die rather than live without him .

" Rather Die Young " was generally well received by contemporary music critics who described it as a dark , yet enchanting ballad . They highlighted Beyoncé 's vocal power and the song 's melody . Critics also noted that the ballad was heavily influenced by the 1980s R & B and soul music , adding that it has a Philadelphia soul vibe . However , some of them commented that it was barely distinguishable among the other songs on 4 , criticizing its chorus which , according to them , forms the major part of the song . Following the release of 4 , " Rather Die Young " charted at number 37 on the South Korea Gaon International Singles Chart , based on downloads alone . The song was part of Beyoncé 's set list for her 4 Intimate Nights with Beyoncé shows , held at the Roseland Ballroom in New York City .

= = Background and recording = =

" Rather Die Young " was written and produced by Beyoncé Beyoncé , Jeff Bhasker , Luke Steele at Enormous Studios , in Los Angeles , in 2011 . Cole Kamen @-@ Green , Alex Asher and Josiah Woodson played the trumpets while Nick Videen and Drew Sayers were on the tenor and alto saxophones . The horn were arranged by Shea Taylor . Jordan Young then recorded Beyoncé 's vocals at the MSR Studios and KMA Studios , in New York City ; Steele and Billy Kraven served as background vocalists . Tony Maserati mixed the track , while Pete Wolford , Ryan Kelly , Serge Nudel , Justin Hergett and Jon Castelliall all assisted in the audio engineering of " Rather Die Young " ; both tasks were executed at the RMC Studio , in Los Angeles . Speaking about what motivated her to record a song in the vein of " Rather Die Young " , Beyoncé said : " I really want people to think when they listen to my music . I want it to help them through their painful memories , their painful moments , and their most happy moments . I want it to be a conversation . "

= = Composition and lyrical interpretation = =

" Rather Die Young " is an R & B @-@ soul power ballad , which is heavily influenced by the 1990s R & B music and the 1970s soul music . Alexis Petridis of The Guardian commented that it refracts " a dramatic Philadelphia soul ballad through gauzy modern production " . " Rather Die Young " also contains elements of retro pop music . The song is built on a heavy laid @-@ back programmed drumbeat , which according to Thomas Conner of the Chicago Sun @-@ Times , was inspired by the material of American band Earth , Wind & Fire . Additional instrumentation includes a horn section , a weave of synthesizers , a piano , a keyboard , and a strummy guitar . Priya Elan of NME noted that " Rather Die Young " gets close to the " smoky soul styling " of Anita Baker , before adding that its chorus bears similarities to Andrew Lloyd Webber 's previous work and jazz hands . Jim Farber of The Daily News wrote that " ' Rather Die Young ' has a choir of Beyoncé's " that recalls the harmonies of all @-@ female singing group The Emotions . Simon Goddard of Q magazine compared the song with Massive Attack 's " Protection " (1995) and also noted similarities with The Shangri @-@ Las ' songs .

Lyrically , " Rather Die Young " talks about the inability to fight what the heart wants , even if it is wrong . Beyoncé prostates herself at the mercy of an indifferent love interest , telling him that she would rather die young than to live her life without him . Beyoncé also sings about leaving a legacy

as she shows her " epic " neediness to her love interest , as stated by Genevieve Koski of The A.V. Club . The music stays soft in the first verse , where Beyoncé likens her romantic interest to American actor James Dean , " You 're my James Dean / you make me feel like I 'm seventeen " . She also relates about how good girls often fall for bad boys ; she affirms that " bad boy " she loves , " drive [s] too fast " and " smoke [s] too much " . During the chorus , Beyoncé projects the image of a woman , who wants to love and be loved regardless of what others may say , " I 'd rather die young / Than live my life without you / Rather not live at all " . As the song progresses , Beyoncé references " some deeper emotional fires burning " as she sings , " Nobody understands what we 've been through " .

= = Critical reception = =

The song received generally positive reviews . Joanne Dorken of MTV UK wrote that " Rather Die Young " is a " dark , yet enchanting ... mesmerising " ballad , noting that as Beyoncé sings , she give listeners a sense of mystery . She also commended her " stunning vocals " . Likewise , Chad Grischow of the website IGN wrote that the song gives Beyoncé 's vocals room to shine with " some beautifully soft verses and [a] belted hook " . Alexis Petridis of The Guardian called " Rather Die Young " a fantastic and dramatic song . Similarly , Rolling Stone 's Matthew Perpetua wrote , " There 's a great melodramatic kick to this song , which comes across like a quiet storm slow jam spiced up with modern drum programming . ' I 'd rather not live at all than live my life without you ' is an unusually self @-@ pitying lyric for Beyoncé , but she sells it well regardless . " Conrad Tao of Sputnikmusic showed high favoritism for the song , writing :

[Knowles '] utterance of ' you 're my James Dean / you make me feel like I 'm seventeen ' on ' Rather Die Young ' is made tolerable by her honeyed vocal slides . Certainly , the ' bad boy ' Beyoncé is in love with is more a physical representation of countless painfully banal fantasies about guys who ' drive too fast ' and ' smoke too much ' than an actual person , but at least it feels tangible . For once , the pop song trying to make a connection with its listener doesn 't feel like a total fraud . Forget Lady Gaga 's song about her relationship with her father or Britney Spears ' lullaby to her babies ? here , I 'm convinced , if only for a moment , that Beyoncé really would rather die young than to live her life without her lover , that she cares , even if you don 't . This doesn 't fully explain why 4 is as enjoyable as it is , but it does convey just how convincing Beyoncé can be when given the right tools ? and it turns out that those tools consist of not much more than Beyoncé 's voice itself .

Prefix magazine 's Craig Jenkins found " retro @-@ leaning flourishes and propulsive boom bap in equal measure " in " Rather Die Young " . Likewise , Cameron Adams of the Herald Sun wrote that " Rather Die Young " is a " boundary @-@ pushing backdrop of 1970s soul dragged into tomorrow " , further describing it as bizarre but brilliant . Mikael Wood of Spin magazine described it as a slow @-@ to @-@ bloom song which is " preoccupied by love 's pleasure " . Ben Cardew of Music Week described " Rather Die Young " as a drum @-@ heavy and gloomy ballad accompanied by a lovely melody . Jocelyn Vena of MTV News described the ballad as having an old @-@ school vibe and commended how " instead of going hard , she [Beyoncé] keeps the music soft " Robert Copsey of the British entertainment and media news website Digital Spy noted similarities between " Rather Die Young " and Beyoncé 's older material .

A mixed review came from Adam Markovitz of Entertainment Weekly , who compared Beyoncé 's work on " Rather Die Young " to that of past idols such as Luther Vandross and Diana Ross , but felt the tone overshadowed her style , stating that " she gets lost in her idols ' polyester @-@ swathed shadows " . Matthew Horton of BBC Online wrote that the ballad is less successful than the other songs on 4 because of its " overdone glitz " . Similarly , NME 's Hamish MacBain classified " Rather Die Young " as one of the " barely distinguishable slowies " , and Priya Elan of the same publication wrote that the song is spoilt by " some rather drippy lyrics and [its] chorus " , adding that there are several lyrical references that " instead of being explained further , are overturned in favour of some romantic mulch " . Greg Kot of the Chicago Tribune noted that the song was a little more than a chorus on repeat . Ryan Dombal of Pitchfork Media commented that " Rather Die Young " ruins its

Philly soul vibe with " a theatrical Broadway glaze " .

= = Live performance = =

Beyoncé performed " Rather Die Young " live for first time on August 14 , 2011 during the 4 Intimate Nights with Beyoncé revue , which was held at the Roseland Ballroom , in New York City . She performed the ballad in front of 3 @, @ 500 people ; she was wearing a gold dress and was backed by her all @-@ female band and her backing singers , called the Mamas . The performance was included on her 2011 video album Live at Roseland : Elements of 4 .

= = Chart performance = =

Selling 15 @, @ 161 digital downloads , " Rather Die Young " opened at number 37 on the South Korea Gaon International Singles Chart for the week ending July 2 , 2011 .