

= Keep It Together (Madonna song) =

" Keep It Together " is a song by American singer Madonna from her fourth studio album *Like a Prayer* (1989) . It was released on January 30 , 1990 by Sire Records as the sixth and final single from the album in the United States , Canada and Japan . Written and produced by Madonna and Stephen Bray , the main inspiration behind " Keep It Together " was Madonna 's relationship with her family ? whom she dearly missed after her divorce from actor Sean Penn . The song was dedicated to American funk and soul band Sly and the Family Stone . The lyrics deal with the realization of how important Madonna 's family has been to her life . A pop and funk song consisting of an upbeat rhythm and groove , " Keep It Together " features percussion , banjo and a conga .

In the United Kingdom and some other countries , " Dear Jessie " (1989) served as the final single from the album and " Keep It Together " was not released as a separate single at all . Receiving mixed reviews from critics , " Keep It Together " was compared to the work of Sister Sledge , especially their song " We Are Family " . The song was a commercial success , reaching a peak of number eight on the Billboard Hot 100 and Canadian charts , while topping the dance chart in the United States . In Australia it reached the top of the charts as a double A @-@ side single with " Vogue " . " Keep It Together " has been performed as the closing song of the 1990 *Blond Ambition* World Tour . The performances were inspired by the 1971 science fiction film , *A Clockwork Orange* , and during the introduction , Madonna sang a verse from " Family Affair " by Sly and the Family Stone .

= = Background = =

When Madonna started work on her fourth studio album , *Like a Prayer* , she was already in an emotional state of mind , following her divorce with then @-@ husband Sean Penn , her thirtieth birthday , and unfavorable reviews for her acting endeavors . She had certain personal matters on her mind that she thought could be the musical direction of the album . But she understood that as she was growing up , so was her core audience . Feeling the need to try something different , Madonna wanted the sound of her new album to indicate what could be popular in music . However , being raised as a Catholic , Madonna felt guilty about the failure of her marriage . She said , " Because in Catholicism you are a born sinner and you are a sinner all your life I could not escape my past , nor could I relax " . Saddened by what was happening with her , Madonna missed her family , her father and her siblings . She confessed to Becky Johnston for *Interview* magazine :

I didn 't feel close to anybody in my family when I was growing up . [...] I didn 't feel close to my older brothers , they were just typical older brothers who tortured me all the time . And I didn 't feel close to my sisters . There was a lot of competition in our family , [...] so , I worked really hard in school . I was a straight @-@ A student , and they all hated me for it because I did it more for the position I was going to have in my father 's eyes that for whatever I was going to learn by studying . Then when I got a little older ? when I was in high school and started dancing really seriously ? I 'd say I got closer to my brothers . My oldest brother opened my eyes to lots of things [...] .

The song was released as the sixth and final single from the album on January 30 , 1990 , by Sire Records . In Australia , it was released as the B @-@ side of " Vogue " , while it was not released in the United Kingdom at all , where " Dear Jessie " served as the album 's final single .

= = Composition = =

" Keep It Together " is a pop and funk song with an upbeat rhythm and groove . It was produced by Madonna and Bray , and features Paulinho da Costa on percussion , brass playing by David Boruff and Steven Madaio , Bill Bottrell as the audio engineer and guitars by Chester Kamen . Despite not on the album 's credits , Prince also played guitar on the song according to Madonna .

According to Sal Cinquemani of *Slant Magazine* , the song is influenced by the Sly and the Family Stone track " Family Affair " (1971) . It starts as the sound of slap bass plays along with sequenced synth bass , as Madonna sings the opening lines , " Keep , keep it together , keep people together

forever and ever " . As the first verse starts , a guitar comes into play with Madonna 's voice being backed by percussion and banjo . After the second chorus comes near the end , Madonna utters the line " Brothers and sisters , They hold the key , To your heart and your soul , Don 't forget that your family is gold " , the percussion sound is thinned out and a mixture of the sound from a live drummer and conga comes into the picture . The song ends with the main groove sound gradually fading out .

According to Rikky Rooksby , author of *The Complete Guide to the Music of Madonna* , although " Keep It Together " sonically pays tribute to Sly and the Family Stone , the lyrics talk about the realization of how important Madonna 's family has been as a form of stability in her life , especially in the line " Brothers and sisters , They 've always been there for me , We have a connection , Home is where the heart should be " . The lyrics follow the course of Madonna 's rise from figuratively being a " hungry sibling " (" I 'm gonna leave this place , So I can forget every single hungry face ") to being a superstar (" I hit the big time but I still get the blues , Everyone 's a stranger , City life can get to you ") .

= = Critical reception = =

" Keep It Together " received mixed reviews from critics . Mark C. Taylor , author of *Nots : Religion and Postmodernism* , felt that " Keep It Together " was a " striking instance of her repeated invocation of family values " . He believed that Madonna 's fascination for family was reflected in the song . Carol Benz , one of the authors of *The Madonna Connection* , believed that the song was successful in asserting the necessity of family ties . J. Randy Taraborrelli , author of *Madonna : An Intimate Biography* described the track as " an uptempo romp about the trials and tribulations , and the joys of having a family . " Martha Bayles , author of *Hole In Our Soul* , felt that " Keep It Together " failed to become an anthem for emotional commitment , because of the funk nature of the song . Madonna , *Unauthorized* 's writer Christopher Anderson proclaimed the track as a worthy number @-@ one single , and complimented the song 's theme of allegiance to one 's family , despite the turmoil and dissensions that occur . Lucy O 'Brien , author of *Madonna : Like an Icon* , described it as an " upbeat meditation on sibling power " and believed that the purpose behind the song was to present a homey image of brothers and sisters happy and together , and Madonna 's need to restore bonds and relationships that had become fraught or distant in her life then . Hadley Freeman from *The Guardian* described " Keep It Together " as " amazing , purely for being Madonna 's take on Sister Sledge 's ' We Are Family ' , a concept no one foresaw , and the fact that she later disowned various members of her family gives it , shall we say , an interesting tinge of irony . "

USA Today 's Edna Gunderson wrote that " Keep It Together " evoked an " R & B groove " that was successful in adding more variation to *Like a Prayer* . Conversely , Ian Blair of the *Chicago Tribune* thought that the different funk tempo of the song distracted from the emotional quotient of the album . Blair added that the song " hits a groove that is one of the funkier things Madonna has ever done . " Scott Benarde from *The Palm Beach Post* listed the song as one of the album 's " downpour " moments . Writing for *The Jerusalem Post* , Andy Goldberg from the newspaper listed the song as one of the highlights of the album , and complimented the family oriented lyrics . Bruce Britt from *Boca Raton News* believed that " Keep It Together " was one of the songs from the album , that exemplified the personal approach to songwriting by Madonna .

Spin 's Joe Levy named the song the only " great " dance record on *Like a Prayer* , and also observed that " Keep It Together " was a " girly @-@ disco " song that drew influences from Sister Sledge 's " We Are Family " and Madonna 's own " Into the Groove " . Stephen Holden from *The New York Times* believed that the song brought the pop @-@ funk style and hippie happiness of Sly and the Family Stone . Journalist J. D. Considine , while reviewing *Like a Prayer* for *Rolling Stone* , felt that " Keep It Together " portrayed " an impressive invocation of the importance of family " . Considine was concerned that since the confessional nature of the songs on *Like a Prayer* evoked strong emotions from the listener , " Keep It Together " would probably seem almost trivial by comparison to them . Stephen Thomas Erlewine from *Allmusic* believed that the song constituted of deep funk music . Louis Virtel of *The Backlot* gave the song a positive review , calling it a " rollicking

family reunion " that is the " sunny side of ? Oh Father ? s ? grim familial reckoning . " Kenneth Partridge from Billboard described the song as a mid @-@ tempo synth @-@ funk tune with a " tense " groove , on which Madonna offers an olive branch to her estranged father and siblings .

= = Chart performance = =

In the United States , " Keep It Together " debuted on the Billboard Hot 100 at number 56 , on the issue dated February 3 , 1990 . The next week , " Keep It Together " jumped to number 41 , becoming one of the greatest gaining songs . It eventually peaked at number eight on the Hot 100 , on the issue dated March 31 , 1990 . During the next few weeks , the song fell quickly from its peak as Madonna 's next single , " Vogue " , began to get massive radio airplay . Its final appearance on the Hot 100 was at number 83 on the issue dated April 28 , 1990 . " Keep It Together " topped the Hot Dance Music / Club Play chart , and peaked at number 66 on the Hot R & B / Hip @-@ Hop Songs chart . Three months since its release , it was certified gold by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) for shipment of 500 @,@ 000 copies of the single . In Canada , the song debuted at number 85 on the RPM Singles Chart on February 10 , 1990 , and after eight weeks , it peaked at number eight . " Keep It Together " was present on the chart for 15 weeks and placed at number 86 on the RPM Year @-@ end chart for 1990 .

In Australia , " Keep It Together " charted on the ARIA Singles Chart along with " Vogue " . It debuted on the chart at number 19 and reached the top the next week , remaining there for five consecutive weeks . The song was present for a total of 35 weeks on the chart and reached number three on the Australian Year @-@ end chart for 1990 . It was certified double @-@ platinum by the Australian Recording Industry Association (ARIA) for shipment of 140 @,@ 000 copies of the single . After its release in Japan , " Keep It Together " appeared for two weeks on the Oricon Singles Chart , and reached number five . The single was not released in the United Kingdom , where " Dear Jessie " was the final single from Like a Prayer instead .

= = Live performance = =

Madonna has performed the song only on her 1990 Blond Ambition World Tour , where it was the closing song of the set list . The staging of the performances was inspired by the 1971 science fiction film , A Clockwork Orange . The shows featured an introductory verse from " Family Affair " by Sly and the Family Stone . Madonna wore an all @-@ black ensemble involving a cage vest , the longline bra , skintight shorts , knee @-@ pads and a bowler hat . Her getup was a nod to actress Liza Minnelli in the film Cabaret . The performance started with her dancers appearing on the stage , with chairs on their back . Madonna appeared in their middle and started doing push @-@ ups on the stage . She started singing " Family Affair " , then mid @-@ way through the song , changed to " Keep It Together " . During the intermediate music , Madonna and her dancers performed an intricate choreography with the chairs . At the end , all the musicians , dancers and collaborators came to say good @-@ bye to Madonna . The singer was left alone on stage to finish with a powerful repeat of her line " Keep people together forever and ever " .

In an interview with Stephen Holden from The New York Times , Madonna explained the significance of the performance : " Finally , right when you think I 'll end [the concert] on a happy note , I come out with my family to do a Bob Fosse @-@ meets- ' Clockwork Orange ' rendition of ' Keep It Together ' . It 's the show 's ultimate statement about the family , because we 're absolutely brutalizing with each other , while there 's also no mistaking that we love each other deeply . " Author Lynne Layton complimented the performance , saying that " as in her double attitude to materialism , femininity , and everything else , what marks the performance is not that Madonna is in control , but that she is open about the pros and cons of family life and obviously echoes the experience of many . " Her thoughts were shared by John LeLand from Newsday , who complimented the aerobics performed onstage by Madonna and her dancers . Conversely , author Allen Metz commented that although the performance was tightly choreographed , the overall feel was marred due to the song 's own " shortcomings " . Greg Kot from Chicago Tribune felt that the

addition of lines from " Family Affair " underlined the " home @-@ is @-@ where @-@ the @-@ heart @-@ is " theme of " Keep It Together " . Louis Virtel from The Backlot praised the performance of the song , stating that it served as the " perfect concluding performance . " Two different performances were recorded and released on video : the Blond Ambition ? Japan Tour 90 , filmed in Yokohama , Japan , on April 27 , 1990 , and the Blond Ambition World Tour Live , filmed in Nice , France , on August 5 , 1990 . It was also shown on the HBO special titled Madonna Live ! ? Blond Ambition World Tour , and was added in her 1991 documentary , Truth or Dare .

= = Track listings and formats = =

= = Credits and personnel = =

Madonna ? songwriter , producer , vocals
Stephen Bray ? songwriter , producer
Paulinho da Costa ? percussion
David Boruff ? brass , strings
Steven Madaio ? brass
Bill Bottrell ? audio engineer , mixing
Chester Kamen ? guitars
Credits and personnel adapted from Like a Prayer album liner notes .

= = Charts = =

= = Certifications = =