

= Russian Roulette ( song ) =

" Russian Roulette " is a song recorded by Barbadian singer Rihanna for her fourth studio album , Rated R ( 2009 ) . It premiered on radio stations worldwide on October 20 , 2009 and was released as the album 's lead single on October 27 through Def Jam Recordings . Written and produced by Ne @-@ Yo and Chuck Harmony , " Russian Roulette " is a pop and R & B ballad that contains dark , morbid , and tense atmospheric elements in its composition . Lyrically , the single is about an abusive romantic relationship that ended abruptly . Music critics noted the lyrical theme as a response to the domestic violence case between Rihanna and her boyfriend , singer Chris Brown .

" Russian Roulette " received generally positive reviews from critics , with many praising Rihanna 's vocal performance and the song 's lyrics . It reached the top @-@ ten in over twenty countries worldwide including number one in Czech Republic , Israel , Luxembourg , Norway , Portugal , Slovakia and Switzerland . The song reached number two on the UK Singles Chart and number nine on the US Billboard Hot 100 chart . " Russian Roulette " also topped the UK R & B and US Hot Dance Club Songs charts . It was certified two @-@ times platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America ( RIAA ) denoting sales of over two million copies in the United States alone .

The song 's music video , was shot by director Anthony Mandler , a frequent collaborator of Rihanna 's , and depicts Rihanna playing a game of the titular Russian roulette with her love interest played by American actor Jesse Williams . Other scenes include Rihanna in the woods where she is run over by a car , in a gas chamber , in a padded cell , and shots being fired at her underwater . The singer performed " Russian Roulette " on several occasions including on the sixth series of The X Factor in the United Kingdom , and on the Late Show with David Letterman in the United States . The song was included on the set list of Rihanna 's Last Girl on Earth Tour . English singer George Michael performed a cover of " Russian Roulette " during his Symphonica Tour .

= = Writing and production = =

In 2009 , producer Chuck Harmony and singer @-@ songwriter Ne @-@ Yo convened together to conceptualize a song that would take Rihanna 's music to a further level . According to Harmony , they didn 't wanted to re @-@ work the previous efforts by Rihanna ? something that according to him the fans expected . The producer told MTV News that they wanted to give Rihanna a film , not just a song with a length of three minutes , " I felt musically like everybody was gonna give like that ' Disturbia , ' ' SOS , ' kind of pop , uptempo stuff , and I really wanted the song that me and Ne @-@ Yo did to stand out . "

Following a domestic violence case between Rihanna and her boyfriend American entertainer Chris Brown , media speculated as to whether any song featured on her fourth upcoming album would be about him . In an interview with MTV News , Ne @-@ Yo clarified that he would not write a song for Rihanna about Brown , because he considered the idea unnecessary . Harmony said that no matter what song Rihanna released as a lead single from the album , it would be looked at as a song about Brown .

In an interview with the same publication , Ne @-@ Yo explained how he wrote the lyrics , " I 'm listening to the track , and all I can see is Rihanna and some random person sitting across from each other at the table with a gun sitting in the middle of the table and playing Russian roulette . " Ne @-@ Yo further stated that Rihanna is not afraid to trying new things and from the first moment she heard the song he knew she would like it , " I trust Rihanna to be Rihanna , and she trusts me to be me . That 's the coolest thing about our relationship . I must say this song is a step in somewhat of a different direction for both of us . " When Harmony heard the song , both he and Ne @-@ Yo were aware that they should change some elements and that it had to be darker and edgier .

" Russian Roulette " was recorded during the summer 2009 , at the Roc the Mic Studios in New York City by Marcos Tovar . Mykael Alexander was the assistant recorder while Makeba Riddick made the vocal production of the song . Mike " TrakGuru " Johnson recorded the music and Kevin Hanson served as an assistant . " Russian Roulette " was mixed by Kevin " KD " Davis together with

Jared Newcomb who served as an assistant . Jessie Bonds played the guitars in the song . Harmony explained that after the song was done , Rihanna called Ne @-@ Yo and told him that " Russian Roulette " is one of her favorites , " I think overall she was comfortable with the vibe of the song and comfortable with the lyrical content of the song . She loves the song . "

= = Release and artwork = =

On October 14 , 2009 , a black metal " R " along with a message saying " The Wait is Over " was placed on Rihanna 's official website . Subsequently , Rihanna posted on her official Twitter profile " # The Wait Is Ova . Nov. 23 09 " . Speculation rose among fans that " The Wait Is Ova " , literally meaning " The wait is over " , would either be the name of a new single or the then @-@ upcoming album . According to Entertainment Weekly the date looked accurate for her album release and " The Wait Is Ova " would not be the title of the album . Two days later , a countdown timer appeared on her website and was scheduled to end on October 20 , 2009 . After the timer finished counting , " Russian Roulette " premiered on BBC Radio 1 , the singer 's official website and on American radio stations . The artwork for the single features Rihanna posing topless with a strip wire around her chest and wearing an eye patch " that completes the angry look " .

Def Jam Recordings serviced the song to contemporary , rhythmic and urban radio in the United States on October 27 , 2009 as the lead single from Rated R. In an interview with NME , Rihanna explained that she and her management didn 't have doubts if " Russian Roulette " should be the lead single as it was very personal and emotional track to her . On November 3 , the single was released for a digital download via iTunes Store worldwide . The album version of " Russian Roulette " together with its instrumental were released as a CD single in Germany on November 13 . On December 11 , seven remixes of the song were digitally released in some countries .

= = Composition and lyrical interpretation = =

" Russian Roulette " is a mid @-@ tempo pop and R & B ballad that contains dark , haunting , morbid , and tense atmospheric elements . The song has an instrumentation consisted of guitars , piano and synths which play over a " heart beat " bass line and is accompanied with Rihanna 's " affecting " vocals . Eric Henderson of Slant Magazine wrote that the song 's production is also decorated with the sound of a rolling dice . According to Jon Pareless of The New York Times " Russian Roulette " " is paced by a heartbeat , a ticking clock and Rihanna 's fearful voice . " The single is written in the key of F ? minor , in common time , with a tempo of 83 beats per minute . Rihanna 's vocal range spans from F ? 3 to C5 . Chicago Tribune 's Greg Kot called the singer 's voice a " delicate instrument " that is often the least element in her song 's production , however , he noted that on the song " she 's squarely in the center of the action " .

Lyrically , " Russian Roulette " is about an abusive romantic relationship that ends abruptly , with some critics comparing them to the relationship that Rihanna had with Brown . Kot noted that the single 's lyrics compare a relationship to a fatal game of choice , while Andy Gill of The Independent wrote that the its title refers to a " state of relationships " . Rob Harvilla of The Village Voice described the song as a spare , suspenseful , violent torch song with a literal title . Los Angeles Times ' Todd Martens wrote that although the song 's lyrics are vague and find people speculating , they " hint at a situation one probably doesn 't want to be in the middle of " . Sasha Resende of The Michigan Daily wrote " the ballad , which employs reckless gunplay as a not @-@ so @-@ subtle metaphor for a troubled relationship , achieves its seemingly morbid intent . "

" Russian Roulette " begins with a " searing " guitar solo that later transitions into a " pulsing " beat which stays constant until the end of the song . The single opens with the lyrics , " Take a breath / Take it deep / Calm yourself / He says to me / If you play / You play for keeps / Take the gun / And count to three . " The metaphor about the game of Russian roulette is also present in the chorus in which Rihanna sings , " And you can see my heart beating / You can see it through my chest / I said I 'm terrified , but I 'm not leaving / I know that I must pass this test / So just pull the trigger . " In the upcoming verse , the character that the singer portrays in the song it 's scared that the man talking

to her will always have a power over , " Say a prayer to yourself / He says close your eyes / Sometimes it helps / And then I get a scary thought / That he 's here means he 's never lost . " " Russian Roulette " ends with a sound of a gun shot , which according to Michaelangelo Matos of The A.V. Club extends the drama accompanied by " harrowing scenarios and tremulous vocals " .

= = Critical response = =

Nick Levine of Digital Spy praised " Russian Roulette " and called it a " masterful return effort " . He additionally wrote that the single is " brave , brilliantly @-@ realized and bizarre enough to distance " the singer from the other pop or R & B performers like Lady Gaga . According to Levine , the song is her best vocal performances and shows Rihanna growing in front of the audience 's eyes . Will Hines of Consequence of Sound called the song a worth centerpiece and further wrote that it stands out from other tracks on the album which proves that Rated R " was a cathartic process for the singer " . Todd Martens of Los Angeles Times wrote that although is hard to imagine the song to be played in a car or a club , it 's " attention @-@ grabbing stuff , standing in stark ? emphasis on stark ? contrast to much of the current pop landscape . " Alibhe Malone of NME wrote that Rated R is an album about power and control in which " Russian Roulette " sets the agenda .

The Boston Globe 's Sarah Rodman wrote that the song is moody but far too deliberate and " has a grab bag of evocative images but never quite jells " . A reviewer of OK ! magazine wrote that the single represents a downbeat way for return to the charts for Rihanna , but can grow on you . Andy Jill of The Independent stated that " Russian Roulette " and " Fire Bomb " have " inflammatory " titles . Entertainment Weekly 's Simon Vozick @-@ Levinson wrote that although Rihanna took risk with releasing the song , it pays off , " Rihanna is in fine vocal form throughout , and Ne @-@ Yo 's songwriting is economical and evocative per usual . " A staff from MTV Newsroom thought that the single retains some sort of attitude and atmosphere that made Rihanna " such a definitive artist " . Jody Rosen of Rolling Stone concluded that works like " Russian Roulette " , " a domestic @-@ violence victim 's confession whipped into soaring melodrama ? tell us why : She was busy saying her piece in the studio . "

Andy Kellman of AllMusic stated that in the song Rihanna had a sudden desire to provoke even if that is in metaphorical context . Pitchfork Media 's Ryan Dombal concluded that the single is a bad Céline Dion song with " barrel @-@ turning revolver noises that actually sound like a can of spray paint being shook up " . Rob Harvilla of The Village Voice stated that " Russian Roulette " ' s composition , makes the song unpleasant for listening . Chris Richards of The Washington Post wrote that the song has " plodding beat " and " forgettable hook " and additionally criticized the ending of the song with a sound of gunshot ; according to him that 's an attempt to " salvage its wasted potential " .

= = Chart performance = =

" Russian Roulette " debuted at number 100 on the US Billboard Hot 100 chart in the issue dated November 7 , 2009 . The next week the song reached a new peak of 75 . In its first week of digital release , " Russian Roulette " sold 132 @,@ 000 copies and moved from 75 to number nine ; it became Rihanna 's twelfth top @-@ ten single on the chart and made her the second female artist of the 2000s decade with most top @-@ ten songs only behind Beyoncé . Also , subsequently debuted at number nine on the US Digital Songs chart . On the Pop Songs chart , the single debuted at number 36 and moved to 35 the next week with audience over 29 million audience impressions on the radio . In its third week , the song reached its peak of 21 on the chart . Additionally , it peaked at number 49 on the US Hot Dance Club Songs chart . In the US , " Russian Roulette " was most successful on the Hot Dance Club Songs chart where it peaked at number one in its seventh week for the issue dated February 20 , 2010 . It was certified two @-@ times platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America ( RIAA ) denoting sales of over two million digital copies in the US alone . " Russian Roulette " also peaked at number nine on the Canadian Hot 100 .

" Russian Roulette " entered the New Zealand Singles Chart at number 19 on November 9 , 2009 , climbing into the top ten the following week at number nine . After fluctuating around the top ten mark over the following three weeks , it regained its peak position on December 14 , 2009 . It remained on the chart for 12 weeks , earning a Gold certification from the Recording Industry Association of New Zealand . " Russian Roulette " debuted on the Australian Singles Chart , at number 11 on November 16 , 2009 . The following week it climbed to its peak of number seven . It remained in the top ten for three consecutive weeks , and for 12 weeks on the chart in total . It has been certified Gold by the Australian Recording Industry Association denoting sales of 35 @,@ 000 copies .

" Russian Roulette " entered the UK Singles Chart at number six on November 29 , 2009 . The following week , it rose to its peak of number two , giving Rihanna her eleventh top five single in the country . Simultaneously , it peaked at number one on the UK R & B Chart and remained at the top for three consecutive weeks . It was certified Silver in the United Kingdom on February 12 , 2010 , after selling 200 @,@ 000 copies . As of August 2011 , the single has sold over 360 @,@ 000 copies in the United Kingdom . Elsewhere in Europe , the song managed to top the charts in Norway , Slovakia , and Switzerland , and attained top five positions in Austria , Belgium , Finland , France , Germany , Hungary , Ireland , Scotland and Sweden . It also reached the top ten in Denmark , Italy and Spain .

= = Music video = =

= = = Background and synopsis = = =

The music video for " Russian Roulette " was directed by Rihanna 's frequent collaborator Anthony Mandler , who directed Rihanna 's previous videos for " Take a Bow " , " Disturbia " , " Rehab " and " Wait Your Turn " . In November 2009 , Rihanna appeared on " TV total " in Germany to talk about her new album and preview 30 seconds of the video for the song . Mandler spoke to MTV News , stating " I think that with this song and the meaning of this song and how loaded it all is , no pun intended , how much imagery and perhaps symbolism that is loaded in this song , the only way to do it was to do something that was visually challenging " . The music video for the song premiered on ABC 's 20 / 20 on November 13 , 2009 .

The music video opens with shots of Rihanna hooded , lying on the floor of a gas chamber . Three men , dressed in black uniforms and wearing dark round glasses circulate around the singer , attempting to extort information from her . The scene then moves to a dimly lit room in which Rihanna sits at a table with her love interest ( played by American actor Jesse Williams ) opposite . On the table between them lies a silver revolver in which , throughout the video , they take it turns holding to their heads . Other scenes include Rihanna in a woodland at night standing in the middle of a highway before a car speeds towards her , quickly cutting to another scene , giving the impression she is run over . Elements of blood and tears and vehicular assault dominate the video . In the final scenes , Rihanna is shown underwater , floating whilst being fired at ; one bullet is visually seen cutting her throat . The video ends with her lover apparently committing suicide with the revolver placed between them .

= = = Reception = = =

The reception of the music video was mixed , with many critics noting its dark theme . James Montgomery of MTV reviewed the video stating : , " There 's seemingly no bottom to the inky depths Rihanna plumbs in her brand @-@ new ' Russian Roulette ' video , a dark , claustrophobic descent that 's creepier than anything she 's ever done before ( including the ' Disturbia ' video ) " . Katy Hall from The Huffington Post commented that the video comes from a pretty dark place and tells more depressing story than Lady Gaga 's " Bad Romance " . According to Daniel Kreps from Rolling Stone , there is a lot of imagery that is influenced by the altercation of Rihanna and Chris Brown

from February 2009 , including a speeding car that approaches Rihanna while she stands alone at night ? " a moment that seems to mirror the events immediately following the assault " . Megan Masters from E ! Online commented that the video " portrays " some seemingly real emotion with her bouncing back @-@ and @-@ forth between writhing around a padded cell . " Simon Vozick @-@ Levinson from Entertainment Weekly supported the dark imagery used in the video , explaining , " What , you thought Rihanna was going to give ' Russian Roulette ' a video full of sunshine and rainbows and peppy choreography ? Her first single from Rated R is a song about violence " .

= = Live performances and cover = =

Following the release of Rated R in the United Kingdom , Rihanna performed the song for the first time at the Nokia promotional concert at Brixton Academy in London . Rihanna performed the song as part of a set list , which included " Wait Your Turn " and " Hard " , the latter of which Rihanna was joined on stage by Young Jeezy , to perform the song together . During the set , Rihanna also performed songs from her third studio album Good Girl Gone Bad , including " Disturbia " , " Don 't Stop the Music " and " Take a Bow " . " Run This Town " and " Umbrella " were performed with assistance of Jay @-@ Z , whose vocals are featured on the songs She performed " Russian Roulette " while particularly sitting on a throne chair . A reviewer from MTV UK stated that " The Barbadian beauty then sat seductively on stage in a throne that even the Beckhams would be proud of to belt out the ballad " .

After the release of the album in the United States , she embarked on some promotional performances . Rihanna performed " Russian Roulette " , together with " Wait Your Turn " , " Hard " and " Umbrella " on Good Morning America as part of the fall concert series in New York City . Just a day later , she performed the song again , this time on the Late Show with David Letterman . On November 29 , 2009 , Rihanna flew to the United Kingdom , again , to perform " Russian Roulette " on the series six of The X Factor . The performance was similar to the one from the Nokia promotional concert and featured Rihanna sitting on a throne chair . In February 2010 , Rihanna recorded on AOL Sessions , where she performed the song , together with " Hard " , " Rude Boy " , " Disturbia " and " Take a Bow " .

" Russian Roulette " was the opening song on Rihanna 's setlist for her Last Girl on Earth Tour , after the presentation " Mad House " . She performed the song on a movable platform while wearing a floor @-@ length gown covered with red LED lights . Neil McCormick of The Telegraph , in a review of one of the tour 's concerts , said : " She kicked off with the homicidal pop @-@ rock ballad Russian Roulette to screen imagery of burning naked mannequins and had shed most of her clothes by her second song ... " . Later the track was excluded from the setlist for the Australian leg of the tour , together with " Rehab " , and was replaced with " Only Girl ( In the World ) " as the tour starter . English singer George Michael covered " Russian Roulette " during his orchestral concert tour , titled the Symphonica Tour ( 2011 ? 12 ) .

= = Formats and track listing = =

= = Personnel = =

Locations

Recorded at Roc the Mic Studios , New York City , New York ; mixed at Chung King Studios , New York City , New York .

Personnel

Credits adapted from the liner notes of Rated R , Def Jam Recordings , SRP .

= = Charts = =

= = Certifications = =

= = Radio and release history = =