

= Illuminati (Madonna song) =

" Illuminati " is a song recorded by American singer and songwriter Madonna for her thirteenth studio album Rebel Heart (2015) . It was written by Madonna Ciccone , Toby Gad , Maureen McDonald , Larry Griffin Jr . , Mike Dean , Kanye West , Tommy Brown , Ernst Brown [a] and Jacques Webster [a] . The song was produced by Madonna , West , Dean and Symbolyc One , with co @-@ production by Charlie Heat and additional production by Travis Scott . The song 's demo was leaked to the internet in December 2014 , with twelve other tracks from the album . Its final version was released on December 20 , 2014 , with five other tracks on iTunes store as " an early Christmas gift " to avoid further leaks . The song 's demo version features dance synths and acoustic guitars ; after showing the song to West , he felt connected to the song and changed it to a darker sound . The song was conceived after Madonna was accused of being a member of the Illuminati ; she wanted to write a song about who they really are and what they are not .

" Illuminati " is a dance @-@ pop song with brittle hits , blips and a buzz @-@ saw break as its main instrumentation . Its sound was compared to that of West 's album Yeezus (2013) . The song 's lyrics discuss Illuminati conspiracy theories ; it names celebrities who had also been accused of being part of the group , and religious imagery . Madonna sings , " It 's like everybody in this party 's , shining like Illuminati " . The song received favorable reviews from music critics , who commended West involvement with the track , and its ambitious sound and lyrics , while some chose it as one of the album 's highlights . It charted in some European territories and on the Billboard 's Dance / Electronic Digital Songs . Madonna performed the song with dancers strapped to tall , flexible poles as part of her Rebel Heart Tour (2015 ? 16) ; it was considered one of the show 's main highlights .

= = Background and release = =

While recording for her thirteenth studio album , Madonna enlisted several collaborators ; MoZella , Symbolyc One and Toby Gad were announced as new collaborators on the album in April 2014 . Madonna posted a photograph of the trio working with her in a recording studio on her Instagram account . She said on the photograph , " Having an Iconic Moment in the studio with Toby @-@ Mozilla and S1 . My throat hurts from singing , laughing and crying . " Gad worked with Madonna on fourteen songs , all of which appeared on the album . According to Gad , " The first week she was quite intimidating . It was like a test phase . You have to criticize , but you can 't really offend . But she also likes honest , harsh critics to say things as they are . It worked out really well and she got sweeter and sweeter . "

American recording artist Kanye West also contributed to three tracks on the album ; Madonna called him " the black Madonna " and said , " We 're comrades in the envelope @-@ pushing genre " . Madonna said , " It 's a little bit of a bullfight , but we take turns . He knows that he 's walking into a room with a person with a strong point of view , and I do , too . I listen to what he has to say , take it in , and he listens to what I say and takes it in . We didn 't agree on everything , but he has good ideas . " She told Rolling Stone that of the songs she played him , West connected the most with " Illuminati " and that , " [h] e loved the melody , and he was actually jumping up and down on the soundboard . He literally stood on top of the mixing board ? we were worried he was going to hit his head on the ceiling , but he didn 't . He ended up being very excited about that track , and then he added his spin to it , musically , and I love it . To me , he elevated the lyrics with the music . It 's like a siren , alerting people . " In December 2014 , thirteen demos of tracks for the album , including " Illuminati " , were leaked to the Internet . To avoid further leaks , Madonna released six completed tracks , including the final version of " Illuminati " with the addition of West 's writing and production , with the pre @-@ order for the album on the iTunes Store on December 20 , 2014 , as an " early Christmas gift " .

= = Composition and lyrics = =

" Illuminati " was written by Madonna Ciccone , Toby Gad , Maureen McDonald , Larry Griffin Jr . , Mike Dean , Kanye West , Tommy Brown , Ernst Brown [a] and Jacques Webster [a] . The song was produced by Madonna , West , Dean and Symbolyc One , with co @-@ production by Charlie Heat and additional production by Travis Scott . Gad played guitar on the track and Dean laid keyboards and programmed the drums . The track was engineered and mixed by Demacio " Demo " Castellon and Noah Goldstein . " Illuminati " is a dance @-@ pop song ; its demo version , written around March ? April 2014 , featured " staid dance synths and cheesy acoustic guitars " , according to Saeed Saeed from The National . The album version features " brittle hits , blips and a buzz @-@ saw break " , which many critics considered reminiscent to West 's " dark and claustrophobic sounds " of his sixth studio album Yeezus (2013) .

The song 's lyrics are about Illuminati conspiracy theories ; Madonna sings and raps about supposed illuminati luminaries including Jay Z , Beyoncé , Kanye West , Nicki Minaj , Bill Gates , Steve Jobs , Lady Gaga , Justin Bieber , Barack Obama , LeBron James and Oprah Winfrey . The song also mentions pentagrams and the " Google of the United States " . According to Amy Pettifer , Madonna " ... reckons it 's the beautiful freaks of the club that hold the power , not these celebrity cyphers ; she 's interested in the sweat @-@ slicked celestial bodies , ' shining like illuminati ' " . In an interview with Rolling Stone , Madonna said she was often accused of being a member of the Illuminati and she wanted to record a song about what she believed the Illuminati to be . She said :

People are always using the word Illuminati but they 're always referencing it in an incorrect way . People often accuse me of being a member of the Illuminati and I think in today 's pop culture the Illuminati is perceived as a group of powerful , successful people who are working behind the scenes to control the universe . Not people with consciousness , not people who are enlightened . So people were accusing me of being a member of the Illuminati , and I kept going , wait ? so first I had to figure out what that meant ... I know who the real Illuminati are , and I know where that word comes from . The real Illuminati were a group of scientists , artists , philosophers , writers , who came about in what is referred to as the Age of Enlightenment , after the Dark Ages , when there was no writing and no art and no creativity and no spirituality , and life was really at a standstill . And right after that , everything flourished . So we had people like Shakespeare and Leonardo Da Vinci and Michaelangelo and Isaac Newton , and all these great minds and great thinkers , and they were called Illuminati ... It had nothing to do with money and power . Of course they were powerful , because they influenced people . But their goal was to inspire and enlighten . So when people refer to me as a member of the Illuminati , I always want to say thank you . Thank you for putting me in that category .

= = Critical reception = =

The song received generally favorable reviews from music critics . Stephen Thomas Erlewine of AllMusic called it " a sleek , spooky collaboration with Kanye West " , while Caryn Ganz of Rolling Stone said the collaboration " gel [s] perfectly " . Ben Kelly of Attitude said , " West 's production makes a real moment " and " Her anti @-@ Vogue rap of suspected Illuminati members is probably the only time Rihanna and Queen Elizabeth will feature side by side " . Gavin Haynes of NME described it as " classy , ' Vogue ' -referencing " . Randall Roberts of Los Angeles Times called it " one of the record 's highlights , " saying , " [s] he raps during [the song] and doesn 't sound totally ridiculous " . He also said the track balances " club frenzy and revelatory lyricism " . Sal Cinquemani of Slant Magazine said , " West gives ' Illuminati ' the Yeezus treatment ... her rapped verses about the titular secret society are clean and tight enough to make you forget about ' American Life ' " . Kevin Ritchie of Now called it one of " the most ambitious and interesting lyrically " . Lindsay Zoladz of New York Daily News wrote that the song is " just goofy enough to work " .

Amy Pettifer of The Quietus said the song is " scuzzy and repetitive with a danceable hook ? but her voice is at its thinnest and the dynamics a little lacking . Despite all this , it does contain the great lyric , ' It 's time to dance and turn this dark into something ' , which could be the album 's epigram . " Lee DeVito of Metro Times called it " a bit repetitive " but said it is probably his favorite track on the album . Saeed Saeed of The National said he favored the album 's version over its

demo , and that , " [t] hankfully , Kanye West rescued it by throwing out the lameness and added the dark and claustrophobic sounds of his seminal 2013 album Yeezus " . Bernard Zuel from The Sydney Morning Herald said it is " colder and harder sounding , in the way of West 's own recent work . There 's some edge to it but not much menace that would really thrust it into compelling . " For Kitty Empire of The Guardian said " Rebel Heart 's key collaboration with Kanye West finds two of pop 's biggest egomaniacs starring in a wiggly club banger that doubles as a take @-@ down of the internet 's most nutzoid meme " . Mark Lore of Paste called it " dark and creepy , and it 's one of the best tracks on Rebel Heart " .

Annie Zaleski of The A.V. Club said , " while her distortion @-@ smudged , guitar @-@ marred Kanye West collaboration ' Illuminati ' is pleasingly confrontational , the song 's lyrical progression is a distracted mess ... The result ? All of these shiny party people resemble the Illuminati . " Jim Farber of The New York Daily News said West " gave her a dark needling rhythm that sounds like something left over from his last album . Its industrial grind clashes badly with Madonna 's soft vocal . " Andrew Unterberger of Spin said the song " wastes a potentially explosive , blacklit Kanye beat on a muddled , hashtagging lyric that isn 't even as conspiracy @-@ baiting as it thinks it is " . New Zealand Herald 's Lydia Jenkin was more critical , writing that it " sounds like a trying @-@ too @-@ hard version of Lady Gaga meets M.I.A. " . Similarly , Evan Sawdey of PopMatters said the song " reek [s] of desperation , wanting so badly to shock and offend listeners that [it] fail [s] to resolve as satisfying song first and foremost " .

= = Live performance = =

" Illuminati " is part of the setlist of Madonna 's Rebel Heart Tour (2015 ? 16) . After the acoustic performance of " Rebel Heart " , Madonna leaves the stage for a costume change ; her dancers perform " Illuminati " while perched on rubber poles that bend with the wind . Jordan Zivitz of Montreal Gazette praised the performance , writing that the dancers " nearly stole the show in their employer 's absence during another costume change , set to Illuminati 's woozy thump " . George Varga of The San Diego Union Tribune said the audience " cheered with notably more enthusiasm " during the performance .

In the New York magazine review of the tour , Lindsay Zolatz commended the dancers , especially during " Illuminati " , writing that it was the " most impressive " part of the show , with " some guys in top hats flying through the air on wobbly stilts that had the whole audience gasping " . Kitty Empire of The Guardian said , " Madonna 's interludes are as good as the main event " , and that the performance of " Illuminati " " finds seven dancers strapped to the top of tall , flexible poles , swaying precipitously " . The Hollywood Reporter 's Ashley Lee said , " Madonna 's dancers served impressive spectacles that left the crowd gasping in awe , as they leaned wildly into the audience from atop ten @-@ foot stilts . It 's arguable that her changeover dance sequences and stunts are more entertaining than other performers ' entire sets . "

= = Credits = =

Personnel adapted from Madonna 's official website .

= = Charts = =