

= Live to Tell =

" Live to Tell " is a song by American singer Madonna from her third studio album True Blue (1986) . Originally composed by Patrick Leonard for the score of the film Fire with Fire , the song was shown to Madonna , who decided to use it for then @-@ husband Sean Penn 's film At Close Range . Madonna wrote the song 's lyrics and co @-@ produced it with Leonard . The song was released as the lead single from True Blue on March 26 , 1986 by Sire Records . It later appeared on compilation albums The Immaculate Collection (1990) , Something to Remember (1995) , and Celebration (2009) .

A pop ballad , the song includes instrumentation from guitars , keyboards , drums and a synthesizer , and its lyrics deal with deceit , mistrust and childhood scars . It is also about being strong , which Madonna recalled in an interview that she thought about her relationship with her parents , while writing the lyrics . The music video , directed by James Foley , shows Madonna 's first image makeover , featuring her with a cleaner look , shoulder @-@ length wavy golden blond hair , conservative wardrobe and subtle make @-@ up . This toned down blond appearance was again inspired by Marilyn Monroe .

" Live to Tell " was generally well received by music critics , who frequently referred to it as the best ballad of her career . It was also a commercial success , becoming Madonna 's third number @-@ one single on the Billboard Hot 100 and her first number @-@ one on the Adult Contemporary chart . The song faced controversy when Madonna performed it on her 2006 Confessions Tour wearing a crown of thorns while hanging on a giant mirrored cross . The performance at Rome 's Olympic Stadium was condemned as an act of hostility toward the Roman Catholic Church by religious leaders .

= = Background and writing = =

After Madonna finished The Virgin Tour , she asked producers Patrick Leonard and Stephen Bray to write some songs with her and produce her third studio album , True Blue (1986) . " Live to Tell " was originally composed by Leonard for the score of Paramount 's romantic drama film Fire with Fire . " My managers represented the guy who was directing the film ; it was his first film . I saw a little piece of the film , and I had the script . I wrote a theme and I said , ' What if I could get Madonna to write the lyrics for it ? ' " , said Leonard .

However , Paramount rejected the song , believing that Leonard was incapable of creating the score for the film . It was then that Leonard presented the track to Madonna . She decided to use it for At Close Range , the new film of her then @-@ husband , actor Sean Penn . Madonna wrote the lyrics of the song onspot , and made a demo recording on a cassette . She presented the song to the film 's director James Foley , who after hearing the track , decided to enlist Leonard as the person to write the score for the film , as per suggestions by Madonna .

Leonard was working with Michael Jackson , on some transcriptions for his Bad album , when Penn called him at the home of Foley . There he got to know that Madonna had suggested he write the score for At Close Range , and had also asked who was going to sing " Live to Tell " , since the song was written from a man 's perspective . Leonard , although he had initially envisioned a male voice interpreting the song , decided to use Madonna as the main vocalist and used the demo version as the main vocal with backup drums only . He later recalled that " it was so innocent and so shy . It 's as naive , as raw , as raw can be and that 's part of what gave it all its charm . " In a 1986 interview , Madonna said that the mood on the song was inspired by a different facet of her image makeover and her desire to focus on something different .

= = Composition = =

" Live to Tell " is a pop ballad , with background instrumentation from a keyboard , a synthesizer , a funk guitar and a mix of synthesized and real drumming . According to the sheet music published at Musicnotes.com by Alfred Publishing , the song is written in the key of F major , is set in common

time and moves at a moderate tempo of 112 beats per minute . The song starts with an instrumental introduction , performed by a synthesizer with the bass pedals set on D minor . Then the key suddenly changes to its relative major , F.

Madonna 's vocal range spans two octaves , from G3 to G5 . As she begins to sing the first verse , the bass pedal changes to C major , changes back to F during the chorus , and back to D minor during the chorus closure . This process is repeated during the second verse and chorus , which abruptly ends in a silence , with only the low and lifeless sound of the synthesizer , set in D minor . Madonna then starts to sing the bridge (or middle part) ? " If I ran away , I 'd never have the strength " ? between the tonal keys of D and F , closing with the repetition of the chorus until the song gradually fades out . The original composition of the song did not have the background synths , instead Leonard created a basic structure on piano , and Madonna added the words on top of that melody . According to Leonard , Madonna came up with the bridge by herself , extending it from the music that he was playing .

Lyrically , " Live to Tell " portrays the complexity of deceit and mistrust . The song is also about childhood scars and had an extreme emotional pitch . According to the book *The Heart of Rock & Soul* by Dave Marsh , the archetype of songs like " Live to Tell " is The Platters ' song " The Great Pretender " . In an interview about the song , Madonna said , " I thought about my relationship with my parents and the lying that went on . The song is about being strong , and questioning whether you can be that strong but ultimately surviving . "

= = Critical response = =

" Live to Tell " was generally well received by music critics . In a review of the album *True Blue* , Stephen Thomas Erlewine from Allmusic called it a " tremendous ballad that rewrites the rules of adult contemporary crossover " . Jim Farber from *Entertainment Weekly* called the song " her best ballad to date " . In a review of her compilation album *The Immaculate Collection* , David Browne from the same magazine called it " one of her few successful shots at being a balladeer " . Alfred Soto from *Stylus Magazine* felt that " the song 's set of lyrics remain her best " and that the vocals " seethes with a lifetime 's worth of hurts which she nevertheless refuses to share " . Sal Cinquemani from *Slant Magazine* called the song " striking " adding that it " rewrote the rules of what a pop song was supposed to sound like " . Edna Gundersen from *USA Today* called the song " a moody heart @-@ tugger , may be her best song ever . "

Adam Sexton , author of *Desperately Seeking Madonna : In Search Of The Meaning Of The World 's Most Famous Woman* , felt that " Live to Tell " made a provocative companion to " Papa Don 't Preach " , the second single from the album . He added that " Madonna appropriately measured the safety of silence against the urge to unburden herself . " Sexton also complimented the production , saying that the " music itself suggests a threatened annihilation , a fact that makes it more haunting . " Allen Metz and Carol Benson , authors of *The Madonna Companion : Two Decades of Commentary* , felt that the track expanded Madonna 's musical horizons . According to them " Live to Tell " was a compelling track which Madonna sang with moving conviction . J. Randy Taraborrelli , author of *Madonna : An Intimate Biography* , was pleased with the track , denoting it as a vehicle of growth for Madonna . Erica Wexler from *Spin* , while reviewing *True Blue* , called " Live to Tell " as " dark and moody , dense with dramatic mystery . In this mushy tale of lost innocence , Madonna very theatrically conveys a lost fatalism . Her fragile voice aches for reassurance and healing when she sings ' Will it grow cold ? The secret that I hide , Will I grow old ? " *Rolling Stone* called the song " as cutting as it is melancholic " and said that it was " arguably [Madonna 's] finest and most distinctive ballad . "

= = Chart performance = =

" Live to Tell " was released in the United States in March 1986 . It debuted on the *Billboard* Hot 100 at number 49 , reaching the top position eight weeks later , becoming Madonna 's third number @-@ one single in the US , and her second number @-@ one that is featured in a film after " Crazy

for You " . The song was a crossover success , topping the Adult Contemporary chart for three weeks , and peaking at number three on the Hot Dance Singles Sales chart . In Canada the song debuted at number 79 of the RPM singles chart in April 1986 , and reached the top of the chart for two weeks in May 1986 , staying on the chart for a total of 23 weeks , It was ranked at the second position of the 1986 RPM Singles year @-@ end chart . The single also peaked at number 1 on the CHUM Chart on May 24 , 1986 , and became its final number @-@ one single .

In the United Kingdom , " Live to Tell " was released on April 21 , 1986 . The next week , the song debuted at number ten on the UK Singles Chart , peaked at number two , and stayed 13 weeks on the chart . It was held from the top spot by Falco 's " Rock Me Amadeus " . " Live to Tell " was certified silver by the British Phonographic Industry (BPI) in May 1986 , for shipment of 250 @,@ 000 copies of the single across the United Kingdom . According to the Official Charts Company , the song has sold 280 @,@ 000 copies in the UK .

Across Europe , " Live to Tell " topped the Eurochart Hot 100 for two weeks , and the singles chart in Italy , as well as peaking inside the top ten in Belgium , France , Ireland , the Netherlands , Norway , and Switzerland . It was also certified silver by the Syndicat National de l'Édition Phonographique (SNEP) for shipment of 250 @,@ 000 copies in France .

= = Music video = =

In December 1985 , Madonna starred in the film Shanghai Surprise , where she toned down her appearance , inspired again by Marilyn Monroe . Madonna held the look for the " Live to Tell " video . In it her make @-@ up was pale and subtle , her shoulder @-@ length hair was wavy and golden blond , and her clothes consisted of a simple 1930s @-@ style floral dress . In an interview with music critic Stephen Holden from The New York Times , she commented about her new look :

" After a while I got sick of wearing tons of jewelry ? I wanted to clean myself off . I see my new look as very innocent and feminine and unadorned . It makes me feel good . Growing up , I admired the kind of beautiful glamorous woman ? from Brigitte Bardot to Grace Kelly ? who doesn 't seem to be around much anymore . I think it 's time for that kind of glamor to come back . In pop music generally , people have one image . You get pigeonholed . I 'm lucky enough to be able to change and still be accepted . If you think about it , that 's what they do in the movies ; play a part , change characters , looks and attitudes . I guess I do it to entertain myself . "

In addition to At Close Range , Foley also directed the song 's video . David Naylor and Sharon Oreck were in charge of the production . The video serves as a publicity campaign for the movie , as it includes brief scenes of the film that indicate the conflict the young man in the movie ? played by Sean Penn ? feels .

The locations in the film are separated visually from the shots of Madonna , who is singing in a darkened studio . Unlike her previous videos , Madonna portrays a narrator , whose song comments on the story , appearing in shots completely different from the narrative action . She appears to speak for the character , addressing his problems directly , like the chorus of a classical tragedy .

= = Live performances = =

Madonna premiered the song at a benefit concert at Madison Square Garden to raise money for medical research for AIDS . She dedicated the song to the memory of her friend , artist Michael Burgoyne . Madonna has since performed the song on three of her world tours . In 1987 , during the Who 's That Girl World Tour , she performed the song standing motionless in a single spotlight , wearing a black ensemble with tassels , golden tips and ribbing , designed by Marlene Stewart . Two different performances of the song on this tour can be found on the videos : Who 's That Girl : Live in Japan , filmed in Tokyo , Japan , on June 22 , 1987 , and Ciao Italia : Live from Italy , filmed in Turin , Italy , on September 4 , 1987 .

Three years later on her Blond Ambition World Tour , Madonna evoked Catholic images during the performance . She wore a black kaftan and a neon crucifix , while singing on a confession bench , with Roman columns and a platform full of votive candles in the background . 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 .

Madonna 's performance of the song was the subject of controversy during the 2006 Confessions Tour . She was raised from the floor hanging on a mirrored cross wearing a red blouse and velvet pants , with a crown of Thorns on her head . During the performance , the number 12 million flashed above her on the stage 's backdrop screens , along with images of African children . This was intended to detail the estimated number of children who have been orphaned by the AIDS pandemic in Africa .

German prosecutors in Düsseldorf threatened to sue her for blasphemy , and Protestant bishop Margot Käßmann said that " maybe the only way an aging superstar can attract attention is to offend people 's religious sentiments . " The Russian Orthodox Church and the Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia (FJCR) described Madonna 's performance as amoral , and urged all members to boycott her upcoming concert in Moscow . The performance at Rome 's Olympic Stadium ? located near the Vatican ? was condemned as an act of hostility toward the Roman Catholic Church by religious leaders . Italian cardinal Ersilio Tonini called the concert " a blasphemous challenge to the faith " and a " profanation of the cross " , also calling for Madonna to be excommunicated . Reverend Manfredo Leone described it as " disrespectful , in bad taste and provocative " .

Muslim and Jewish leaders also criticized the performance . Mario Scialoja , the head of Italy 's Muslim League commented " I think her idea is in the worst taste and she 'd do better to go home . " Riccardo Pacifici , the spokesman for Rome 's Jewish community said " It 's a disrespectful act , and to do it in Rome is even worse . " Madonna released a statement about the controversy :

I am very grateful that my show was so well received all over the world . But there seems to be many misinterpretations about my appearance on the cross and I wanted to explain it myself once and for all .

There is a segment in my show where three of my dancers ' confess ' or share harrowing experiences from their childhood that they ultimately overcame . My ' confession ' follows and takes place on a Crucifix that I ultimately come down from . This is not a mocking of the church . It is no different than a person wearing a Cross or ' Taking Up the Cross ' as it says in the Bible . My performance is neither anti @-@ Christian , sacrilegious or blasphemous . Rather , it is my plea to the audience to encourage mankind to help one another and to see the world as a unified whole . I believe in my heart that if Jesus were alive today he would be doing the same thing .

My specific intent is to bring attention to the millions of children in Africa who are dying every day , and are living without care , without medicine and without hope . I am asking people to open their hearts and minds to get involved in whatever way they can . The song ends with a quote from the Bible 's Book of Matthew : ' For I was hungry and you gave me food . I was naked and you gave me clothing . I was sick and you took care of me and God replied , " Whatever you did for the least of my brothers ... you did it to me.'

Please do not pass judgement without seeing my show .

= = Cover versions and usage in media = =

" Live to Tell " has been covered by numerous artists . In 1992 , American guitarist Bill Frisell covered the song in his fourth album , Have a Little Faith . In 1998 , Blonde Ambition released a dance single of the song featuring 6 different hi @-@ NRG remix versions . Italian singer Lucrezia made an uptempo dance version of the song that was remixed by David Morales . It peaked at number two for two weeks on Billboard 's Hot Dance Club Play , and was included in the 2001 album Logic Pride , Vol . 4 . Canadian jazz singer Carol Welsman , covered it on her eponymous 2007 album .

New wave band Berlin covered the song for the 1999 album Virgin Voices : A Tribute to Madonna , Vol . 1 . In an interview with CNN , Berlin 's lead vocalist Terri Nunn said that the tribute was necessary , commenting that " she [Madonna] has influenced a lot of people " , adding that " Live

to Tell " is the only song from Madonna that she would touch . Other covers of the song on tribute albums include Semi Moore on The Material Girl : A Tribute to Madonna , released in 2000 , an instrumental version on the 2002 album The String Quartet Tribute to Madonna , a folk version by Winter Flowers on the 2007 album Through the Wilderness , and a hi @-@ NRG version by Melissa Totten on her 2008 album , Forever Madonna . In the American police procedural television series Cold Case , the song features in the finale of the first season episode " Churchgoing People " .

= = Formats and track listing = =

U.S. / Canada / Germany / U.K. 7 " single
" Live to Tell " (Edit) ? 4 : 37
" Live to Tell " (Instrumental) ? 5 : 49
U.S. / Canada / Germany / U.K. 12 " maxi @-@ single
" Live to Tell " (LP Version) ? 5 : 49
" Live to Tell " (Edit) ? 4 : 37
" Live to Tell " (Instrumental) ? 5 : 49
Germany / U.K. CD Maxi Single (1995)
" Live to Tell " (LP Version) ? 5 : 49
" Live to Tell " (Edit) ? 4 : 37
" Live to Tell " (Instrumental) ? 5 : 49

= = Credits and personnel = =

Madonna ? lyrics , producer , vocals
Bruce Gaitsch ? guitars
Patrick Leonard ? drum programming , keyboards , lyrics , producer
Jonathan Moffett ? drums
Michael Verdick ? audio mixing , engineer
Credits adapted from the album 's liner notes .

= = Charts and certifications = =