

= Touch Me I 'm Sick =

" Touch Me I 'm Sick " is a song by the American alternative rock band Mudhoney . It was recorded in March 1988 at Seattle 's Reciprocal Recording studio with producer Jack Endino . " Touch Me I 'm Sick " was released as Mudhoney 's debut single by independent record label Sub Pop on August 1 , 1988 . The song 's lyrics , which feature dark humor , are a sarcastic take on issues such as disease and violent sex .

When it was first released , " Touch Me I 'm Sick " was a hit on the indie circuit ; it remains the band 's most recognizable song . The heavily distorted and fuzzy guitars , snarling vocals , blunt bass line and energetic drumming contributed to a dirty sound that influenced many local musicians , and helped develop the nascent Seattle grunge scene . According to Allmusic , " the song 's raw , primal energy made it an instant anthem which still stands as one of [grunge 's] all @-@ time classics " .

= = Origins and recording = =

According to Mudhoney vocalist Mark Arm , " Touch Me I 'm Sick " originated from a discussion with Sub Pop owner Bruce Pavitt , who " said : ' Hey , you sing about dogs . You sing about being sick . You got a shtick , it 'll take you to the top . ' And he basically gave us five chords , but he said don 't use more than three within one song . " Arm also states that " Touch Me I 'm Sick " was a catchphrase around which the band built a song .

Mudhoney recorded the song at Seattle 's Reciprocal Recording studio in March 1988 , three months after the band 's formation . Producer Jack Endino was surprised by how noisy the sessions were and how dirty the band wanted the guitars to sound ; " for the most part , I just sort of stood back and let them go at it " . Guitarist Steve Turner said that the band selected two of their " grungiest " songs for the single . Initially , " Sweet Young Thing Ain 't Sweet No More " was to be the A @-@ side of the single and " Touch Me I 'm Sick " the B @-@ side , before ? in drummer Dan Peters 's words ? " that all got flipped around " .

= = Music and lyrics = =

" Touch Me I 'm Sick " has a straightforward garage punk structure with a simple repeating power chord riff played at a high tempo . This is accompanied by a blunt bass line and frenetic drumming . The song 's dirty sound was produced using an Electro @-@ Harmonix Big Muff distortion pedal , which is augmented by a second guitar providing more distortion . Music writer Brian J. Barr referred to this noisy sound as " the sonic equivalent of an amplified comb scraping against paper " .

Critics have noted a Stooges influence in " Touch Me I 'm Sick " , typical of Mudhoney 's early material . Turner said : " In retrospect , it 's The Yardbirds ' ' Happenings Ten Years Time Ago ' by way of The Stooges ' ' Sick of You ' . At the time I was trying for the stuttering R & B guitar of The Nights and Days . " The song is also reminiscent of the hardcore punk of Black Flag . In his book Loser : The Real Seattle Music Story , Clark Humphrey accuses the song of being a copy of " The Witch " by The Sonics . The band have dismissed this claim , and questioned the writer 's knowledge of music .

Arm 's lyrics , according to critic Steve Huey , are a rant about " disease , self @-@ loathing , angst , and dirty sex " . In an essay called " ' Touch Me I 'm Sick ' : Contagion as Critique in Punk and Performance Art " , Catherine J. Creswell suggests that some of the lyrics refer to AIDS . According to Creswell , " In declaring ' Well , I 'm diseased and I don 't mind ' and changing the final refrain to ' Fuck Me , I 'm Sick ! ' the speaker declares himself to be the viral , ' AIDS @-@ bearing , ' ' polluting ' person of contemporary fantasy " . Creswell , who also believes the song parodies the theme of seduction in contemporary rock music , points to lyrics that refer to impotence (" If you don 't come , if you don 't come , if you don 't come , you 'll die alone ! ") and violent possession or forcing (" I 'll make you love me till the day you die ! ") . However , Arm says that he had not put much thought into the lyrics ; while performing the song in concerts , he sometimes changes them to amuse himself .

Another feature of " Touch Me I 'm Sick " that has been commented upon is Arm 's vocals . Huey refers to them as a " hysterical screech " , and " snarling , demonic howls " . Journalist Joe Ehrbar says that Arm begins the song with a " burp " , before singing with a " nasally howl " . Creswell considers Arm 's " overboard " vocals to mock a variety of rock stereotypes : the punk snarl , the " woozy slur " of hard rock , garage rock " yea @-@ ahs " , R & B @-@ style wails and a " Jerry Lee Lewis shudder " .

= = Release and reception = =

" Touch Me I 'm Sick " was released on August 1 , 1988 , as a 7 " vinyl . It was Mudhoney 's debut release . Initially , Sub Pop released 800 clear coffee @-@ brown vinyl copies , 200 black vinyl copies and a few assorted vinyl color copies of the single . The limited release numbers were inspired by another indie label , Amphetamine Reptile . Sub Pop owners Bruce Pavitt and Jonathan Poneman reasoned the limited supply would increase demand , and utilized different colors of vinyl in order to rationalize further limited pressings and to increase the single 's allure as a collectible item . The record , which came in a white paper bag without a picture sleeve , had an inscription on the A @-@ side : " What does the word ' crack ' mean to you ? " . The B @-@ side sticker featured the toilet picture that later became the cover art of the sleeved second edition of the single .

According to Pavitt , " It was just a limited edition , maybe 800 pieces , but people all over America started raving about it . People that we really respected . " The single was an indie hit in Seattle , and " Touch Me I 'm Sick " became Mudhoney 's most recognizable song . When asked in an interview about the sales figures of the single , Turner replied , " The first [pressing sold] 1 @,@ 000 , then 3 @,@ 000 of the reissue , then it was out of print for a while ; then they made 2 @,@ 000 more and those are probably gone . " The single 's success caught the band by surprise ; Arm had initially dismissed the song as a " B @-@ side toss off " . " Touch Me I 'm Sick " and B @-@ side " Sweet Young Thing Ain 't Sweet No More " were later included on the Mudhoney compilation albums Superfuzz Bigmuff Plus Early Singles (1990) and March to Fuzz (2000) .

= = = Sonic Youth cover = = =

Prior to the release of the " Touch Me I 'm Sick " single , Pavitt sent a five @-@ song Mudhoney tape to New York alternative rock band Sonic Youth for the members ' opinions . Sonic Youth immediately proposed a split single where each band covered the other . Sonic Youth covered " Touch Me I 'm Sick " while Mudhoney covered Sonic Youth 's " Halloween " . " Touch Me I 'm Sick / Halloween " was released as a limited edition 7 " vinyl by Sub Pop in December 1988 . The cover was included in the deluxe edition of Daydream Nation (2007) , and offers a female perspective of the song with bassist Kim Gordon handling the vocals .

= = Legacy = =

Following the success of the " Touch Me I 'm Sick " single in the Seattle area , Sub Pop positioned Mudhoney as the flagship band of their roster and undertook heavy promotion for the group . The band 's early material received airplay on college radio and influenced many local musicians , including Kurt Cobain of Nirvana . In a few years , many Seattle grunge bands signed to major labels and broke into the mainstream , achieving mass popularity . Although Mudhoney never attained this level of mainstream acceptance , according to Allmusic 's Mark Deming , the band 's " indie @-@ scene success laid the groundwork for the movement that would (briefly) make Seattle , WA , the new capital of the rock & roll universe " .

Since its release , " Touch Me I 'm Sick " has been accorded classic status within the grunge genre . Writing for Allmusic , Steve Huey described the song as " the ultimate grunge anthem " and " a crucial and vastly influential touchstone in the evolution of the grunge movement , virtually defining the term " . For its northwestern rock exhibit , the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame requested the song 's original lyrics sheet . Since it did not exist ? Arm briefly considered making a fake one by writing

down the lyrics , crumpling the sheet , and then burning the edges ? the band instead donated Turner 's old Big Muff pedals .

" Touch Me I 'm Sick " remains Mudhoney 's most popular song . Joe Ehrbar called it " the song most of us would come to know [the band] by " . Arm considers the track to be Mudhoney 's highwater mark ,

There 's something special about that first single , we were never quite able to recapture that sound . I don 't know if it was the guitars or the recording . It was just a really gnarly , gnarly guitar sound . We 've gotten some since , but they 've been a different kind . I think it had more to do with the actual electromagnetic chemistry of what was going through our amps that day . It was just a cool , fried @-@ out sound .

The song was referenced in the 1992 film Singles , which is set against the backdrop of the Seattle grunge scene . The fictional band in the film , Citizen Dick , perform a song called " Touch Me I 'm Dick " ? a wordplay on Mudhoney 's song . In 2003 , Charles Peterson published a book of photography titled Touch Me I 'm Sick . It features black @-@ and @-@ white photographs of bands (including Mudhoney) and concerts , and focuses on the alternative music scene of the 1980s and 1990s .

= = = Accolades = = =

* denotes an unordered list

= = Track listing = =

7 " single (SP18)

Both songs credited to Mark Arm , Steve Turner , Dan Peters and Matt Lukin .

" Touch Me I 'm Sick " ? 2 : 23

" Sweet Young Thing Ain 't Sweet No More " ? 3 : 35