

= Papa Don 't Preach =

" Papa Don 't Preach " is a song by American singer Madonna from her third studio album True Blue (1986) . The song was written by Brian Elliot with additional lyrics by Madonna , and produced by Stephen Bray and Madonna . The song also appears remixed on the 1990 compilation album The Immaculate Collection and in its original form on the 2009 compilation album Celebration . The song 's musical style combines pop and classical styling , and its lyrics deal with teenage pregnancy and abortion . It was based on teen gossip Elliot heard outside his studio , which has a large front window that doubles as a mirror where schoolgirls from the North Hollywood High School in Los Angeles regularly stopped to fix their hair and chat .

Released as the album 's second single in mid @-@ 1986 , the song was a commercial success . It became Madonna 's fourth number @-@ one single on the Billboard Hot 100 , and performed well internationally , reaching the top position in the United Kingdom and Australia . It was well received by music critics and was frequently cited as a highlight in the album . The music video , directed by James Foley , shows Madonna 's second image makeover , featuring her with a more toned and muscular body , and cropped platinum blonde hair . It portrayed a storyline where Madonna is trying to tell her father about her pregnancy . The images are juxtaposed with shots of Madonna dancing and singing in a small , darkened studio , and spending a romantic evening with her boyfriend .

Shortly after its release , the song caused heated discussions about its lyrical content . Women 's organizations and others in the family planning field criticized Madonna for encouraging teenage pregnancy , while groups opposed to abortion saw the song as having a positive pro @-@ life message . Madonna has performed " Papa Don 't Preach " in four of her world tours , most recently The MDNA Tour in 2012 . The song also caused her first conflict with the Vatican , as she dedicated it to Pope John Paul II , who urged Italian fans to boycott her concerts during the Who 's That Girl World Tour in 1987 . In 2002 , British singer Kelly Osbourne recorded a hard rock cover of the song which was included as a bonus track on her debut album Shut Up .

= = Writing and inspiration = =

During the autumn of 1985 , Madonna started writing and recording songs for her third studio album , True Blue . She brought back Steve Bray and hired a new songwriter collaborator , Patrick Leonard , to help her co @-@ write eight of the album 's nine tracks . The album 's first track " Papa Don 't Preach " , was written by Brian Elliot , who described it as " a love song , maybe framed a little bit differently " . The song is based on teen gossip he heard outside his studio , which has a large front window that doubles as a mirror where schoolgirls from the North Hollywood High School in Los Angeles regularly stopped to fix their hair and chat . The song was sent to Madonna by Michael Ostin , the same Warner Bros. executive that discovered " Like a Virgin " . Madonna only contributed with some minor lyrical revisions , making " Papa Don 't Preach " the only song on the album that she did not have a strong hand in writing . In 2009 , during an interview with Rolling Stone Madonna was asked by the interviewer Austin Scaggs as to why the theme of the song was meaningful to her . She replied saying ,

[The song] just fit right in with my own personal zeitgeist of standing up to male authorities , whether it 's the pope , or the Catholic Church or my father and his conservative , patriarchal ways For ' Papa Don 't Preach ' there were so many opinions ? that 's why I thought it was so great . Is she for ' schma @-@ smortion ' , as they say in Knocked Up ? Is she against abortion ?

= = Composition = =

" Papa Don 't Preach " is a dance @-@ pop song with instrumentation from acoustic , electric , and rhythm guitars , keyboards , and string arrangements . It is set in common time , and moves at a moderate tempo of 116 beats per minute . The song is written in the key of F minor . The combination of key and tempo produces a disjuncture between pop and classical rhythms , underlined by the instrumentation during the introduction .

The song begins with a distinctly Vivaldian style , as the fast tempo and classical @-@ style chord progression anticipates the lyrics to follow . The opening chords and the melody emphasize the tonic of the leading notes : Fm ? E ? ? D ? ? Cm ? D ? ? E ? ? Fm ? D ? ? E ? ? Fm , resembling a Baroque work . This is followed by the sound of dance music , produced by a powerful beat from the instruments . Madonna 's vocal range spans from F3 to C5 , and has a different sound from her previous work , more mature , centered , and with a lower range .

The lyrics show Madonna 's interest in her Roman Catholic upbringing , as the song theme is about a girl who admits to her father that she is pregnant and refuses to have an abortion or give up the baby for adoption despite what her friends are telling her to do . It is constructed in a verse @-@ chorus form , with a bridge before the third and final chorus . At the beginning , she addresses her father directly , asking him to talk to her as an adult , " You should know by now that I 'm not a baby " . The transition to the chorus employs a more dramatic voice with a higher range , ending nearly in cries as she sings the word " Please " . Leading to the chorus , Madonna switches to a pleading voice , singing the song 's main hook in a high tone . During the bridge , the song features a Spanish @-@ inspired rhythm , one of the earliest examples of the influence that Hispanic music had on Madonna 's musical style .

= = Critical response = =

" Papa Don 't Preach " was lauded by pop music critics . Davitt Sigerson from Rolling Stone magazine in a review of the album True Blue said that if there is a problem with the album " it 's the lack of outstanding songs " , adding that " only the magnificent ' Papa Don 't Preach ' has the high @-@ profile hook to match ' Like a Virgin ' , ' Dress You Up ' and ' Material Girl ' . " In its review of True Blue , Allmusic 's Stephen Thomas Erlewine said that " she is using the music to hook in critics just as she 's baiting a mass audience with such masterstrokes as ' Papa Don 't Preach ' . " Robert Christgau in a review for The Village Voice felt that " she [Madonna] doesn 't speak for the ordinary teenaged stiff any more " , adding that the " antiabortion content of ' Papa Don 't Preach ' isn 't unequivocal , and wouldn 't make the song bad by definition if it were , the ambiguity is a cop @-@ out rather than an open door , which is bad . "

Sal Cinquemani from Slant Magazine said that " with songs like ' Papa Don 't Preach ' , Madonna made the transition from pop tart to consummate artist , joining the ranks of 80s icons like Michael Jackson and Prince . " David Browne from Entertainment Weekly in a review of her first compilation album The Immaculate Collection , commented that " in theory a 30 @-@ ish urban sophisticate singing in the voice of a pregnant teen , sounds ridiculous " , but added that " with the help of collaborators like Stephen Bray and Patrick Leonard , though , turns into a perfectly conceived pop record " . In 2005 , the same magazine placed the song at number 486 on its list of " The 500 Greatest Songs Since You Were Born " . In 1987 , the song was nominated for Best Female Pop Vocal Performance at the 29th Grammy Awards , but lost to Barbra Streisand 's The Broadway Album .

= = Chart performance = =

" Papa Don 't Preach " was released in the United States in June 1986 . It debuted on the Billboard Hot 100 at number 42 and , within eight weeks of release , reached the top of the chart , making it Madonna 's fourth number @-@ one single in the US . It maintained the top position for two weeks and spent 18 weeks on the chart . It also reached a peak of four on the Hot Dance Club Songs chart and a peak of number 16 on the Adult Contemporary chart . In October 1998 , the single was certified gold by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) for shipment of a million copies of the single . It placed at position 29 for the Billboard Year @-@ End chart for 1986 . In Canada the song debuted at number 53 of the RPM singles chart on July 5 , 1986 , reached the top for two weeks in August 1986 , and stayed on the chart for 20 weeks . It placed at position 13 on the RPM Year @-@ End chart for 1986 .

In the United Kingdom , " Papa Don 't Preach " was released on June 16 , 1986 . The song debuted

at number 13 on the UK Singles Chart before climbing to number one two weeks later . It then spent three consecutive weeks at the top , stayed 15 weeks on the chart , and was certified gold by the British Phonographic Industry (BPI) in August 1986 for shipment of 500 @,@ 000 copies of the single . According to the Official Charts Company , the song has sold 645 @,@ 000 copies in the UK .

Across Europe , " Papa Don 't Preach " was successful , topping the Eurochart Hot 100 for 11 weeks . It reached the top position of the singles charts in Belgium , Ireland , Italy , and Norway , and peaked inside the top five in Austria , France , Germany , the Netherlands , Spain and Switzerland .

= = Music video = =

For the music video , Madonna sported a complete image makeover . She changed the heavy jewelry and make @-@ up , and adopted the gamine look , which is notably applied to describe the style and appearance that Shirley MacLaine and Audrey Hepburn used during the 1950s . In the video Madonna played a tomboy , dressed in jeans , a black leather jacket , and a slogan T @-@ shirt with the caption " Italians do it better " . The video alternated between tomboy shots and those of a sexier Madonna with a more toned and muscular body , cropped platinum blonde hair , and figure @-@ revealing clothing , consisting of a 1960s @-@ style black bustier top and capri pants .

The video was directed by James Foley , who worked with Madonna in her music video for " Live to Tell " , produced by David Naylor and Sharon Oreck , and Michael Ballhaus was in charge of the photography . The video was shot on location over three days in Staten Island , New York and Manhattan . Staten Island was chosen on Foley 's suggestion as it was where he grew up : " We talked about wanting to tap into a working @-@ class environment , because by that time she had done ' Material Girl ' and ' Like a Virgin ' and other stuff that was very glamorous and stylized . She wanted to do something a bit more grounded and ' drama ' . " Actor Alex McArthur was signed to play Madonna 's boyfriend and the father of her child in the video . Madonna had spotted McArthur in a small role as a naive youth in the 1985 film *Desert Hearts* , and she thought he was a natural to play her mechanic boyfriend . " I was out in the garage working on my Harley , " said McArthur , " I answered the phone and a voice said , ' Hi , this is Madonna . I would like you to be in my next video ' . "

The music video starts with shots of the New York skyline , the Staten Island Ferry , and character close @-@ ups . Madonna plays a teenager , who is seen walking along a lane . Then it shows her thinking about her father , played by Danny Aiello , and how much he loves her . She then sees her boyfriend , played by actor Alex McArthur , coming along . The images are juxtaposed with shots of Madonna dancing and singing in a small , darkened studio . Madonna then moves away from her friends , who warn her from her boyfriend . She and her boyfriend spend a romantic evening together on a barge where they reflect upon their lives after watching an elderly couple . Then Madonna finds out that she is pregnant and after much hesitation tells her father . They have a few hours of tension between them . Her father eventually accepts the pregnancy , and the final scene is a reconciliatory embrace between father and daughter .

Georges @-@ Claude Guilbert , author of *Madonna as Postmodern Myth* , compared her look in the video as a " combination of Marilyn Monroe , Jean Seberg and Kim Novak . " He added that it was hard for him to believe that " [Madonna] did not know that she was going to cause a huge controversy with the video ... With such a song and video , she was throwing in America 's face the image of a country ravaged by the abortion debate , which is far from being resolved . " Lynda Hart , one of the authors of *Acting Out : Feminist Performances* , felt that the video " alternated between two competing representations of Madonna ... Charging coercion , both sides make the video as an invitation to a certain way of life , in the process denying it the stylistic invocation of a rhetoric of self @-@ authorization . " At the 1987 MTV Video Music Awards , the " Papa Don 't Preach " video won the Best Female Video award , and was nominated for Best Cinematography and Best Overall Performance .

= = Live performances = =

Madonna has performed the song on four of her world tours . She premiered the song in 1987 , during her Who 's That Girl World Tour , where she danced around the stage wearing a white Spanish @-@ style dress designed by Marlene Stewart , and a black leather jacket similar to the one she used in the music video . The screen in the background showed portraits of Pope John Paul II and then @-@ President of the U.S. Ronald Reagan , along with scenes of John Perry III 's short film , The Nightmare , ending with the words " Safe Sex " , as Madonna finished the song . She dedicated the song to the Pope , marking her first conflict with the Vatican , as Pope John Paul II urged Italian fans to boycott her concerts . 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 in 1990 , Madonna evoked Catholic images during the " Papa Don 't Preach " performance . She wore a black kaftan made of chiffon and energetically danced , accompanied by six male dancers , with 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 .

In 2004 , during the Re @-@ Invention World Tour , Madonna performed the song wearing a Scottish kilt , and a T @-@ shirt that said " Kabbalists do it Better " on most of the shows , and " Brits do it Better " and " Irish do it Better " T @-@ shirts during the shows in the United Kingdom and Ireland , reminiscent of the one she used in the song 's music video . Madonna also performed a shorter , abbreviated version of " Papa Don 't Preach " in the MDNA Tour in 2012 . Wearing a black tight outfit , Madonna sang the song while crawling around on the ground , then towards the end of the performance , several dancers wearing military clothing and animal masks surrounded and tied her up and took her to the main stage , giving way to the next performance , " Hung Up " .

= = Cover versions = =

" Papa Don 't Preach " has been covered by numerous artists . In 1986 , " Weird Al " Yankovic included the song as the last in his polka melody " Polka Party ! " from his album of the same name . In 2002 , British singer Kelly Osbourne recorded together with Incubus ' members Mike Einziger (guitar) , and José Pasillas (drums) , a hard rock cover of the song that was produced by her brother Jack Osbourne . It was included as a bonus track on her debut album Shut Up and on the soundtrack of MTV 's reality television program The Osbournes .

The song was released in the United Kingdom on September 2002 , peaking at number three . In the rest of Europe , the song peaked inside the top ten in Ireland and Finland , and the top twenty in Sweden . In Australia the song debuted at number three , and received a platinum certification by the Australian Recording Industry Association (ARIA) . This version was panned by music critics , who thought that the cover " makes precisely zero sense " , and that it " reeks of opportunism " , also criticizing Incubus ' collaboration , describing it as " unimaginative " , and that " their presence makes the whole mess barely distinguishable " .

French group Mad 'House made an Eurodance cover of the song , that was included on their 2002 album Absolutely Mad . Covers of the song on tribute albums include Brook Barros on The Music of Madonna , released in 2005 , and a jazz version on Bo . Da 's Plays Madonna in Jazz , released in 2007 . The song has been sampled at the beginning of Mario Winans ' 2004 single " Never Really Was " , and a slowed @-@ down version by Keshia Chanté sample the song in the 2006 single " Fallen " . In 2001 , Picturehouse released a quiet acoustic cover on the first Even Better Than the Real Thing covers album . The television show Glee released an acoustic cover version performed by Dianna Agron as her character Quinn Fabray , a pregnant teenager , in 2009 .

= = Legacy = =

As the song 's popularity increased in the United States , so did the criticism and support it received from groups concerned with pregnancy and abortion . In July 1986 , shortly after the release of the video for " Papa Don 't Preach " , Madonna commented on the controversy surrounding the song , to music critic Stephen Holden from The New York Times :

Papa Don 't Preach " is a message song that everyone is going to take the wrong way . Immediately they 're going to say I am advising every young girl to go out and get pregnant . When I first heard the song , I thought it was silly . But then I thought , wait a minute , this song is really about a girl who is making a decision in her life . She has a very close relationship with her father and wants to maintain that closeness . To me it 's a celebration of life . It says , ' I love you , father , and I love this man and this child that is growing inside me ' . Of course , who knows how it will end ? But at least it starts off positive .

People who criticized the song 's message included Ellen Goodman , a national syndicated columnist , who called the video " a commercial for teenage pregnancy " . Feminist lawyer Gloria Allred , the spokeswoman of the National Organization for Women (NOW) , angrily called for Madonna to make a public statement or another record supporting the opposite point of view . Alfred Moran , the executive director of Planned Parenthood of New York City , also criticized the song , fearing that it would undermine efforts to promote birth control among adolescents and that it would encourage teenage pregnancy . Recalling how his agency 's clinics were filled in 1985 with girls wearing clothes that were an imitation of Madonna 's style , Moran said that the song 's message is " that getting pregnant is cool and having the baby is the right thing and a good thing and don 't listen to your parents , the school , anybody who tells you otherwise ? don 't preach to me , Papa . The reality is that what Madonna is suggesting to teenagers is a path to permanent poverty . "

In contrast , groups opposed to abortion saw " Papa Don 't Preach " as a positive , pro @-@ life song . Susan Carpenter @-@ McMillan , the president of the California chapter of Feminists for Life (FFL) in the U.S. , said that " abortion is readily available on every street corner for young women . Now what Madonna is telling them is , hey , there 's an alternative . " Tipper Gore , a founder of the Parents Music Resource Center (PMRC) , who a year earlier denounced Madonna for the sexual lyrical content of her single " Dress You Up " , and had led a campaign against explicit content in music , commended Madonna for speaking candidly about such a serious subject and important social issue . When speaking of the song , Gore said " the song speaks to a serious subject with a sense of urgency and sensitivity in both the lyrics and Madonna 's rendition . It also speaks to the fact that there 's got to be more support and more communication in families about this problem , and anything that fosters that I applaud . "

The song 's writer , Brian Elliot , commented about the debate : " I just wanted to make this girl in the song a sympathetic character . As a father myself , I 'd want to be accessible to my children 's problems . " Madonna avoided the controversy , and did not comment on the song 's use as a pro @-@ life statement . Her publicist , Liz Rosenberg , said that " she [Madonna] is singing a song , not taking a stand " , adding that " her philosophy is people can think what they want to think . " Danny Aiello , having appeared in the video as the titular " Papa " , recorded " Papa Wants the Best for You " later that year , an answer song written by Artie Schroeck from the father 's point of view .

= = Track listing and formats = =

= = Credits and personnel = =

Brian Elliot ? Music and lyrics

Madonna ? additional lyrics , producer , lead vocals

Stephen Bray ? producer , synth bass , percussion , drums , keyboards

Reggie Lucas ? producer of " Ain 't No Big Deal "

David Williams ? rhythm guitar

Bruce Gaitsch ? electric guitar

John Putnam ? acoustic guitar , electric guitar

Fred Zarr ? additional keyboards
Johnathan Moffett ? percussion
Billy Meyers ? string arrangement
Siedah Garrett ? background vocals
Edie Lehmann ? background vocals
Credits adapted from the album 's liner notes .

= = Charts = =

= = Certifications = =