

= Rebel Heart (Madonna album) =

Rebel Heart is the thirteenth studio album by American singer and songwriter Madonna . It was released on March 6 , 2015 , by Interscope Records . Following the completion of the MDNA release and promotion , Madonna worked on the album throughout 2014 , co @-@ writing and co @-@ producing it with various musicians , including Diplo , Avicii , and Kanye West . She regularly uploaded pictures of her recording sessions on her Instagram account . Unlike her previous efforts , which involved only a few people , working with a large number of collaborators posed problems for Madonna in keeping a cohesive sound and creative direction for the album .

Thematically , Rebel Heart represents the singer 's romantic and rebellious sides . The themes grew organically during the writing and recording sessions . Musically , it is a pop record which merges an array of genres such as 1990s house , trap , and reggae , as well as the use of acoustic guitars and gospel choir . Some of the songs are autobiographical in nature while others talk about love and Madonna 's career . Rebel Heart features guest appearances by boxer Mike Tyson and rappers Nicki Minaj , Nas and Chance the Rapper .

The record had been set for a March 2015 release , with the first single to be released on Valentine 's Day . But after a flurry of unexpected album content leaks , Madonna released the album for pre @-@ order on the iTunes Store on December 20 , 2014 , with six songs being available immediately for download . A police investigation led to an Israeli man being arrested and charged with hacking into Madonna 's computer and leaking the songs . The leaked cover art for the deluxe edition of the album became popular , leading to numerous memes being created on Instagram , Tumblr , and Twitter . To promote the album , Madonna made several television appearances and performances , including the 57th Annual Grammy Awards and the 2015 Brit Awards . It was further promoted by the Rebel Heart Tour which started in September 2015 , and concluded in March 2016 , visiting North America , Europe , Asia , and Oceania . " Living for Love " , " Ghosttown " , " Bitch I 'm Madonna " , and " Hold Tight " were released as singles from the album .

Rebel Heart received predominantly positive reviews from music critics ; multiple reviewers called it her best effort in a decade . They found that unlike her two previous studio efforts , Hard Candy (2008) and MDNA (2012) , the album 's sound was progressive . It peaked at number two on the Billboard 200 chart in the United States and the UK Albums Chart . Rebel Heart also peaked at number one in various countries across the world , including major music markets such as Australia , Canada , Germany , Italy , Spain , and Switzerland , while reaching the top ten on charts in France , Ireland , Mexico , Japan , New Zealand , and Sweden , and attaining Gold certifications in some of the regions .

= = Background and development = =

Following the release of her twelfth studio album , MDNA (2012) , Madonna embarked on The MDNA Tour to promote it . The tour created much controversy over her statements on violence , human rights , and politics , and her use of fake firearms and her nudity on stage . She was threatened with several lawsuits . She was enraged by many world events , which she claimed were acts of " injustice " against human beings . In September 2013 , she released secretprojectrevolution , a short film she directed with Steven Klein , dealing with artistic freedom and human rights . The film also launched a global initiative called Art for Freedom to promote freedom of expression . She clarified in L 'Uomo Vogue that her next album would be connected with Art for Freedom , saying that she " had " to be committed to the initiative and use her voice as an artist .

By December 2013 , Madonna 's manager Guy Oseary commented that the singer was " eager to get started " on her next album . However , she had another project in mind - developing the screenplay for the Andrew Sean Greer novel , The Impossible Lives of Greta Wells . Madonna decided to split her time between writing the screenplay and writing songs for the new album . In February 2014 , Madonna confirmed that she had already begun working on her thirteenth studio album , saying : " I 'm right now in the process of talking to various co @-@ writers and producers and talking about where I want to go with my music " . Working with a number of collaborators on

the album , Madonna encountered problems in keeping a cohesive sound and creative direction for Rebel Heart , since her previous efforts had been produced with only a small core group of people developing the music . She observed that a lot of the people she enlisted would not stay in one city at a time due to their different projects , resulting in Madonna not finishing her songs . " So , I was just the person standing there with a clipboard in the headlights , going ' Ok ! ' A little bit like a school teacher , " she admitted .

= = Writing and recording sessions = =

In March 2014 , Madonna started posting a number of images on the social media website Instagram , where she hinted at possible songwriters and collaborators with hashtag captions . First she posted about going into the recording studio with Swedish DJ and producer Avicii . Record producer Carl Falk talked to the Dagens Nyheter newspaper in April 2014 about the sessions with Madonna and Avicii . He recalled that eleven demos were recorded within a week at Henson Recording Studios in Hollywood , with acoustic guitars and piano . A total of six personnel were selected by Avicii 's manager Arash " Ash " Pour Nouri . They were divided into two groups , the first consisted of Falk , Rami Yacoub , and Savan Kotecha ; the second consisted of Salem Al Fakir , Vincent Pontare , and Magnus Lidehäll . Avicii worked with both groups to create the demo songs , while Madonna arrived at the studio in the afternoon and stayed until 7 am . She worked closely with both teams while writing and changing melodies , and was in charge of the process .

A few days later , Madonna posted an image of a sunset with the words " Rebel Heart " on them , and a caption which the media interpreted as lyrics from a new song . The lines posted were : " Day turns into night . I won 't give up the fight . Don 't want to get to the end of my days ... saying I wasn 't amazed " . Additional images showed Madonna with singer Natalia Kills in front of a microphone , and with Martin Kierszenbaum , the founder and chairman of Cherrytree Records , and senior executive of A & R for Interscope Records , Madonna 's label . By mid @-@ April 2014 , she had also revealed on Instagram the names of songwriters Toby Gad and Mozella and record producer Symbolyc One with images of the group working in studio . The list of personnel grew to include producer Ariel Rechtshaid and sound engineer Nick Rowe . In an interview with Sirius XM Radio , Kierszenbaum described the recording process :

We were supposed to be with her in the studio for a couple of days . She kindly invited us to stay a little longer . We don 't know what 's going to end up on the album but it was an absolute you know honor ... For me being such a fan for so long it was so exciting to hear her vocal in the room right next to me , coming out of her head really sounding exactly like all those records we all love and she 's a pleasure to work with because she 's so in tune with who she is and what she wants to sing . I don 't know . It 's really great collaborating with her and Natalia is such a great writer .

In May 2014 , Madonna posted a selfie in which she talked about working with American DJ Diplo . Madonna had invited him for her annual Oscar party , but he could not attend . They eventually started talking about music through texts and decided to collaborate on the album . Madonna asked Diplo to provide his " craziest record " for the album . Together they wrote and recorded seven songs . " Those records are gonna be crazy @-@ sounding . We really pushed the envelope with some of the stuff we were doing ... [S] he was up for anything . I love when an artist gives a producer the confidence he needs to work with them , and Madonna was very open @-@ minded to my ideas " , Diplo added . One song was composed using a hook Madonna had sung in the studio ; Diplo described it as " super weird " . Another one , later confirmed as " Living for Love " , had nearly twenty versions recorded ranging from a piano ballad to an EDM version . Ultimately Madonna and Diplo compromised on version midway between the two styles . Rechtshaid and British singer MNEK also joined their writing sessions , improving the song 's verses . Diplo also confirmed another track , known as " Bitch I 'm Madonna " , which he believed would push the lyrical boundaries for a pop song . Both Alicia Keys and Ryan Tedder confirmed working on the album , saying that they had contributed to the songwriting with Keys playing piano on " Living for Love " . Two other songs , " Messiah " and " Devil Pray " , were confirmed by Madonna in different interviews .

= = Titling and themes = =

Thematically, Caryn Ganz of Rolling Stone felt that the album focused on two subjects : listening to one's heart, and being a rebel. Madonna explained that these concepts were not the initial inspiration, but emerged during the sessions with Avicii. Madonna observed two distinct themes emerging organically, and felt the need to express them. The record was titled Rebel Heart, since it dealt with two different aspects of the singer's character : her rebellious, renegade side, and her romantic side ; she wanted the album to represent both. On the French radio station NRJ, she explained that Rebel Heart could be both autobiographical and fictional, since she mixed both her own experiences with imaginary narratives while writing the songs. The title also stemmed from Madonna's belief that contemporary music artists are not encouraged or inspired to be rebellious, take risks, or speak @-@ up, and she wanted to highlight this. However, she understood the importance of having love in the rebellious nature, so added the word Heart to the title.

Introspection was also listed as one of the foundational themes prevalent on the album, along with "genuine statements of personal and careerist reflection scattered among the posturing of 'Bitch I'm Madonna' and 'Unapologetic Bitch'" according to Slant's Sam C. Mac as well as her "obsessive self @-@ regard". Madonna explained to Jon Pareles of The New York Times that although she has never looked back at her past endeavors, reminiscing about it felt right for Rebel Heart. "And it's bittersweet for me to think about that. It just seemed like a time where I wanted to stop and look back. It's kind of like survivor guilt. How did I make it and they didn't?" During the album's development phase, she became comfortable expressing her ideas in front of a few people, comparing it to : "writing your diary in front of somebody and reading it out loud ... It was almost like an acting exercise, you know, just putting myself in a room and letting ideas flow even if I didn't feel so connected to the people".

Further inspiration for the album came from Madonna's exploration of other cultures and art, literature, and music, referencing them in the songs. She believed that the tracks should stand on their own, so that one could sing them accompanied with just a guitar. Madonna enlisted the help of her daughter Lourdes and son Rocco, calling them her A & R advisers. They visited night clubs and were able to provide her with news about up @-@ and @-@ coming music and artists, helping to create the sounds she gravitated towards for the album.

Generally a pop record, Rebel Heart was different from Madonna's releases in the last decade according to Bradley Stern from MuuMuse. He called it an "eclectic record" citing the merging of an array of musical genres like 1990s house, trap, and reggae along with the use of acoustic guitars. Stern felt that unlike Hard Candy (2008) and MDNA which chased then current musical trends, this album's sound was progressive. Adding to this, Mitchell Sunderland from Vice felt that Rebel Heart was a "lesson learned" from the criticism Madonna had received for her previous two albums. Jed Gottlieb of the Boston Herald found the album continued Madonna's "increasingly interesting, innovative approach" by combining contemporary musical styles with her previous tastes. He found Rebel Heart to be an improvement from the generic dance tunes on MDNA. For Jon Pareles of The New York Times, Rebel Heart was like a sequel to MDNA in its composition, but while the latter was marred by its cold mechanized vocals and clichéd songwriting, the former portrays Madonna's musical abilities as someone "who ponders sin along with romance and fame". Jay Lustig of The Record believed that Madonna had always lacked a thematic coherence with her previous endeavors. However, with the songs from Rebel Heart, she was able to create potentially successful singles despite the tracks' different styles, thereby maintaining consistency on the record.

= = Music and lyrical interpretation = =

Rebel Heart opens with the song "Living for Love". Composed in the house genre, it begins with Madonna singing over a "regal" piano line, eventually joined by percussion. Although a breakup song, "Living for Love" talks about being triumphant and hopeful. According to Dean Piper of The

Daily Telegraph , the song has " some classic Madonna traits : religious references , a gospel choir , 90s piano beats and a whirling bass " . It was compared to her 1989 singles , " Like a Prayer " and " Express Yourself " by Jason Lipshutz of Billboard . The second track , " Devil Pray " , was inspired by how one could be enticed to partake of narcotics to achieve a higher level of consciousness and connect to God . Lyrically it asks for salvation from a variety of drug abuses , making allusions to Saint Mary and Lucifer , as well as the pain of healing from drug abuse . Produced by Madonna with Falk , Avicii , DJ Dahi , and Blood Diamonds , " Devil Pray " starts with gentle guitar sounds which build up to an electropop production , accompanied by a house beat . " Ghosttown " talks about civilizations ending and the world encountering an armageddon , but humans seeing hope amid the destruction . Written with Jason Evigan , Evan Bogart , and Sean Douglas , it is a power ballad song , which Madonna sings in " piercing " and " warm " vocals like those of Karen Carpenter 's , and the production is comparable to her 1986 single , " Live to Tell " . According to Douglas , " Ghosttown " was written in three days , after Madonna personally requested studio time with him and the other songwriters . The fourth track , " Unapologetic Bitch " , has reggae , dancehall , and dubstep influences , and is a ska song where Madonna speaks negatively about a break @-@ up and her lover , in lyrics such as : " It might sound like I 'm an Unapologetic Bitch but sometimes you have to call it like it is " . Madonna explained that the song is about having fun irrespective of the situation one is in .

The fifth song , " Illuminati " , was inspired after Madonna learned that some people labelled her as a member of the Illuminati . She researched the real Illuminati and wrote the song . Lyrically it refers to the Illuminati conspiracy theory , the Egyptian pyramids , the Phoenix , the Age of Enlightenment , and the Eye of Providence among others , with the chorus lyrics : " It 's like everybody in this party is shining like Illuminati " . According to Madonna , Kanye West , who produced the track , loved the melody and changed the composition adding his own spin to it . Minaj appears on the sixth track , " Bitch I 'm Madonna " , where she raps , asking everybody to " go hard or go home " , while Madonna shouts lyrics like : " I just want to have fun tonight , I wanna blow up this house tonight " . Produced by Diplo and Sophie , the track has a tearing sound alongside the " bleepy electro " and " churning dubstep " composition . During the writing sessions , Minaj had to rewrite the lyrics until she could get the correct sentiment Madonna wanted . " Hold Tight " consists of an " arresting " chorus and a drum beat sound , described by Sam C. Mac of Slant Magazine as : " innocuous , lyrically platitudinous pop that briefly works itself up into something exciting when it threatens to become a gospelized stomp " . Track eight , " Joan of Arc " , is a ballad in which Madonna sings about the media scrutiny of her life , singing : " Each time they take a photograph , I lose a part of me I can 't get back " . It also references the Roman Catholic saint of the same name . Madonna 's hushed , vibrato @-@ tinged vocals , and confessional lyrics in " Joan of Arc " , are enhanced by a new beat instrumentation that utilizes strings and acoustic guitars in the bridge .

" Iconic " features Chance the Rapper and boxer Mike Tyson . The latter has a spoken word introduction to the song , similar to his addition on Canibus ' debut single , " Second Round K.O. " (1998) . Madonna invited Tyson to the recording studio where he talked about his life ; he recorded the introduction in one take . Consisting of a " weird " beat , " Iconic " finds Madonna embracing herself as an icon through the lyrics . " HeartBreakCity " follows " Iconic " , and is a piano ballad talking about lost love , with Madonna singing in a deeper vocal register , inspired by baroque pop . Containing synths , banjo sounds , and hollow drums , " Body Shop " describes love as a damaged car on the highway , requiring a body repair to be alive . West also produced the next track , " Holy Water " , where the singer compares her bodily fluids to the title . With hedonistic sound effects , the song is reminiscent of Madonna 's 1990 single , " Justify My Love " and contains a lyrical excerpt from " Vogue " . A bassline accompanies the chorus , consisting of moaning sounds , arcade game music , and synths . " Inside Out " was produced by Mike Dean , and features Madonna 's vocals with reverb , accompanied by piano sounds and restrained chords . " Wash All Over Me " follows , and is the last track on the standard version of the album . Baroque piano sounds , and a steady military beat , lead up to the chorus as Madonna sings about the world changing , heartbreaks , and acceptance . A gospel choir and minimum synths back the song 's sound .

The deluxe version of Rebel Heart begins with the track " Best Night " , an 80s electro composition

reminiscent of Sade 's songs with drums and Indian flute instrumentation . Madonna begins the song with the line , " You can call me M tonight " but her voice is not discernible in the chorus , only in the harmonies . There is another reference to " Justify My Love " at one point during the intermediate bridge . " Veni Vidi Vici " appears next , and is a rap " origin story song " with its lyrics built around Madonna 's songs : " I expressed myself , came like a virgin down the aisle / Exposed my naked ass , and I did it with a smile / And when it came to sex , I knew I walked the Borderline / and when I struck a pose , all the gay boys lost their minds " . Madonna sings the chorus over simple guitar beats , uttering " I came , I saw , I conquered " , the English translation of the song 's title . Nas appears for a guest verse talking about his own life as Diplo backs it with shotgun and crunching horn sounds . " S.E.X. " is the next track where Madonna asks sarcastically " tell me what you know about sex " over sounds of bass , synths and a string arpeggio . Near the end she lists a number of bondage items like : " Twisted rope , handcuffs , blindfold , string of pearls " . Described as both an embodiment and critique of act , " S.E.X. " talks about the lack of intimacy with Madonna rapping in a " dispassionate " voice ; she purposely made it sound like she had a lisp in her articulation of the words .

" Messiah " is a dramatic pop ballad with an orchestra backing and violins . Madonna sings in a " deeper velvety " tone , with the lyrics talking about lighting candles , necromancy , and casting love spells . The title track finishes off the deluxe version and was changed completely from its leaked demo . It consists of acoustic guitar and violins , with autobiographical lyrics . Amy Pettifer of The Quietus noted , " ' Rebel Heart ' quietly [acknowledges Madonna 's] part in building the scene and popularizing stylistics that are the foundation of current trends . " The super deluxe version presented tracks like " Graffiti Heart " , where Madonna drew inspiration from her pre @-@ fame friends like artists Jean @-@ Michel Basquiat and Keith Haring evoking the power of art in gaining freedom . It was described by the Pretty Much Amazing blog as a " a galloping love letter to creativity " , while " Beautiful Scars " is a disco @-@ lite throwback track . " Borrowed Time " deals with war and social issues while " Auto @-@ Tune Baby " features a baby wailing in the background .

= = Release , leaks , and artwork = =

In May 2014 , photographer Mert Alas posted on his Instagram account that he was listening to a new Madonna album , but Billboard clarified that she was still in the process of recording it in Los Angeles . They later posted a 50 @-@ second snippet of an instrumental which media claimed to be from Madonna , but the sample was traced back to Dutch DJ Sander Kleinenberg and his song " We Are Superstars " . Oseary confirmed that Madonna looked forward to a 2015 release date for the album . However , on November 28 , 2014 , two songs titled " Rebel Heart " and " Wash All Over Me " were leaked onto the Internet ; the songs were immediately taken down , and Oseary tweeted asking for assistance in finding the source of the leaks . On December 17 , 2014 , a total of thirteen songs were leaked , as well as artwork suggesting the album was to be named Iconic . An aggravated Madonna clarified that the songs were demo versions from earlier recordings ; she described the leak as " artistic rape " . She was criticized subsequently for referring to the hack as " terrorism " in the wake of the Peshawar school massacre and the Sydney hostage crisis , terrorist acts that had taken place earlier in 2014 . Madonna said in a Billboard interview that after the leak she and her team tried to trace it back to the source , but ultimately decided to release the finished songs . Referring to the Sony Pictures Entertainment hack , she was critical of the Internet and explained that the incident led to her securing her laptop and hard drives , and disabling the Wi @-@ Fi . " I wanted to plan everything in advance . Release the single , shoot a video , start talking about my record . And you know , prepare for the release of the entire album and have everything set up just so ... But we sort of were left with no choice " , she added .

On December 20 , 2014 , the album was made available for pre @-@ order at the iTunes Store . When ordered , six tracks (five in the United Kingdom) were automatically downloaded . Madonna stated that the songs were meant to be " an early Christmas gift " with the final release on March 10 , 2015 . Originally , " Living for Love " was intended to serve as the lead single from the album . It

was to be released on Valentine 's Day , with the rest of the record slated for the spring . However , due to the leak , the release date had to be pushed up . Oseary recalled that they did not receive a confirmation until Friday night whether the pre @-@ release could be executed , since iTunes was closing for the Christmas weekend . After much discussion on the pros and cons of the release , and with the aid of Interscope vice @-@ chairman Steve Berman , and Apple Inc . ' s Robert Kondrk , they were able to go live slowly . The six songs Madonna chose had to be polished , and since the tracks ' producers were unavailable , she mastered and mixed them herself . The album 's release was compared to Beyoncé 's self @-@ titled surprise release in 2013 , with The Guardian calling it a " partial Beyoncé " . The leaks continued with fourteen new demos being revealed between December 23 and December 27 . Three new tracks ? " Hold Tight " , " Joan of Arc " and " Iconic " ? became available following Madonna 's Grammy performance .

The final track list for Rebel Heart was revealed on January 20 , 2015 , including the standard and deluxe version song names . A day later Israeli police arrested a man suspected of hacking into Madonna 's , as well as other musicians ' computers , stealing and leaking content . Lahav 433 , an Israeli crime @-@ fighting umbrella organization , had led a month @-@ long investigation after the leaks occurred , working closely with the FBI . Although Israeli police refused to name the suspect , media identified him as former reality show contestant Adi Lederman , who had participated in the Israeli singing competition , Kokhav Nolad , season ten . As the deluxe edition leaked in full , Lederman was charged by Israel 's Magistrate Court on four counts : computer trespassing , prohibited secret monitoring and additional computer trespassing , copyright infringement , and obstructing investigation . The investigation also revealed that Lederman was the one who had leaked the demo of Madonna 's lead single from MDNA , " Give Me All Your Luvin ' " . Copies of songs , including rehearsal recordings of upcoming Madonna performances , were sold for more than \$ 1 @,@ 000 to various clients . Lederman was ultimately sentenced to fourteen months in a Tel Aviv prison .

The cover art , featuring Madonna 's face inter @-@ crossed with black wires , became popular on social media resulting in numerous memes being created on Instagram , Tumblr and Twitter . Fans wound black wires across their faces imitating the cover , and even created memes with the faces of other celebrities , including : Britney Spears , Michael Jackson , Homer Simpson , Jim Carrey , Marlon Brando , and the Grinch . Madonna forwarded many of the images to her social media accounts . However , three of the images ? those of Martin Luther King Jr . , Nelson Mandela and Bob Marley with the same wires around their faces ? were heavily criticized for being " disrespectful and racist " . The singer explained the photos the next day , saying that she was flattered by the comparison to the three and characterized herself as a " freedom fighter " .

= = Promotion = =

= = = Live performances = = =

Madonna confirmed her appearance at the 57th Annual Grammy Awards on February 8 , 2015 ; Oseary clarified that the singer would also perform at the ceremony . The singer performed " Living for Love " wearing a one @-@ piece , matador red outfit , surrounded by male dancers dressed as Minotaurs similar to the song 's music video . Forbes reported that Madonna 's performance was the most @-@ watched moment of the night . Her effort to sing live without Auto @-@ Tune during the choreographed performance was also widely praised . She also performed the song at the 2015 Brit Awards , on February 25 , 2015 . However , in the early stages of the performance , a wardrobe malfunction caused her to be pulled down a flight of stairs that made up part of the stage . She later took to Instagram to confirm that she was well , posting : " Thanks for the good wishes ! I 'm fine " . It was later revealed that her cape was tied too tightly , and when her dancers attempted to remove it from her neck , this caused her to crash to the floor , leaving the audience in shock . After several seconds , she continued her performance as planned .

Madonna partnered with the geosocial networking app , Grindr to promote Rebel Heart . A contest

was held and five of the app 's users were selected for an exclusive interview with the artist . The contest required re @-@ creating the artwork for Rebel Heart and posting it as a Grindr profile picture . Other winners received signed copies of the album . Joe Stone from The Guardian considered this to be a " savvy " promotional method allowing Madonna to connect directly with her gay audience . Madonna appeared on The Jonathan Ross Show , for her first UK television interview in three years , on February 26 , 2015 (aired on March 14) . She performed an edited version of " Living for Love " , as well as " Ghosttown " for the first time . On March 1 , she travelled to Italy for an appearance on the television show Che tempo che fa (aired on March 8) , where she performed " Devil Pray " and " Ghosttown " while talking with host Fabio Fazio on numerous topics including the album 's development process . The next day she appeared on France 's Le Grand Journal show , performing an edited version of " Living for Love " and " Ghosttown " . Another interview aired on The Today Show on March 9 and 10 , 2015 , where she spoke to host Carson Daly about the Rebel Heart leaks . Madonna appeared for the first time on a special edition of The Howard Stern Show on March 11 , 2015 during which she discussed her life , and personal relationships , as well as confirming that " Ghosttown " was to be the second single from Rebel Heart .

Madonna appeared and performed on The Ellen DeGeneres Show in the US for the entire week of March 16 to 20 . Songs performed included " Living for Love " with DeGeneres herself joining the singer onstage , a stripped down version of " Joan of Arc " , " Ghosttown " , and finally , her 1985 single " Dress You Up " , during a bathroom concert sequence with DeGeneres . On March 29 , 2015 , Madonna performed " Ghosttown " at the 2nd iHeartRadio Music Awards in Los Angeles , where she was joined onstage by singer Taylor Swift playing guitar . Two days later , the BBC 's Jo Whiley interviewed her for Radio 2 , the singer 's first radio interview in the UK . Madonna appeared on The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon on April 9 , 2015 , singing " Bitch , I 'm Madonna " and her 1983 single , " Holiday " .

= = = Singles = = =

" Living for Love " was the first single from the album , released along with five other tracks . It was sent for radio play in the US on February 10 , 2015 . The song received positive feedback with Slant Magazine listing it at number 25 on their year end top songs list for 2015 , saying : " Overworked and overthought , for sure , but the song 's essence remains in tact , and if Madonna 's message of life after love didn 't register as a commercial comeback on the scale of , say , Cher 's ' Believe ' , it remains a pop @-@ gospel sequel of the highest order " . An accompanying music video , directed by the French duo Julien Choquart and Camille Hirigoyen , together known as J.A.C.K. , was released in February 2015 . Its storyline incorporates mythological elements and shows Madonna as a matador , fighting her dancers dressed like minotaurs on a red circular stage . " Ghosttown " was first sent for radio airplay in Italy on March 13 , 2015 , and a week later in Australia . The music video was directed by Jonas Åkerlund , and starred actor Terrence Howard . The video 's main theme was " an apocalyptic situation mimicking the end of the world " , showing the singer and Howard as the sole survivors in a destroyed city .

The third single , " Bitch I 'm Madonna " , was released as a remix EP , featuring remixes by various collaborators . Åkerlund again helmed the video for the song , which featured Minaj and Diplo with Madonna , and cameo appearances by : Rita Ora , Chris Rock , Jon Kortajarena , Miley Cyrus , Alexander Wang , Beyoncé , Katy Perry , Kanye West , and Madonna 's two sons , Rocco and David . The video was shot at the Standard Hotel in New York City and shows Madonna and her entourage having a party throughout the building , ending on the rooftop . The release of the video to the streaming service Tidal was plagued by technical difficulties , and was met with a mixed response . Critics complimented the craziness of the clip but panned the absence of the guest stars from the set . " Hold Tight " was a radio only single in Italy , released for airplay on July 24 , 2015 , and served as the fourth single from Rebel Heart in that country .

" Bitch I 'm Madonna " became the only track from the album to enter the Billboard Hot 100 . It debuted and peaked at number 84 on the chart , aided by a total of 2 @.@ 6 million streams of the

song 's audio and video . The first three singles reached the top of the Billboard Dance Club Songs , extending Madonna 's record as the artist with the most number one songs on the chart , as well as the artist with the most number @-@ one singles ever on a Billboard chart , breaking her tie with country singer George Strait who earned 44 number @-@ ones on the Hot Country Singles chart . " Living for Love " reached number 26 in the United Kingdom , becoming Madonna 's 71st top @-@ forty single , extending her record as the female artist with the most top @-@ forty UK singles .

= = = Rebel Heart Tour = = =

Numerous news outlets started reporting on the concert tour supporting Rebel Heart . The Italian newspaper Torino Today reported Madonna was planning on returning to Turin with the tour on November 20 and 21 , 2015 . The tour was called the Rebel Heart Tour with appearances in North America , Europe , Asia and Oceania , beginning on September 9 , 2015 . Billboard reported that the tour would use arenas only , and would visit cities where Madonna had not performed previously . The initial itinerary had 25 ? 30 shows in North America and 20 ? 25 shows in Europe , with additional dates being revealed later on . This tour was the singer 's first visit to Australia in more than 20 years , having last toured there with The Girlie Show World Tour in 1993 , and her first time performing in New Zealand and the Philippines . The tour 's main stage was elevated and set up at the end of each arena , with a long catwalk extending from its middle to the center of the space . At the middle of the catwalk there was a circular stage , while the far end of the pathway ended in a heart @-@ shaped stage . Designers working on the tour 's wardrobe included : Jeremy Scott for Moschino , Alessandro Michele for Gucci and Alexander Wang , along with Fausto Puglisi , Prada , Miu Miu , Swarovski , Lebanese designer Nicolas Jebran , as well as Madonna 's longtime collaborator Arianne Phillips . The tour generated positive critical reviews , many noting that Madonna appeared to be in a happy mood . At its completion , the tour grossed a total of \$ 169 @. @ 8 million from the 82 shows , with over 1 @. @ 045 million ticket sales .

= = Critical response = =

On its release , Rebel Heart received positive critical reviews . At Metacritic , which assigns a weighted mean rating out of 100 to reviews by music critics , the album received an average score of 68 , based on 29 reviews , which indicates " generally favorable reviews " . The Daily Telegraph writer Neil McCormick , Andy Gill of The Independent , AllMusic 's Stephen Thomas Erlewine , and Lauren Murphy of The Irish Times each gave the album 4 out of 5 stars . McCormick felt that " (f) or the first time in years , [Madonna] doesn 't sound desperate " , praising it in comparison to Hard Candy and MDNA . Saeed called it : " a fine collection of sturdy pop tunes in which Madonna finally allows herself to look back and sometimes pilfer from her peak periods of the late 80s and early 2000s " . Murphy wrote " the indisputable pop icon is back with a tentative bang " after MDNA had " few memorable pop hits " . For Gill , the most impressive aspect of Rebel Heart was Madonna 's vocals , while Erlewine found the album to be a revival of Madonna 's defiant side and her confessional mood .

Writing for The Quietus , Amy Pettifer praised the album , describing it as : " a darker return to the club culture roots [for Madonna] , and it seems ? on some level ? to face up to the missteps of her more recent releases " . Giving it 3 @. @ 5 out of 4 stars , USA Today writer Elysa Gardner described the album 's sound and lyrics as " piercingly direct " . Chicago Tribune writer Greg Kot and Randall Roberts of the Los Angeles Times awarded it 3 out of 4 stars . Kot believed that the album would have been better without the songs referencing sexuality , but still considered it to be " fascinating " while Roberts believed that Rebel Heart stood out " sturdily " because of its production . Writing for The Boston Globe , James Reed opined that the album was a : " welcome detour in the artist 's recent discography ... her most satisfying effort in a decade and nimbly connects the dots between Madonna 's various eras and guises " . Critic Joey Guerra of the Houston Chronicle called Rebel Heart : " a complex , consistently strong album " .

Slant Magazine editor Sal Cinquemani , Joe Levy of Billboard , and Caryn Ganz of Rolling Stone

each awarded the album 3 @. @ 5 out of 5 stars . Cinquemani wrote that the album was " all over the map " , yet felt it was " a surprisingly coherent one " . Levy wrote that the album was " subtle " compared to " current standards " , adding that : " These songs unfold slowly , building through foreplay @-@ like intros before hooks are displayed over a shifting series of textures " . Ganz felt that Rebel Heart " is at its strongest when Madonna shoves everyone to the side and just tells it to us straight " , and added : " Deep down , Madonna does have a rebel heart ? and you can 't fault her for reminding us that pop music is all the better for it " . Jamieson Cox of Time commended the album for its consistent production and sound , and for Madonna 's vocals and songwriting . Giving it a rating of " B " , Kyle Anderson and Adam Markovitz of Entertainment Weekly called the album " Madonna 's best outing since 2000 's Music " . Alexis Petridis of the The Guardian and Time Out writer Nick Levine gave the album 3 out of 5 stars . Petridis felt that the two contrasting sides of the album did not " quite gel " , reasoning that : " the former might represent the music Madonna wants to make , while the latter is the music she feels obliged to make " . Levine wrote : " ' Rebel Heart ' may lack cohesion , but she 's definitely not down for the count : this contains some of the best music Madonna 's made in a decade " .

Annie Zalesky of The A.V. Club said the album had its " fair share of those head scratching moments " , but found it to be a move in the right direction musically . Spin writer Andrew Unterberger gave the album a 6 out of 10 ranking . While describing the record as " clunky " , Unterberger also wrote that it : " contains a number of Madonna 's best songs in years " . Writing for The New Zealand Herald , Lydia Jenkin gave it a mixed review , deeming the album a " bit of a mess " and " confused " . Lindsay Zoladz of New York magazine was disappointed , feeling that Madonna sounded " safe " in the songs , adding that : " (t) he Madonna of Rebel Heart [has] succeeded once again in the increasingly empty goal of sounding current " . Gavin Haynes of NME panned the album , saying that the album : " feels like a wasted opportunity . Trite self @-@ empowerment anthem ' Iconic ' informs us that there 's only two letters difference between Icon and I Can 't . Sadly , there are also two letters between class and ass " .

= = Commercial reception = =

According to Andrew Hampp of Billboard , the pre @-@ order received a strong commercial response after its release to iTunes Stores around the world . In the United States , three of the six released tracks debuted on Billboard 's Dance / Electronic Songs chart dated January 3 , 2015 ? " Living for Love " , " Bitch I 'm Madonna " , and " Unapologetic Bitch " ? despite being available for only two days . The six songs had sold a combined 146 @,@ 000 digital downloads , according to Nielsen SoundScan . The album 's pre @-@ orders were estimated at around 50 @,@ 000 to 60 @,@ 000 copies , according to industry prognosticators . The album debuted at number two on the Billboard 200 chart with 121 @,@ 000 album equivalent units , behind the soundtrack of the TV series Empire . While Rebel Heart was the best @-@ selling album of the week ? ranking number one on Billboard 's Top Album Sales chart with pure album sales of 116 @,@ 000 copies (96 % of overall units) ? it fell behind the soundtrack when it came to streaming and track equivalent album units , with just over 1 @,@ 000 and 4 @,@ 000 respectively . It became Madonna 's 21st top @-@ ten album , but was her first studio release not to debut atop the chart since 1998 's Ray of Light . Rebel Heart 's concert tour bundle amounted to less than 10 @,@ 000 copies compared to the 180 @,@ 000 copies sold for her previous album , MDNA . The release also prompted Madonna to debut at number seven on the Billboard Artist 100 chart , moving up by 2 @,@ 919 % in overall Artist 100 points and gaining 31 % in social media activity . In Canada , Rebel Heart debuted at number one on the Canadian Albums Chart with 18 @,@ 000 copies sold in the first week , making it her seventh number @-@ one there during the SoundScan era . The next week , the album dropped 19 places on the Billboard 200 , while in Canada it dropped only one position . Billboard reported that the sales dropped by 78 % to 26 @,@ 000 units , a reflection of the high pre @-@ orders during first week . The album gradually dropped down the next two weeks . On the fifth week it received a boost in sales as a result of Madonna 's appearance on The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon , jumping from number 57 to 41 on the Billboard 200 . The album was present for a total of 11

weeks on the chart , and ranked at number 151 on the Billboard 200 year end chart for 2015 .

In the United Kingdom , the Official Charts Company reported that Rebel Heart outsold its nearest competitors by a ratio of nearly 3 : 1 , after just 24 hours on sale . However , Sam Smith 's *In the Lonely Hour* pushed ahead at the last minute , and Rebel Heart debuted at number two with a difference of 12 @, @ 000 copies . It became Madonna 's first studio album to miss the top spot since *Bedtime Stories* , which also debuted at number two in 1994 . The album sold 37 @, @ 245 copies including 416 from streaming , the lowest first week sales for a studio album by Madonna . However , she extended her lead as the biggest selling female artist of the 21st century in UK , with cumulative sales of 7 @. @ 65 million copies . The following week , the album dropped to number 7 , with sales declining by 67 @. @ 46 % to 11 @, @ 983 copies . The album was certified silver by the British Phonographic Industry (BPI) for selling over 60 @, @ 000 copies and has sold 76 @, @ 490 copies as of June 2015 .

Rebel Heart debuted at the top of the German Albums Chart , becoming her twelfth chart @-@ topping record there . Madonna surpassed The Beatles and Robbie Williams as the foreign act with the most number @-@ one albums in German chart history , and equaled Herbert Grönemeyer for third place overall , behind only Peter Maffay and James Last with 16 and 13 chart @-@ toppers respectively . In France , the album debuted at number three on the SNEP Albums chart , with three @-@ day sales of 17 @, @ 000 copies . Rebel Heart also debuted at number one on record charts in : Austria , Belgium (Flanders) , Croatia , the Czech Republic , Hungary , Italy , the Netherlands , Portugal , Spain and Switzerland , as well as in the top ten in the rest of Europe .

In Australia , Rebel Heart debuted at the top of the ARIA Albums Chart with sales of 6 @, @ 962 copies , becoming Madonna 's eleventh number @-@ one album in the country and tying her with U2 as the act with the most number @-@ one albums since the establishment of ARIA in 1983 . It became Madonna 's 19th week atop the chart , ranking her at number 24 on the list of artists with most accumulated weeks at the top . The album had a sharp drop the next week , selling 1 @, @ 312 copies and dropping to number 18 on the album chart . In New Zealand , it debuted at number seven on the Official New Zealand Music Chart . In Japan , Rebel Heart debuted at number eight on the Oricon Albums Chart with first @-@ week sales of 7 @, @ 548 physical units , becoming her 23rd top @-@ ten album there . It also entered the Oricon International Albums Chart at number one , staying there for a second week . In South Korea , the album gave Madonna two top @-@ ten entries simultaneously on the Gaon International Albums Chart , with the deluxe edition at number one and the standard edition at number seven . As of March 2016 , the album has sold an estimated one million copies worldwide .

= = Accolades = =

In its year end review of albums released in 2015 , Rolling Stone ranked Rebel Heart at # 45 noting : " How did it take this long for Madonna to write herself a theme song titled ' Unapologetic Bitch ' ? No apologies offered or needed ? Rebel Heart was the queen 's finest album in a decade , picking up the disco @-@ stick baton of her 2005 *Confessions on a Dance Floor* as Madonna voyages back into the groove and reflects on where she 's been lately " . It was also listed at number six on its ranking of the 20 Best Pop Albums of 2015 . Similarly , in its year end review , Spin magazine listed the album at number 21 as Andrew Unterberger noted that : " For most artists who spent whole decades defining the mainstream , titling an album Rebel Heart would seem misguided at best , but for Madonna , it 's truer now than ever : A fifty @-@ something refusing to bend to public demands about how she should age gracefully ... is as big an act of defiance as you can stage in contemporary pop music " . AllMusic listed Rebel Heart as one of their Favorite Pop Albums of 2015 , describing it as : " Bold , messy , and life @-@ affirming record that finds Madonna simultaneously looking forward and back " .

For its year end tabulation , Digital Spy listed Rebel Heart at number 10 on the list of Top 25 Albums of 2015 with Lewis Corner noting that the tracks ranged from : " brilliant , dancehall groove to more reflective and somber pop ballads " . He added that : " At this stage in her career , if Madonna doesn 't have ' pop chameleon ' on her LinkedIn profile ... then Rebel Heart alone is

enough to endorse that title ". He listed " Devil Pray " as a standout track . Associated Press music editor Mesfin Fekadu ranked the album at number 5 , describing the album as a " contemporary classic that puts albums from other female artists half [Madonna] ' s age to shame " . Fekadu criticized radio for not playing the songs from the album , listing " Bitch I 'm Madonna " and " Joan of Arc " as highlights . Billboard listed the Deluxe edition album cover at number 15 in their ranking of the Best Album Covers of 2015 .

= = Formats and track listing = =

Credits adapted from Madonna 's official website .

Notes

^ [a] signifies a co @-@ producer

^ [b] signifies an additional producer

^ [c] signifies a remixer

^ [d] signifies personnel listed with BMI as songwriter on the song .

= = Credits and personnel = =

Performers

Musicians

Technical personnel

Credits and personnel adapted from Madonna 's official website .

= = Charts = =

= = Certifications and sales = =

= = Release history = =