

= Ray of Light (song) =

" Ray of Light " is a song by American singer Madonna . It is the title track from her seventh studio album Ray of Light (1998) , and was released as the album 's second single on May 6 , 1998 , by Maverick Records . The song was also included on the compilation albums GHV2 (2001) and Celebration (2009) . Written by Madonna , William Orbit , Clive Muldoon , Dave Curtiss , Christine Leach , and produced by Madonna and Orbit , " Ray of Light " is based on Curtiss Muldoon 's " Sepheryn " and is an electronic dance song with techno , trance , Eurodance , and disco influences , " Ray of Light " contains several sound effects such as whistles , bleeps and bells , the usage of electric guitar , and underlying synths . Lyrically , the song has a theme of freedom .

The song has received critical acclaim by music critics , for its club @-@ friendly , electronic sound , lyrics , and " emotional warmth " . The song was also nominated for three Grammy Awards ; for Record of the Year , Best Dance Recording , and Best Short Form Music Video , winning the last two . " Ray of Light " debuted and peaked at number five on the Billboard Hot 100 , becoming Madonna 's highest debut on the chart to date . It also reached number one on the Hot Dance Club Songs chart . Internationally , the song reached the top five in Canada , Finland , Italy and the United Kingdom , and peaked at number one in Scotland and Spain .

An accompanying music video for " Ray of Light " was directed by Jonas Åkerlund and shows scenes from different cities around the world , with Madonna singing the song in front of them . The video was critically acclaimed , receiving the Grammy Award for Best Short Form Music Video , as well as winning five awards at the 1998 MTV Video Music Awards . Later , Stefano Salvati accused her of plagiarizing the concept of a music video he directed for Biagio Antonacci in 1994 . The song has been performed in three of Madonna 's concert tours , most recently on her Sticky & Sweet Tour (2008 ? 09) . It has been covered by a number of artists , and has been featured in several elements of popular culture , such as on the FOX show Glee , as well as different advertising campaigns .

= = Background = =

Madonna began recording Ray of Light with English electronic musician and producer William Orbit in 1997 , after Guy Oseary , Maverick Records 's partner , phoned Orbit and suggested that he send some songs to Madonna . Orbit then sent a 13 @-@ track digital audio tape to Madonna , and " Ray of Light " was among these tracks . It is based on a track written in the 1970s , called " Sepheryn " , by English folk music duo Curtiss Maldoon . In 1996 , Christine Leach , Clive Maldoon 's niece , recorded her version for the track . She worked for a time with Orbit . Leach said she had always loved the duo 's work and " Sepheryn " had a dream @-@ like quality . When she rewrote the chorus melody , she removed a few bits . After Madonna heard Christine 's version of the track , she liked it , and reworked the lyrics . Dave Curtiss said he " couldn 't believe it " after he heard the track , and was pleased with what Madonna had done with his original composition . Madonna said about the song : " It 's totally out of control . The original version is well over 10 minutes long . It was completely indulgent , but I loved it . It was heartbreaking to cut it down to a manageable length . " Its original version was set to be included on a compilation album , titled Veronica Electronica , although it was not released .

= = Composition = =

An electronic dance music song , " Ray of Light " has received stylistic comparisons to rave , psychedelic and acid music . The track contains strong techno elements , as well as disco , trance , and Eurodance influences , and it sees Madonna deepen her dance roots and go for a more electronic sound . According to the sheet music published by Musicnotes.com , the song is set in common time , with a moderately fast groove tempo of 126 beats per minute . It is composed in the key of B ? major , with Madonna 's vocals on the song spanning from B ? 3 to F5 , with the latter note sung on the " ah @-@ ah " vocalization near the end of the song . " Ray of Light " has a basic

sequence of B ? ? E ? ? B ? E ? B ? as its chord progression .

The song starts with an electric guitar riff which has been compared to English alternative rock / Britpop band Oasis , after which the fast techno melody begins , which , according to biographer Lucy O 'Brien in Madonna : Like an Icon , has been described as having a " bubbling psychedelic undertow " , as well as combining " melodic pop with bleep @-@ driven techno " . Throughout the composition , there are numerous electronic sound effects , including whistles , bells and bleeps . Its beat has been described as " restless " . Towards the middle of the track , the electric guitar riff is repeated in which Madonna sings the same line as the start of the song , until the dance section returns , and the song gradually ends . Madonna 's " breathlessly " delivered vocals on the song are noted to be different to the ones featured in her singles before the 1996 film Evita . " Lyrically , the song has a theme of freedom and it shows a more spiritual side to Madonna . According to Madonna the track is a mystical look at the universe and how small we are .

= = Critical reception = =

" Ray of Light " received acclaim from music critics . In a review for the album as a whole , Stephen Thomas Erlewine from AllMusic described the track as " swirling " . In a separate review , Liana Jonas of the same website called the track a " wickedly good club song " , as well as claiming that it was " sonically progressive yet listener @-@ friendly " ; she also praised Madonna 's vocals , comparing them to those of a " club diva to celestial goddess " . Larry Flick from Billboard described it as Madonna at her best . Rob Sheffield from Rolling Stone in his review for the album as a whole , wrote that , alongside other tracks such as " Swim " and " Drowned World / Substitute For Love " , Madonna is " positively ferocious " . Sal Cinquemani from Slant Magazine wrote that the song was a " celebratory tech @-@ frenzy " , and noted Madonna 's " elation " in the song , giving it an " A " rating . Sputnikmusic listed the song as the album 's recommended tracks . Michael R. Smith from The Daily Vault praised the song as one of Madonna 's best singles , explaining :

What makes " Ray Of Light " one of Madonna 's best singles is the fact that it is such a bitch to sing . Filled with multiple octave changes , it forced Madonna to push her vocal as far as it could possibly go . The song demanded she make use of her upper register and hold notes longer than she ever had before . It really is a techno gem that is always a standout at her concerts . After hearing a sample of it for the first time in the spring of 1998 , I just knew that Madonna had outdone herself . The song brings the entire album of to a whole new level .

In her book Madonna : Like an Icon , Lucy O 'Brien described the song as " speedy acid electronica " and an " ecstatic hymn to the skies " and noted that the song was composed a semitone higher than the singer 's vocal comfort zone , but claimed that " the strain really helped " . The A.V. Club commented that the " pumped @-@ up title track is bound to be a deserving smash " . J.D. Considine of The Baltimore Sun noted that Madonna 's " newfound strength is particularly apparent in pulsing , rhythm driven tracks like the title tune , which finds her soaring confidently at the top of her register on the busily percolating chorus , then whispering breathily on the brief , dream @-@ like bridge " . David Browne , while reviewing Ray of Light for Entertainment Weekly , titled the song as " sirenlike techno @-@ glitter @-@ ball " . Idolator 's Stephen Sears explained that Madonna 's vocals throughout the album were a " game @-@ changer " , including on the song , as she strengthened her voice while working on her film Evita . He ends his review by stating " Indeed , no choir is needed to lift ' Ray Of Light ' into disco heaven . Madonna supplies the highs herself in some perfect moments : the extended , spiraling way she wails ' yea @-@ ea @-@ ears ' at 3 : 27 or how her vocal spins out of control at 4 : 14 , matched by Orbit 's frenzied guitar work " .

= = Accolades and recognition = =

In 1999 , " Ray of Light " won two Grammy Awards for Best Dance Recording and Best Short Form Music Video . It was also nominated for Record of the Year , but lost to Celine Dion 's " My Heart Will Go On " . Furthermore , The Village Voice ranked it as the fourth best in 1998 in their Pazz & Jop critics ' poll . " Ray of Light " is also often ranked as being one of the best songs of the 1990s .

In 2005 , the song was placed at number 401 on Blender 's " The 500 Greatest Songs Since You Were Born " . In a Slant Magazine list of the best singles of the 1990s , in which " Ray of Light " was placed 16th , it was written that the song 's " beat is restless " , and that " Ray of Light " is " a standout single " due to its " emotional warmth " .

= = Chart performance = =

In the United States , " Ray of Light " was Madonna 's highest debuting single at number five on the Billboard Hot 100 , for the issue dated July 11 , 1998 . " Ray of Light " was present for a total of 20 weeks on the Hot 100 , and placed at number 75 on the year @-@ end chart . The song also reached the top of the Hot Dance Music / Club Play chart of Billboard . " Ray of Light " was certified gold by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) in September 1998 , for shipment of 500 @,@ 000 copies of the single across United States . In Canada , it debuted at number 85 on the RPM Singles Chart and reached number three in its eighth week . It was present on the chart for a total of 30 weeks .

In Australia , " Ray of Light " debuted on the ARIA Singles Chart at its peak of number six on May 24 , 1998 , staying there for one week . It was present for a total of 17 weeks on the chart , and was certified gold by the Australian Recording Industry Association (ARIA) for shipment of 35 @,@ 000 copies of the single . At the year @-@ end charts of ARIA , " Ray of Light " was the 57th best @-@ selling Australian single of 1998 . In New Zealand , " Ray of Light " also debuted at its peak position of number nine on the RIANZ Singles Chart , and reached a peak position of number two after three weeks . It was present for a total of 14 weeks on the chart and fell out on September 13 , 1998 , at number 31 .

In the United Kingdom , " Ray of Light " debuted and peaked at number two on May 9 , 1998 , being held off the number one spot by All Saints 's " Under the Bridge / Lady Marmalade " , which also debuted the same week . The single was the 68th best @-@ selling song of 1998 in the UK , with the British Phonographic Industry (BPI) certifying it silver , for shipment of 200 @,@ 000 copies of the song . According to the Official Charts Company , " Ray of Light " has sold 275 @,@ 000 copies in the region as of 2008 . The track debuted at its peak of number nine on the issue dated May 16 , 1998 on the Eurochart Hot 100 Singles chart . In Belgium , " Ray of Light " was moderately successful in both territories , peaking at number 25 in Flanders and 33 in Wallonia . In the Netherlands , the song debuted at number 45 on the Dutch Top 40 , and reached a peak of 22 on May 16 , 1998 , remaining there for three weeks . The song reached a peak of number two in Finland , where it remained for two weeks , before spending a total of five weeks on the chart . In Sweden , it reached number 14 and spent 10 weeks on the chart . On the Swiss Singles Chart , " Ray of Light " debuted at its peak of number 32 on the issue dated May 24 , 1998 . The song also reached number one in Spain on its debuting week . It stayed on the top spot for three weeks before descending the chart .

= = Music video = =

The accompanying music video for " Ray of Light " was directed by Jonas Åkerlund , with Madonna 's scenes being shot in early April 1998 at MTV 's Times Square studios in New York and Los Angeles . The images of Madonna 's background include various cities , such as Los Angeles , New York , London , Las Vegas , and Stockholm . The video premiered on MTV Live on May 12 , 1998 . Madonna stated that when she makes an album , she " puts [her] soul on it " , but a music video is a lot more working with a director . With the Ray of Light album , she wanted to have videos with a fresh expression , and she wanted new directors to replace of the old ones she had worked with for years . She felt that Jonas Åkerlund has a special way of working . She commented that she and the director " met on the telephone , and he sent me a whole bunch of treatments I didn 't like . But he kept at it and didn 't give up " . The singer also mentioned that the video is basically " a day in the life of the earth to show that we are rushing forward to the end of the 1900s century at full speed . I think Jonas made an excellent interpretation of the song , although he forced me to dance like crazy

for two days . He 's a tough director " . Åkerlund stated that " It was damn good ! Madonna was pleased with the quick result and [is] a dream to work with ? it was probably the easiest job I 've done in years ! " Additionally , he said :

" I had two ideas that did not fit the song . She said no even though I had a very clear idea of how she would look in the video . I worked up on another idea and brought together a featured band for her to see . I did it all in front of me . [...] In retrospect , it feels good , the video we have done much better suited to the track than the first ideas . She [Madonna] has an incredible track on everything she is doing . Style , music , business ? she has a mental track of every single thing and won 't give up until she is completely satisfied . And on music videos there is nothing she does with one hand on her back ? she 's engaged to one hundred percent " .

The music video for " Ray of Light " starts with the rising of the sun , until it progresses into a Koyaanisqatsi @-@ esque section , featuring time @-@ lapse images of daily life , from people riding a subway , ordering food , bowling , and children in a classroom to sped @-@ up city @-@ scapes and freeways at night . As the video goes on , night starts to fall , and high @-@ speed images of Madonna dancing in a discothèque progress , until she is seen falling asleep on the dance floor .

On June 23 , 1998 , the music video of " Ray of Light " was released on VHS as a limited edition of 40 @,@ 000 copies by Warner Music Vision . It had sold 7 @,@ 281 copies of the following month after its release , becoming the best @-@ selling video singles of the Nielsen SoundScan era . A few days after its release , Italian director Stefano Salvati accused Madonna 's Warner Bros. Records imprint Maverick Records for plagiarizing the concept of a music video he directed for Biagio Antonacci 's 1994 single " Non è Mai Stato Subito " . According to Salvati , copies of his videos were submitted to Maverick before the " Ray of Light " video was shot and requested it to be pulled from distribution . Both videos featured the respective singers performing at regular speed against a backdrop of high @-@ speed images . However , he did not sue the singer or her companies . The video received a total of eight MTV Video Music Awards nominations in 1998 , eventually winning five ; for Video of the Year , Best Female Video , Best Direction , Best Editing and Best Choreography , becoming her most @-@ winning song at the show . Madonna said she was grateful for MTV 's regonition of the music video . The video was ranked at number four on " The Top 100 Videos That Broke The Rules " , issued by MTV on the channel 's 25th anniversary in August 2006 .

= = Live performances = =

" Ray of Light " has been featured in the set lists of three Madonna tours ? 2001 's Drowned World Tour , 2006 's Confessions Tour and 2008 ? 09 's Sticky & Sweet Tour . In 1998 she premiered " Ray of Light " during her surprise concert at the Roxy NYC nightclub . She also appeared on The Oprah Winfrey Show in and performed " Ray of Light " and " Little Star " . During the 1998 MTV Video Music Awards Madonna started performing " Shanti / Ashtangi " , sporting black hair and wearing an Indian sari . Lenny Kravitz then appeared playing the guitar , which paved way to " Ray of Light " . A religious group called the World Vaishnava Association claimed that Madonna offended Hindus with the performance by continuing to wear a Hindi mark on her head while performing the song . A spokesperson for the association stated that the mark is a symbol of chastity , harmony and purity , and is designed to show " dedication to God " . The representative also said that because Madonna simulated a sexual act and wore a see @-@ through tank top onstage while wearing the mark , she offended both Hindus and Yogis . A spokesperson for Madonna stated that the singer did not understand why the World Vaishnava Association was upset as she had not done anything insulting , and did not wish to insult anyone . However , the vice president of the World Vaishnava Association claimed that " the Hindu community and Eastern spiritual seekers the world over should be happy for Madonna personally in terms of her genuine interest in enlightened life , and grateful to her for her sincere efforts to attract others to the same " .

Three years later , " Ray of Light " was included as the fifth song from the opening Neo @-@ Punk segment of Madonna 's 2001 Drowned World Tour , which featured Madonna and her dancers

dancing along to the song wearing punk inspired clothing , while the backdrop screens showed an extended version of the song 's music video . This time , the electric guitar was played by Monte Pittman . Michael Hubbard from MusicOMH noted that " things quickly hotted up with [...] Ray Of Light , a track that was quite simply as sublime as it was infectious " . In 2005 , Madonna performed " Ray of Light " during the Live 8 benefit concert . She later performed the song at the 2006 Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival in Indio , California . During her 2006 Confessions Tour , Madonna included a rock version of " Ray of Light " as the second song of the show 's third act , the Glam @-@ Punk segment . For this performance Madonna played the electric guitar and urged all the fans to jump through the song , it also featured six male backup dancers , dressed in black outfits and white ties doing a synchronized choreography . Rolling Stone called the performance " hard @-@ rocking " .

" Ray of Light " was also performed by Madonna during the 2007 Live Earth concert in London 's Wembley Stadium again accompanied by a guitar . Madonna 's performance at the event was watched by 4 @.@ 5 million people . For the 2008 ? 09 Sticky & Sweet Tour , " Ray of Light " was included as the third song of the show 's final segment . This time , Madonna played the electric guitar again and wore a futuristic outfit with a breastplate and a short wig . She was accompanied by her dancers who were dressed in futuristic outfits and performed a robotic choreography . During the 2009 extension of the tour , the song became the second @-@ to @-@ last of the show and also slightly edited for selected performances , with the lyrics from Michael Jackson 's song " Man in the Mirror " : " If you wanna make the world a better place ... Take a look at yourself , and then make a change " appearing on the screens before the beginning of the song . Madonna also honored Jackson by wearing a black armband and a white glove . While reviewing the tour in 2008 , Jim Farber from New York Daily News called the performance of the song one of the " highest @-@ energy " dance numbers of the show .

= = Covers and usage in media = =

" Weird Al " Yankovic 's medley " Polka Power ! " from the 1999 album Running With Scissors includes a polka version of the chorus of " Ray of Light " . The 2000 compilation Virgin Voices : A Tribute To Madonna , Vol . 2 features a cover of the song by Sigue Sigue Sputnik . On the 2004 compilation Platinum Blonde NRG , Vol . 2 : Nrgised Madonna Classics , a Hi @-@ NRG cover is performed by Future Force . English singer Natasha Bedingfield recorded a cover version of " Ray of Light " for BBC Radio 1 's 40th anniversary . Played during the The Chris Moyles Show on September 19 , 2007 , it can be found on the Radio 1 . Established 1967 compilation album . Bedingfield commented : " I have so much respect for Madonna after learning how hard it is to sing that song . She has an amazing voice ? the range you need to sing the song is incredible " . In 2008 , Iggy Pop and The Stooges played " Ray of Light " (along with " Burning Up ") during Madonna 's induction in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame . In 2010 , the song was played in the film Burlesque , while Ali (Christina Aguilera) was rehearsing for her new position as a dancer in the Burlesque Lounge , owned by Cher 's character Tess . In late 2012 , American singer Adam Lambert performed a cover version on VH1 Divas , dancing through laser lights while donning a priestly black and white tunic .

The song was used by Microsoft in its 2001 advertising campaign for Windows XP . It begins with a man leaping through a green field and then lifting off into a sunny sky ? a landscape lifted from Windows XP 's default " bliss screen " . There is also a series of images of people using Windows XP for real @-@ time communications , to collaborate in an airy restaurant , to relay digital images of flying people , watch videos and listen to music . Then , a snippet from the song follows the phrase : " Faster than the speeding light she 's flying ... You soar . Yes you can " . The campaign was reworked after the September 11 attacks ; the tag line " Prepare to fly " was changed to " Yes you can " , to sidestep new concerns about air travel , said Stephanie Ferguson , director of the company 's PC Experience Solutions Marketing Group . In 2008 , a Sunsilk shampoo commercial included shots of Marilyn Monroe and Shakira with songs well known by them , and ends with several video shots of Madonna to the sounds of " Ray of Light " . Madonna reportedly received US

\$ 10 million for the song 's usage . The commercial premiered on Super Bowl XLII . In 2010 , Glee tribute episode " The Power of Madonna " featured " Ray of Light " playing in the background as the school 's cheerleading team performed a complicated stilts routine . In the 2011 Family Guy episode " New Kidney in Town " , Peter Griffin is seen in the " Ray of Light " video after drinking his first energy drink (Red Bull) .

= = Track listings and formats = =

= = Credits and personnel = =

Madonna ? vocals , songwriting , producer

William Orbit ? songwriting , producer

Clive Muldoon ? songwriting

Dave Curtis ? songwriting

Christine Leach ? songwriting

Pat McCarthy ? engineer

Credits and personnel adapted from Ray of Light album liner notes .

= = Charts = =

= = Certifications = =