

= This Used to Be My Playground =

" This Used to Be My Playground " is a song recorded by American singer Madonna . It is the theme for the film A League of Their Own , which starred Madonna , and portrayed a fictionalized account of the real @-@ life All @-@ American Girls Professional Baseball League . Madonna was asked to record a song for the film 's soundtrack . At that time she was busy recording her fifth studio album , Erotica , with producer Shep Pettibone . They worked on some ideas and came up with " This Used to Be My Playground " in two days . Once presented to director Penny Marshall 's team , the song was released as a standalone single on June 16 , 1992 , by Warner Bros. Records . However , it was not available on the film 's soundtrack due to contractual obligations and was later added to the Olympics @-@ inspired Barcelona Gold compilation album , released that summer . The song was included on Madonna 's 1995 ballads compilation Something to Remember .

Written and produced by Madonna and Pettibone , " This Used to Be My Playground " was the first time that Pettibone worked with live string arrangement . Madonna recorded the song on a Shure SM57 microphone , with instrumentation from piano , organ , strings and a basic drum sounds . During the final recording , the duo had to redo the whole orchestra section to tailor it for the song . " This Used to Be My Playground " starts with a keyboard introduction and strings , with Madonna singing in expressive but subdued vocals . Its verse and chorus merge into each other for having a continuity in the song , but the track ends abruptly . Lyrically it discusses visiting one 's childhood places and not letting go of the past .

The song received positive reviews from critics , who noted it as an essential addition in Madonna 's repertoire . The song earned the singer a Golden Globe Award nomination for Best Original Song . It was a commercial success , reaching the top of the charts on the US Billboard Hot 100 ; the track was Madonna 's tenth chart @-@ topping single , breaking her tie with Whitney Houston to become the female artist with the most number one singles at that time . It also reached the top of the charts in Canada , Finland , Italy and Sweden , while reaching the top @-@ ten of the charts in Australia , Belgium , France , Germany , Ireland , Netherlands , Norway , Spain , Switzerland and the United Kingdom . Even though the song was commercially successful , Madonna has never performed it in any of her concert tours , nor included it on her greatest hits albums , GHV2 (2001) and Celebration (2009) .

= = Background and release = =

In 1992 , Madonna starred in the Penny Marshall directed film A League of Their Own , which portrayed a fictionalized account of the real @-@ life All @-@ American Girls Professional Baseball League (AAGPBL) . Columbia Records representatives presented music supervisor Jay Landers with the film 's script . Together with Michael Dilbeck , head of music for Columbia Pictures , they decided to compose a soundtrack for the film . According to Landers , Marshall being well connected to the music community also helped them choose the artists they wanted to work with . The director wanted the music and songs to be performed by contemporary artists , but catering to the period of 1943 ? 44 , which was the film 's timeline . Carole King had already written the opening song for A League of Their Own , and Madonna being associated with it , Columbia wanted her to record another song . Lars recalled that there was some " early hesitation " if Madonna 's character should be kept the same or separated from that in the film and the song , and in the end they decided to go with the latter concept .

After the shooting was over , Madonna was busy in the recording sessions for her fifth studio album , Erotica with producer Shep Pettibone . Throughout January ? March 1992 , Madonna and Pettibone worked on demos for the album and finally decided on 15 of them . When Lars called Madonna and asked her to record a song for the film , the singer and Pettibone had just completed working on the ballad " Rain " . Madonna admitted that she did not have any material for the film and Lars explained that Marshall wanted only a ballad . Pettibone composed a track the same night and Madonna had some ideas she wanted to incorporate . During an interview with The Guardian , Madonna described the process as " assignment writing " since it was completely separate from her

Erotica sessions . It took them two days to write and produce the song , and the final version was submitted to Marshall 's team . Lars recalled that they " immediately loved it ... We all thought it would be a very successful record and we knew right away it would be perfect . "

Due to contractual reasons , the track could not be included on the official A League of Their Own soundtrack ; instead , it was included on the compilation Barcelona Gold , which was released to promote the 1992 Barcelona Summer Olympics . " This Used to Be My Playground " was officially released as a standalone single to promote the film , on June 16 , 1992 , by Warner Bros. Records . The song was later included on the 1995 ballad compilation album Something to Remember .

= = Recording and composition = =

Recording the track was a new experience for Pettibone since it was the first time that he worked with live musicians and arrangements . Pettibone took the demo of the song , and added live drums , piano and strings to it . They did not have any strings written originally for the song , and chose composer Jeremy Lubbock for the music arrangement ; Lubbock had previously worked with Madonna on her soundtrack album I 'm Breathless (1990) . Madonna recorded the song on a Shure SM57 microphone , with the melody being played over and over again , accompanied by the piano , organ , strings and a basic rim @-@ looping sound on a portable Macintosh computer . Pettibone spent the rest of the recording session working on the verses and final structure of " This Used to Be My Playground " was completed . The day after the song was finished , Madonna traveled to Oregon to work on her next film , Body of Evidence , giving Pettibone the time to finish off the songs for Erotica .

The duo met again in May 1992 at Oceanway Studios in Los Angeles to complete the orchestration of the song . Lubbock 's arrangement was chosen for adding the final touches and the recording started . However , Madonna and Pettibone did not like the orchestra parts and wanted to redo the whole composition . The producer recalled , " Madonna and I had to change the whole arrangement , right there in the studio , with a full orchestra sitting there getting paid for taking up space ? around \$ 15 @,@ 000 for three hours , \$ 3000 for every half @-@ hour over that . And of course , Lubbock was talking to two people who didn 't know a C from a B natural . The pressure was on " . So they stood near Pettibone 's Mac and sang the notes , with Lubbock correcting them . The total recording was finished of in 2 hours and 58 minutes , thereby saving to pay the orchestra the extra fees . The last recording of the song was on Memorial Day where Madonna re @-@ did the lead vocals and improved them . Together they did some final edits of the track and finished it .

" This Used to Be My Playground " features a keyboard introduction , followed by the strings and the song starts . Musically , the song is set in the time signature of common time with a slow tempo of 77 beats per minute . It is composed in the key of G minor with Madonna vocals ranging from the chords of G3 to B ? 4 . The song follows a basic sequence of Gm ? F / G ? E ? maj7 ? Dm7 ? Gsus ? G as its chord progression . The chords have an unexpected flow in terms of the beginning and the ending , moving from E ? down to Gm and momentarily to F major , then going back to the previous sequence again . The song has a lush , romantic quality , with the melody going through different ranges and peaks , and the verse and the chorus flow into each other , making it sound seamless . Madonna sings in subdued but expressive vocals , aided by the strings and background singers during the third verse . Towards the end the singer 's voice is double tracked and produces little amount of roughness . Lyrically the song talks about Madonna revisiting the places from her childhood (" This used to be my playground / This used to be my childhood dream ") , and evokes the songwriting on her fourth studio album , Like a Prayer (1989) . The singer is in a dilemma between choosing the past and letting go , concluding that the latter is difficult (" Say goodbye to yesterday (the dream) / Those are words I 'll never say (I 'll never say)) " . The track has a sudden ending with the orchestra and the backing vocal uttering " Wishing you were here with me " , the line addressed to Madonna 's mother .

= = Critical response = =

After its release , " This Used to Be My Playground " received acclaim from music critics . J. Randy Taraborrelli , author of Madonna : An Intimate Biography , called the track a " melancholic performance " . Michelle Morgan , author of the book Madonna , described it as a " beautiful ballad " . Similarly , Humberto Quiroga Lavié called it one of Madonna 's best ballads in his essay Secretos y Misterios de Hombres y Mujeres . Author Rikky Rooksby wrote in his book The Complete Guide to the Music of Madonna , that the song was appropriate for the film and its nostalgic moment towards the end , showing the characters grown up and reuniting at a museum opened for themselves and the titular league . He called it " one of Madonna 's very best recordings and most expressive single " . While reviewing Something to Remember , author Chris Wade wrote in his book The Music of Madonna , that the song conjured up a " strangely sad , nostalgic feel , reminding ourselves of memories from yesteryear " . He commended Madonna 's vocals calling it as the song 's " premier sound " and adding that the way " she sings and captures the melancholic melody is heartbreaking [...] it 's one of her finest ever ballads . " Encyclopedia Madonnica writer and journalist Matthew Rettenmund noted in the book that the song 's rise to the top of the charts was aided by its " honest delivery and aching sense of loneliness , regret and nostalgia for friendship lost . "

Matthew Jacobs from The Huffington Post , placed it at number 32 on his list " The Definitive Ranking Of Madonna Singles " . He wrote : " What 's surprising is that this heartfelt ballad 's release was sandwiched between ' Justify My Love ' and ' Erotica ' , which corroborates the many checkered crowns that Madonna can wear " . Similarly , AllMusic 's Jose F. Promis called it " a quiet predecessor to her most notorious album Erotica " . Promis also believed that the single version of the song was worth of collecting since it was not released in CD version in the United States . Sal Cinquemani from Slant Magazine , called it one of the singer 's " soundtrack gems " . Writing for the Deseret News , Chris Hicks called the song " a lovely change @-@ of @-@ pace number " for Madonna .

Louis Virtel , from TheBacklot.com , placed " This Used to Be My Playground " at number 52 of his list " The 100 Greatest Madonna Songs " . He wrote ; " The theme to Madonna ? s best movie is nostalgic and sweet , and it gave her a major hit that utilized the lachrymose qualities in her voice . " Mary Ann A. Bautist , from the Philippine Daily Inquirer , called it one of the singer 's " alternative tunes [...] that can be as romantic and touching as any ballad " . Liz Smith , from The Toledo Blade , called it an " exquisite ballad " . On his review of the compilation Barcelona Gold , The Daily Gazette 's Bill Rice wrote : " Madonna 's plaintive single ' This Used to Be My Playground ' , is one medal winner " . The song was nominated for a Golden Globe award for Best Original Song , but lost to " A Whole New World " from Aladdin . It won two accolades at the ASCAP Awards , in the categories of Most Performed Songs from Motion Pictures and Most Performed Pop Song .

= = Chart performance = =

In the United States , " This Used to Be My Playground " debuted on the Billboard Hot 100 chart at number 35 , for the week of July 4 , 1992 . The debut was aided by just airplay points which enabled it to enter the Hot 100 Airplay chart at number 14 . The song received immediate heavy rotation in US radio stations like Hot 97 in New York and Wild 107 in San Francisco . One week later , the song jumped to number 17 on the Hot 100 , having had the largest sales and airplay points of any record on the chart . On August 8 , 1992 , the song reached the top of the chart for one week , becoming Madonna 's tenth number one single , breaking her tie with Whitney Houston as the female artist with the most number one singles at that time . The song replaced " Baby Got Back " by Sir Mix @-@ a @-@ Lot although it was number three on the Hot Singles Sales and Hot 100 Airplay charts . According to Michael Ellis from Billboard , the song edged out " Baby Got Back " by a small margin of chart points . The song spent a total of 20 weeks on the chart and ranked at number 21 on the Hot 100 year end chart for 1992 .

" This Used to Be My Playground " also reached peak positions of number two on the Hot 100 Airplay and number four on the Adult Contemporary charts . On September 10 , 1992 , it was certified gold by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) for shipments of 500 @,@ 000 copies . Billboard ranked it at number 22 on their list of " Madonna 's 40 Biggest Hits " on the

Hot 100 . In Canada , the song debuted at number 60 on the RPM Top Singles chart on July 4 , 1992 . After seven weeks it reached the top of the chart and was present for a total of 19 weeks . It also reached number two on the RPM Adult Contemporary chart .

In the United Kingdom , the song debuted at number five on the UK Singles Chart , and reached a peak of number three the week of August 25 , 1992 , and was present on the top 100 for a total of 9 weeks . It was certified silver by the British Phonographic Industry (BPI) on September 1 , 1992 , for shipments of 200 @, @ 000 copies . The single has sold over 275 @, @ 000 copies as of October 2010 . The song also achieved great success across Europe , hitting number one in various countries including Italy , Finland , and Sweden and charting within the top ten in other countries . It resulted in the song achieving a peak of number five on the European Hot 100 Singles chart . In Australia the song reached a peak of number nine on the ARIA Charts and received a gold certification from the Australian Recording Industry Association (ARIA) for shipment of 35 @, @ 000 copies .

= = Music video = =

The accompanying music video , directed by Alek Keshishian , was filmed in June 1992 at Raleigh Studios in Hollywood , California and Malibu Beach . It premiered on MTV on June 30 , 1992 , a day before the release of A League of Their Own . The video shows a man viewing a photo album , as Madonna sings in different settings from within the various pictures . Scenes from A League of Their Own also appear on the album during the song 's instrumental break . As the video ends , the man having reached the end of the album , then scrolls backwards through the previous pages . The video was commercially released in 2004 as a bonus feature on the 2 @-@ disc special edition DVD of A League of Their Own . According to Rettenmund , unlike most music videos related to film soundtracks , " This Used to Be My Playground " did not give emphasis on having shots from the film in the video itself . Instead Keshishian and Madonna chose introspection as the theme , with simple images to portray them . Rettenmund notes , " At the end , the man who has been looking back at his scrapbook of Madonna lays his head down , sealing the video with the perfect bit of sadness to resonate with Madonna 's ennui . "

The video has been compared to Boy George 's video for his 1987 single , " To Be Reborn " , released less than five years before " This Used to Be My Playground " . In George 's video , he also appears on pages of a photo album , performing the song . George himself stated in his autobiography that he was " furious " after watching Madonna 's video and renamed it " This Used to Be My Video " .

= = Track listing = =

7 " vinyl , Cassette single , Japanese 3 " CD single

" This Used to Be My Playground " (single version) ? 5 : 08

" This Used to Be My Playground " (long version) ? 6 : 03

European 12 " vinyl , CD single

" This Used to Be My Playground " (single version) ? 5 : 08

" This Used to Be My Playground " (instrumental version) ? 6 : 54

" This Used to Be My Playground " (long version) ? 6 : 03

= = Credits and personnel = =

Madonna ? songwriter , producer , vocals

Shep Pettibone ? songwriter , producer , programming

Jeremy Lubbock ? string arrangement , programming

Al Schmitt ? engineer , mixing

Jeri Heiden ? designer

Credits adapted from the liner notes of Something to Remember and the single release of " This

Used to Be My Playground " .

= = Charts = =

= = Certifications = =