

= Sex (book) =

Sex is a coffee table book written by American singer Madonna , with photographs taken by Steven Meisel Studio and film frames shot by Fabien Baron . The book was edited by Glenn O 'Brien and was released on October 21 , 1992 , by Warner Books , Maverick and Callaway Books . Approached with an idea for a book on erotic photographs , Madonna expanded on the idea and conceived the book and its content . Shot in early 1992 in New York City and Miami , the locations ranged from hotels and burlesque theaters , to the streets of Miami . The photographs were stolen before publishing , but were quickly recovered .

The book had a range of influences , from punk rock to earlier fashion iconoclasts such as Guy Bourdin and his surrealism , and Helmut Newton , in its stylized , sado @-@ masochistic look . Sex has photographs that feature adult content and softcore pornographic as well as simulations of sexual acts , including sadomasochism and analingus . Madonna wrote the book as a character named " Mistress Dita " , inspired by 1930s film actress Dita Parlo . It also includes cameos by actress Isabella Rossellini , rappers Big Daddy Kane and Vanilla Ice , model Naomi Campbell , gay porn star Joey Stefano , actor Udo Kier , socialite Tatiana von Fürstenberg , and nightclub owner Ingrid Casares .

The packaging for the book is made of aluminium , which was Madonna 's idea , and is spiral bound and enclosed in a Mylar sheet . Due to the scandalous nature of the photographs and the media mayhem surrounding it from the initial preview of the book , Madonna did not have to promote Sex , except for a pre @-@ release party and some television specials . Her publishers were extremely apprehensive about the release as well as its commercial potential . Sex was released alongside her fifth studio album Erotica , which was released a day earlier .

The book was an instant commercial success , managing to sell over 150 @,@ 000 copies on its first day of release and topping the New York Times Best Seller list . It was received negatively by both critics and fans of the singer , who felt she had " gone too far . " Through the years , however , critical reception towards Sex has become more positive , with academics deeming it a defining phase in Madonna 's career . Sex is noted for its impact on society and culture as well as on Madonna herself , and is considered a bold , post @-@ feminist work of art . The book has since become one of the most sought @-@ after out @-@ of @-@ print books ever released and still remains the best and fastest @-@ selling coffee table book of all time .

= = Background and development = =

According to Giselle Benatar of Entertainment Weekly , there are two versions of how Madonna came up with the idea for the book . One was that she conceived the idea of an erotic photography book during the shooting of the film A League of Their Own in the summer of 1991 . The second one is that Judith Regan , vice @-@ president and editor @-@ in @-@ chief of Simon & Schuster , flew to Los Angeles in March 1991 to meet with Madonna and her manager Freddy DeMann , armed with a proposal for a similar collection of photo @-@ erotica . The singer had initially verified whether Regan had approached any other celebrities with this concept , as Madonna would be interested to be a part of it only if it was a unique idea . By the end of the meeting Madonna had agreed " in principle " to do a book called Madonna 's Book of Erotica and Sexual Fantasies . She told Regan that DeMann would call her and work out the details regarding the book . However , Madonna never got back in touch with Regan , who assumed that the singer did not want to proceed with the idea . Madonna 's publicist Liz Rosenberg never confirmed nor denied Regan 's claim , but according to Benatar , Madonna started working on Sex before wrapping up A League of Their Own . At first Warner Bros. Records and the executive directors at Time Warner were reluctant to allow Madonna to publish such a book , but finally gave in to the idea . Madonna , however , was forced to sign a contract that forbade her from showing child pornography , bestiality and religious imagery . Not long after signing this agreement Madonna founded Maverick , a multi @-@ media entertainment company . Since by contract she had total artistic control over any of the work released by Maverick , the agreement she signed with Time Warner concerning what not to do in Sex became obsolete .

Originally to be titled X , Madonna changed her mind when Spike Lee 's film Malcolm X began to be promoted . (The film was released three weeks after the book .) She would go on to tell Vogue magazine : " This is a really good symbol , and I thought of it first . " Warner Bros. commented that Sex was very difficult to produce , requiring contributions from many different printing and publishing companies . They also stated that in order to generate any profit , the book would have to sell at least 350 @, @ 000 copies . Madonna hired top @-@ notch talent for the development of the book ; she counted on the help of friends from the music , film and fashion industry . The singer hired Fabien Baron as the art director , fashion photographer Steven Meisel , editor Glenn O 'Brien , make @-@ up artist Francois Nars and hairstylist Paul Cavaco . The Sex book had a range of influences ? from punk rock to earlier fashion iconoclasts like Guy Bourdin and his surrealism , and Helmut Newton , in its stylized , sado @-@ masochistic look . Madonna originally wanted the book to be of an oval shape in order to simulate a condom but the printing and manufacturing of such a book would have been too expensive . Meisel would later comment : " Madonna and I can keep up with each other " and that " I 'm doing things to make people think too . It 's not really to antagonize or to push people 's buttons . It 's really to present another way of seeing things . "

The pictures were taken almost entirely in Super 8 format , and most of the photo shoots took place in New York City and Miami . Locations in New York City included the Hotel Chelsea and Times Square 's all @-@ male burlesque Gaiety Theatre (dancers from theatre participated in one of the book 's photo sessions) , whereas in Miami the majority of the sessions were shot at a house Madonna had purchased just before starting the project , and in several beaches and streets . One morning during the four @-@ day Florida shoot Madonna was prancing around her 14 @-@ bedroom house in Miami completely naked , when someone jokingly suggested she go out on the street , then , according to Baron " the next thing we 're in the street " where allegedly " cars screeched to a halt , motorists whistled , and one entranced cyclist fell off his bike . " This was just one of the many crazy episodes that took place during the shooting of the book . According to Baron , during the photo shoots " [Madonna] ' d do something crazy and then we 'd come up with something even crazier " . One of the most shocking photographs made for the book , which featured two women in post @-@ punk attire flanking Madonna with one of them holding a knife to Madonna 's crotch , was dismissed as it was considered too violent . At some point , while the book was being produced , some of the photographs were stolen , but were quickly recovered by the FBI . According to New York magazine , there were approximately 80 @, @ 000 photographs taken for the book , but only a handful made the final cut . The printing of the book was extended for 15 days making the total production process last about eight months .

= = Design and content = =

Wrapped and sealed in a polyethylene terephthalate (PET) Mylar bag , Sex contains 128 pages and is spiral bound with an aluminium cover that has the word " Sex " stamped in the middle and a warning label . The front page also shows Madonna against a sky blue backdrop . Three different types of paper were used for the printing of Sex and the design was overseen by Madonna and Baron & Baron Inc . (consisting of Fabien Baron and the photographer Siung Fat Tjia) who had previously collaborated with the singer designing the cover art of her fifth studio album , Erotica . As this was the first project for Maverick , the packaging was crucial ; however Madonna did not have faith in Warner Book 's " mass @-@ market " publication process . Hence Baron suggested to transfer the packaging job to Nicholas Callaway 's bespoke Callaway Editions . Charles Melcher , co @-@ publisher with Callaway for the book , said that they usually did " exquisite art books , \$ 100 high end , beautiful things " . But it was a challenge for them to process Madonna 's ideas into reality . The artist wanted the packaging to be sealed , so that the reader had to tear it up and read . They considered various kinds of clasps before zeroing on the idea of the sealed bag as a reference to a condom package . The metal cover was Madonna 's idea , who took the inspiration from the 1979 album , Metal Box by the band Public Image Ltd . Melcher recollects , " We were talking about materials for the cover , and we went into her kitchen . [Madonna] pointed at the metal plate at the back of her stove and said , ' I want something like this ' . I was very impressed with the way she

interacted with her world to source things . " The company bought about 1 @, @ 500 @, @ 000 pounds (680 @, @ 000 kg) of aluminium , a pound for each book . The designers had to do the front and the back covers , while rolling , stamping and ionizing the metal .

The book opens up with the introduction : " Everything you are about to see and read is a fantasy , a dream , pretend " . Throughout Sex , Madonna offers poems , stories , and essays . She also uses the pseudonym " Mistress Dita " as a homage to German actress Dita Parlo ; her friends in these stories are Bunny , Dex , Stella , Chiclet and Stranger . According to biographer J. Randy Taraborrelli , a big part of the book is read as a letter to a pornographic magazine . As a thank you for recovering the stolen pictures during the making of the book , in the credits of the book Madonna mentioned the FBI for " ... rescuing photographs that would have made J. Edgar Hoover roll over . " Madonna also wanted to explore the notion of power in Sex . Melcher said that the artist wanted to talk about " gentle and hard , soft and violent [in Sex] . She was playing out all those elements in her book . That was reflected in the materials : uncoated , soft paper on the inside and hard metal coating on the outside . "

Just like the text ? which was mostly written on top of photographs ? the photographs on the book are highly sexual and depict nudity , simulations of sexual acts , bondage , homosexuality and analingus , with accessories such as knives , whips , masks and chains ; however , full intercourse is never shown . Aside from unknown models , featured in the book are actress Isabella Rossellini , rappers Big Daddy Kane and Madonna 's then boyfriend Vanilla Ice , model Naomi Campbell , gay porn star Joey Stefano , actor Udo Kier , socialite Tatiana von Fürstenberg , and nightclub owner Ingrid Casares ; however the heterosexual photos in the book involve only Madonna and Vanilla Ice . Madonna herself is featured partially or completely naked . One of the book 's most famous photographs shows Madonna hitchhiking completely naked in Miami . The book also reflects a great part on Dita 's perspective towards her own sexuality . Dita writes in Sex that her " pussy " is a temple of learning and that exposing it , is really a homage to it (" It 's hard to describe it smells like a baby to me fresh and full of life . I love my pussy , it is the complete summation of my life ") . Sex contains statements like " ass fucking is the most pleasurable way to get fucked and it hurts the most too " . Others include " [t] here is something comforting about being tied up . Like when you were a baby and your mother strapped you in the car seat . She wanted you to be safe . It was an act of love " and " I wouldn 't want a penis . It would be like having a third leg. it seems like a contraption that would get in the way . I think I have a dick in my brain " . In Sex , Dita also pointed out that " A lot of people are afraid to say what they want . That 's why they don 't get what they want " . The book includes Madonna 's perspective on pornography :

I don 't see how a guy looking at a naked girl in a magazine is degrading to women . Everyone has their sexuality . It 's how you treat people in everyday life that counts , not what turns you on in your fantasy . If all a person ever did was get off on porno movies I would say they are probably dysfunctional sexually , but I don 't think it 's unhealthy to be interested in that or get off on that . I 'm not interested in porno movies because everybody is ugly and faking it and it 's just silly . They make me laugh , they don 't turn me on . A movie like In the Realm of the Senses turns me on because it 's real . I 've been told there are some good Traci Lords movies but I 've never seen them . I wouldn 't want to watch a snuff movie . I wouldn 't want to watch anyone get really hurt , male or female . But generally I don 't think pornography degrades women . The women who are doing it want to do it . No one is holding a gun to their head . I don 't get that whole thing . I love looking at Playboy magazine because women look great naked .

= = Release and promotion = =

The initial preview of the book was met with a huge amount of controversy , as it showed a nude Madonna wearing a rabbit 's tail , shaving the pubic hair of a naked man , and cavorting outdoors with a dog , suggesting bestiality . The Vatican urged its people to boycott the release , saying that it was " morally intolerable " . Indian customs officials said that the book offended the country 's public morality . The Press Trust of India (PTI) , India 's domestic news agency , quoted a top customs official as saying the book would be seized under a section of the Customs Act prohibiting entry of

indecent literature . Citizens of Alexandria , Louisiana filed a complaint with the city 's police department on behalf of a group called the Rapides Parish Chapter of American Family Association , claiming that it violated Louisiana 's anti @-@ obscenity laws . South US Baptists did not want their Bibles coming off the same printing presses as Madonna 's Sex and threatened to stop doing business with a Chicago printer . The Nashville @-@ based Baptist Sunday School Board , a division of the Southern Baptist Convention , reviewed their \$ 2 @. @ 1 million (\$ 3 @, @ 541 @, @ 167 in 2016 dollars) printing contract with R.R. Donnelley & Sons . Board President James Draper said he was infuriated that Donnelley also printed " such an obscene book " . Entertainment Tonight reported that Madonna herself had initiated the mayhem with the explicit content in the music video for " Erotica " , walking bare breasted at designer Jean Paul Gaultier 's fashion show and posing nude in Vanity Fair magazine . A writer for The Sacramento Bee said that since the press wanted " controversy " , Madonna was willing to provide them " fodder " with her " antiques " .

Madonna then said she was " doing this to liberate America ? free us all of our hang @-@ ups " . She told Spin magazine " We live in a very repressed society , and I deal with erotic themes . The point I try to make is : Why should we feel ashamed of our sexuality ? " . Later she revealed that " [This book] does not condone unsafe sexual practices " . Nicholas Callaway from Callaway Arts & Entertainment said that the book was " inevitably going to be controversial . The book explores every aspect of sexual fantasy . It 's hard to calculate the effect , [but] , Sex should be considered ' art ' " . Originally it was rumored that Time Warner was nervous about the release of the book ; however , in an interview with Vanity Fair , William Sarnoff , president of Warner Books , said he felt that Madonna " should pursue all avenues of creativity as she defines it " . The Warner company had also previously assured that they would make sure Sex reached its main target audience and also reminded that the book was safely wrapped in a Mylar bag to prevent in @-@ store peeping and contained a warning label . Michael Kilian of the Chicago Tribune published an article on October 7 , 1992 , regarding the then upcoming release of Sex : " Prepare thyself , [...] , The mega @-@ event of the millennium is to occur in precisely two weeks . It 's an event far more mega than the November election , the collapse of communism or even the crowning of Leanza Cornett as the new Miss America . " Kilian also described it as the " personal sexual fantasy picture book in all Christendom , then it goes far beyond all previous ' truly twisted ' personal sexual fantasy picture books ? perhaps beyond all imagining what such a book could be " .

On October 15 , Madonna threw a pre @-@ release party at New York City 's Industria Superstudio , and signed all the invitations under her Sex alter ego " Dita " . During the party , Madonna showed up dressed as Little Bo Peep and even carried with her a stuffed toy lamb . Madonna 's publicist Liz Rosenberg showed concern at first due to " what the parents of America 's impressionable teens will soon be thinking " but later said that it " all depends on your idea of lovemaking , which in Madonna 's case , should give new meaning to the word erotic " . Both Waldenbooks and Barnes & Noble prepared corporate statements that the managers could share with customers who are offended by Sex . (Both statements defended the right of bookstores to provide " diversity and choice " to customers and say censorship is not the role of bookstores .) Many book stores , too , stated that the book would not be sold to anyone under 18 and that it would be for display only behind the cash register . Bookstore owner David Epstein stated that " The feeling of most people who have ordered the book is that Madonna is something special , that this is cutting @-@ edge art , [...] , they 're not the kind of people who are buying it because it 's smut and dirty pictures . People are interested in it as art . "

Sex was finally released on October 21 , 1992 , by editorials Callaway and Warner Books ; it was also the first work released by Madonna 's company Maverick . To accompany its release , a comic book as well as a promotional single containing a stripped @-@ down version of " Erotica " , titled " Erotic " , were made available . The book was released by Madonna as alongside her fifth studio album Erotica , which had been released a day earlier . With an initial print run of one million copies of the first edition in five continents and in five languages , the price of the book was \$ 50 (\$ 84 in 2016 dollars) at retail , making sex an " expensive visual book " . Nevertheless , the book managed to break records regarding the number of copies pre @-@ ordered before the release . Nicholas Callaway pointed out that the book was an unprecedented hit , because the print run of an average

art book ranges between 5 and 10 @, @ 000 units . He described it as " the largest initial release of any illustrated book in publishing history " .

Due to the high scandal and controversy surrounding the book , there wasn 't really any need for Madonna to promote it ; however , one of the few promotions for the book Madonna did , was appearing on the cover of the October edition of Vogue , where she appeared dressed in " Hippie trip " fashion . These photographs were taken by Meisel . After the book was released , on October 22 , 1992 , MTV aired a special called The Day in Madonna , hosted by Kurt Loder (the title of this special was a pun of the title of the channel 's daily show The Day in Rock) , which profiled the release of Madonna 's Sex and her album Erotica , even taking the book to the streets to allow people , including a sex therapist and group of real @-@ life New York City dominatrices , to view it . MTV also interviewed many people who had viewed the book on the day of its release at the HMV music store in New York City . In celebration of the release of the book , the store held a Madonna look @-@ alike contest and set up a booth where people could view the book for one dollar a minute , with all of the proceeds going to Lifebeat , the music industry organization founded to help fund AIDS research .

= = Critical and commercial reception = =

The book received negative reaction from critics , conservative and feminist " anti @-@ porn " groups , due to its sexually explicit photographs which many characterized as " hardcore pornography " . Taraborrelli opined that much of the book appears surprising and not shocking . He derided the whole concept as childish and impetuous rather than an adult book . According to him , though Madonna insisted that she was trying to demystify sexuality altogether , the author believed she just wanted to publish pornographic text and pictures and get away with it . " She was being a brat , not a revolutionary " , the author concluded . Author Lucy O 'Brien declared that the book was a bold , harrowing exercise in frustration , and despite Madonna 's attempt at invincibility , the book appeared as " a curious act of self @-@ destruction " . " The overwhelming effect of the book is numbing , " complained Rolling Stone . " The images are derivative , and Madonna herself seems far too eager to shock ; that , not even prurient arousal , seems the ideal response the book tirelessly seeks . The potency of Sex 's subject matter is dissipated by Madonna and Meisel 's self @-@ congratulatory ? and silly ? sense of their own ' bravery , ' as if their naughty games were somehow revolutionary . "

Roger Catlin from the Hartford Courant said that the passages from the book were " too dirty to quote here , even the funny ones " . The Daily Beast said that " the book is neither groundbreaking (save that it features a major star) nor particularly sexy [...] Sex is convincing only when it 's playful , as when she appears nude in a Miami pizzeria , chewing a slice while a baffled customer looks on . Elsewhere , she 's simply undressed with no place to go " . Richard Harrington from The Washington Post gave the book a mixed review by saying : " Is Sex shocking ? not really . Mostly because it 's Madonna , and somehow we 've come to expect this from her . Is Sex boring ? surprisingly , yes " . During her review of the book , British author Zoë Heller from The Independent wrote that it was " the women who once saw Madonna as a witty feminist role model who have been most alarmist about her latest pornographic incarnation " and that " previously , they say , Madonna played with traditional images of feminine sexuality in a subversive , ' empowering ' way . But now , with sado @-@ masochism and rape fantasies , she has gone too far . " Calvin Tomkins , author and art critic for The New Yorker , wrote that " unfortunately , the book is going to be mistaken for pornography " . Vanity Fair deemed it " the dirtiest coffee table book to ever be published " . Caryn James from The New York Times was negative in her review stating that " There is plenty here to offend the meek (whips and chains) , the self @-@ righteous (gay men and lesbians) , not to mention the tasteful (a tacky and cluttered art design) " . Vicki Goldberg from the same newspaper was also dismissive of the photography of the book saying that " Unfortunately , not many of the images are very good photographically . Many are just pictures , or just porn " . Writing for Spin magazine , Bob Guccione , Jr. gave the book a particularly unfavorable review :

Madonna has overstayed her welcome . She 's becoming the human equivalent of the Energizer

Bunny , flashing us her breasts in every magazine that 'll let her . [...] Her book Sex , is a rip @-@ off . Because it 's not about sex , it 's more about a hatred of it . [...] The book is not erotic . It 's all somehow , astonishingly , dead . As sexy as a body chart at the doctor 's office . Because it 's just as precise and soulless . [Sex] is a con job because instead of being flagrant pornography , it dresses itself up as Great Art . The text is pretentious and derives most , if not all , of its impact from the fact that it 's Madonna talking , quite a lot ... Any other model would sound no more or less coarse , just uninteresting .

Despite all the controversy and negative backlash , which included the book being banned in Japan shortly after its release , Sex proved to be a commercial success , selling 150 @,@ 000 copies on its release day in the United States alone . Hundreds of copies of the book were pre @-@ ordered , prompting book sellers to say that Sex was " shattering their sales records for advance purchases " . A week later , the book 's sales exceeded the 500 @,@ 000 units and eventually topped The New York Times Best Seller list . Giselle Benatar wrote in her article " Sex & Money " : " This isn 't the publishing event of the year , it 's the publishing event of the century . " A day earlier , Tyra Braden from The Morning Call wrote that she and some friends concluded that the book " might become a collector 's item a few years down the road " . In just three days , the book had managed to sell more than 1 @.@ 5 million copies worldwide .

= = Social impact and aftermath = =

Dubbed at the time " The Queen of obscene " , Madonna and the Sex era is considered by many as the artist 's most controversial and transgressive period . The book , widely panned by the press , is regarded as one of the factors that shaped the social reaction and critique towards Madonna during the early 1990s . Her fifth studio album Erotica was affected by the negative press surrounding the book . In March 1993 , Spin magazine wrote an article praising the book , but months later in Mexico , social communicologist Nino Canún presented a television special called ¿ Y usted qué opina ? (English : So what 's your opinion ?) , where the audience , among them a priest , presented their arguments as to why " this morally clueless singer shouldn 't be allowed to perform in the country " , making reference to The Girlie Show World Tour , which was set to visit Mexico . Later , during her concert in Mexico , Madonna wore a charro sombrero and simulated an orgy with her dancers onstage , as a response to these comments . Continuing her provocative imagery , Madonna starred in the erotic thriller Body of Evidence , which featured the singer fully nude and in scenes engaged in simulated sexual acts . In March 1994 , Madonna appeared as a guest on the Late Show with David Letterman , using profanity that was required to be censored on television and handing Letterman a pair of her underwear and asking him to smell it . The releases of her sexually explicit film , album and book , and the aggressive appearance on Letterman all made critics regard Madonna as a sexual renegade . She faced strong negative publicity from critics and fans , who commented that " she had gone too far " and that her career was over . Later on the song " Human Nature " from her sixth studio album Bedtime Stories (1994) , Madonna addressed the public backlash the book was still receiving , particularly with the lines " Did I say something wrong ? Oops , I didn 't know I couldn 't talk about sex . I must have been crazy , " as well as the line " What was I thinking ? " .

The perfect iconic goddess of True Blue had all gone . In the same way that sixties beauties like Nico , Marianne Faithfull and Brigitte Bardot set about destroying their beauty after they were famous , the very thing they felt limited them , Madonna annihilated hers . Within a few short years she moved from teasing flirtation to desperate sexual display . It is ironic that after the triumph of Like a Prayer , she hits this bathos . Being a blond again set her off in the wrong direction . It was as if with the Sex book she showed the underside of the Hollywood dream .

Madonna herself would later say : " I wouldn 't say I regret it . I 've made mistakes and learned from them . Most people want to hear me say that I regret publishing my Sex book . I don 't . What was the problem was releasing my Erotica album at the same time . I love that album and it got overlooked . " However , author Andy Koopmans in his book Madonna (2002) would comment that the singer regretted both publishing Sex and recording Erotica and that the book " had affected

everything she did later " . It was not until 2003 that Madonna would once again declare that she regretted nothing ; " I 'm not apologising in any shape or form [...] I was interested in pushing buttons and being rebellious and being mischievous and trying to bend the rules . There was a lot of irony in the Sex book and I am poking fun at a lot of things and I am being kind of silly and adolescent and I am being very f you , if a man can do it , I can do it . " A year earlier on 2002 , Naomi Campbell confessed to " have a lot of respect for Madonna being bold enough to come out and do a book on sex . I 've never reneged on that " . However , in 2009 , rapper Vanilla Ice , who was Madonna 's boyfriend at the time of the book 's creation , confessed to not being happy with the book once he saw it . " My friends were like , ' Dude , that 's cool man ' , but I was like , ' I 'm dating her , it 's not cool to see your girlfriend with all these other people ' [...] It kinda ruined the whole thing . I wonder what her kids think of that book ? Here she is writing kids ' books now but they 're going to see it and go , ' Mommy , what were you thinking ? ' " Another of the book 's models , actress Isabella Rossellini , told Out magazine that she regretted her participation on the book ; " I don 't think the book worked , even though the photos were extraordinary , and some of them quite memorable . I think there was a little bit of a moralistic sort of ' I 'll teach you how to be free ! ' ? and that bothered the hell out of me . "

Later reviews towards Sex have become more positive . The authors of The Porning of America : The Rise of Porn Culture , What It Means , and Where We Go from Here (2008) have commented that " the book is particularly interesting in the way that , like many of Madonna 's works , it portrays sex in terms of domination and power " , whereas Jane Raphaely , editor @-@ in @-@ chief of Cosmopolitan praised Madonna 's " liberated behavior on Sex [...] the fact that she takes all forms of pornography and systematically demystifies it by putting it under her control " , in an article in 1996 . Brian McNair , author of Striptease Culture : Sex , Media and the Democratisation of Desire (2002) praised this period of Madonna 's career , saying that she had " porno elegance " and that " Sex is a cultural phenomenon of global proportions and thanks to this Madonna established her iconic status and cultural influence " . Priya Elan from The Guardian , wrote : " That the Sex book came after a record @-@ breaking album and tour felt like a shrinkwrapped curve ball . But Madge was expressing something unique " . Elan felt that the book was part of a " slower reveal that began with confessional tracks such as ' Oh Father ' (from 1989 's Like a Prayer) and continued with the many scenes of narcissism captured in [the documentary] In Bed With Madonna " .

= = Legacy = =

Sex is now considered a bold , post @-@ feminist , work of art , besides being labeled a " cultural book " . Martin Amis from The Observer wrote an essay discussing the book 's cultural meaning . Critical theorist Douglas Kellner affirmed that with Sex " Madonna became herself , an artifact of pop culture " . French academic writer Georges Claude Guilbert (author of three books about Madonna) described Sex as one of the most successful publicity stunts in history whereas Russell W. Belk , author of Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods in Marketing mentioned that the book is a quality product in marketing . In 1992 , Madonna had generated more than US \$ 500 million (\$ 843 @,@ 134 @,@ 930 in 2016 dollars) to Time Warner in sales of both albums and the Sex book , despite the negative feedback . However , Taraborrelli commented in his book , Madonna : An Intimate Biography , that those " who knew Madonna well at that time , knew what was really going on with her : the Sex book ? and the outrageous antics that preceded it and would follow it ? was really just something she used as a barrier between her and the rest of the world . " For years it had seemed to Madonna that both her personal and professional life was extremely scrutinized by the public and media , and although she had started this scrutinizing by her provocative works , she was tired of it . Being vexed at this interest in her personal life , Madonna fought back by creating the persona of a renegade , something so outrageous as to defy explanation , something found objectionable by most people . Taraborrelli said that in Madonna 's view , " she had no other way of fighting back " . The Boston Globe 's Matthew Gilbert analyzed the singer 's provocative attempt in an article published in the newspaper :

Madonna 's motive for baring her breasts to the public feels more like personal gratification , less

like commitment to a cause . She 's not out to change the world . Let 's face it : Few people get erotic in front of millions of viewers for purely selfless political reasons . It 's hard to escape the view of Madonna as a difficult Catholic adolescent aiming the finger at everything repressive . And many of her songs are addressed to an authority figure of her youth ? from God and Jesus Christ to her own father . The heart of Madonna 's outrageousness seems to lie beneath her liberal rationales , as if she 's acting out something private and the world is her couch , not to mention her bank . Her politics are largely Electral .

According to some writers , Sex also helped Madonna make a name in the porn industry , and earned her the title of S & M 's first cultural ambassador and was praised for recreating " porn @-@ chic " . Humberto Quiroga Lavié pointed out that it was the fact that Sex was considered pornographic that helped it become a bestseller . Steve Bachmann , on his book Simulating Sex : Aesthetic Representations of Erotic Activity pointed out that " perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of Madonna 's sexual phenomenon is the extent to which her book marked a new threshold in the pornographic franchise " . McNair wrote in his book that " Sex brought out the personal underground to the surface of pop culture " . London art critic Sarah Kent wrote in Time Out magazine that the timing of Sex was " impeccable . Obsessions about the human body was in vogue , with Madonna 's book as well as artist Andres Serrano 's " cumming shots " and Jeff Koons ' The Jeff Koons Handbook , the latter portrayed fairytale pictures of the artist having sex with his pornographic actor wife , Cicciolina .

Sex has also become an important book in the LGBT community . Ben Shapiro , author of Porn Generation : How Social Liberalism Is Corrupting Our Future wrote that due to its iconic status " Sex adorns the coffee tables of hundreds of gay men and sperm banks " . Mark Blankenship , from the LGBT @-@ oriented website New Now Next stated that " literature changed forever " with the publishing of Sex . Madonna 's portrayal of lesbian love scenes in the book sparked debates about her own sexual orientation . This was an adjunct to the singer 's public relationship with comedian Sandra Bernhard , with whom she cavorted around , visiting lesbian night @-@ clubs as well as partying . The LGBT community felt it was an important portrayal for them . They debated whether Madonna was " ripping " them off for publicity . As Carolin Grace from Diva magazine noted : " Madonna became meaningful in early nineties , when Sex came out , and at that point lesbian culture was really changing . " She noted how women were coming out about their sexuality and the book 's handling of the taboo issue were " a legacy , our contribution to the show . The lesbian sub @-@ cultural references borrowed by Madonna aren 't our only possessions . " O 'Brien argues in her book Madonna : Like an Icon , that the book had a confusing philosophy . According to the female critics , who pointed out the vacuousness of Madonna 's remarks about porn and abuse , the singer did not have a correct idea that behind these fantasies the " reality is too hard for her to endure " , referring to the daily hustles that women have to face at red light districts and brothels . The author felt that despite the courageous premise of genuine exploration of queer sex , the book crossed over into pornography and a wrong portrayal for the community , while being flippant and commercial . She drew an example of the death of pornographic actor Joey Stefano , one of the models of the book , from drug overdose . Stefano had been thrilled to be a part of the book , but was underpaid . Once Madonna and her team were done with the shoot , " they packed up and left the Gaiety ... They left behind the mundane reality and the boys who have to deal with it seven days a week . "

Sex has also become an object of modern culture references . American performance artist Ann Magnuson , who had worked with Madonna on the 1985 film Desperately Seeking Susan , released a parody of the book 's photo sessions , where she simulated sex with a giant stuffed bear . In 2010 , writer @-@ performer Greg Scarnici released a book parody of Sex , titled Sex in Drag , which featured over 70 parodied images from the book . In a deleted scene from a 1993 episode (Krusty Gets Kancelled) of the animated sitcom The Simpsons , aired as part of The Simpsons 138th Episode Spectacular , Krusty the Clown attempts to market a book extremely similar to Sex as a means of resolving his financial woes . Krusty is seen in a suggestive pose on the front cover . Unlike Madonna , however , Krusty apparently never appeared fully nude , as he quickly claimed that he used a body double . In 2008 , Madonna 's look and attire she wore to the Sex pre @-@

release party was ranked by People magazine as one of Madonna 's " 50 Looks We Can 't Forget " . In April 2012 , a nude picture of Madonna taken by Meisel was put up for sale . The picture , an outtake from the book , features a naked Madonna lying on a bed , sporting bleach @-@ blonde hair and dark eye make @-@ up , smoking a cigarette and partially covered by a sheet . The picture was bought by an unnamed collector for almost US \$ 24 @,@ 000 (\$ 24 @,@ 737 in 2016 dollars) . In 2011 , according to the BookFinder.com , Sex was the most requested out @-@ of @-@ circulation publication and still remains the best @-@ selling coffee table book . In 2015 , the book was included on Rolling Stone 's list of " 20 Great Moments in Rock Star Nudity " . Author Keith Harris wrote : " No celebrity had ever commanded control over her own naked image so audaciously as Madonna in [Sex] " .