

= Secret (Madonna song) =

" Secret " is a song recorded by American singer and songwriter Madonna from her sixth studio album *Bedtime Stories* (1994) . It was released on September 27 , 1994 , as the lead single from the album by Warner Bros. Records as well as Maverick and Sire . The song was later included on her greatest hits compilations *GHV2* (2001) and *Celebration* (2009) . " Secret " was developed based on a demo version created by producer Shep Pettibone , which was reworked by Dallas Austin , with whom Madonna was working on *Bedtime Stories* . Written and produced by the singer with Austin , an additional writer on the track was Pettibone . The song was a departure from the style of music that Madonna had previously released ; up to that point in her career her music had mostly been big @-@ sounding dance tracks or melodic ballads . " Secret " combined pop and R & B genres with instrumentation from acoustic guitar , drums and strings , while lyrically talking about a lover having a secret , as well as how Madonna realized that one 's happiness is under one 's control .

The song was released accompanied by eight different remixes by DJ Junior Vasquez , who just re @-@ used Madonna 's vocals , but changed the composition of the track completely . Unusual for the mid @-@ 1990s , Madonna talked about the new single on the Internet leaving an audio message for her fans , as well as a snippet of the song . " Secret " received favorable reviews from music critics , who praised Madonna 's vocal delivery and its mid @-@ tempo R & B groove , deeming it seductive and soulful . The song was also a commercial success . In the United States , it peaked at number three on the *Billboard Hot 100* and was certified gold by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) . In the United Kingdom , it reached a peak of number five , becoming her record @-@ breaking 35th consecutive top @-@ ten single on the *UK Singles Chart* . Elsewhere , it reached number one in Canada , Finland and Switzerland , and the top five in Australia , Denmark , France , Italy , New Zealand and Spain .

With the single 's cover art and its accompanying music video , Madonna ushered in another image change , inspired by the look of Hollywood actress Jean Harlow . The black and white video was directed by photographer Melodie McDaniel who was chosen by the singer due to McDaniel 's previous short films . It features Madonna as a singer in a nightclub in Harlem , New York . Interspersed with scenes of daily life in the neighborhood , the video ends with Madonna uniting with her lover and their supposed child . The video sparked academic discussions on what can constitute the lyrical secret of the song . Madonna performed " Secret " on tour for the first time during her 2001 *Drowned World Tour* . It was later performed at the Houston stop of her *Sticky and Sweet Tour* in November 2008 as a fan request , and later on the *Rebel Heart Tour* in 2015 .

= = Background and release = =

Following the release Madonna 's first book publication , *Sex* , the erotic thriller , *Body of Evidence* , her fifth studio album , *Erotica* , as well as a disastrous interview on David Letterman 's show in the early 1990s , the media and public 's backlash against Madonna 's overtly sexual image was at a peak . Madonna wanted to tone down her explicit image . Her first attempt was to release the tender ballad " I 'll Remember " from the soundtrack of the film *With Honors* . Musically she wanted to move in a new musical direction and started exploring new @-@ jack R & B styles with a generally mainstream , radio @-@ friendly sound . She incorporated it in her sixth studio album , *Bedtime Stories* , released in October 1994 . At first , it started as a collaboration with Shep Pettibone and was to be stylistically similar to *Erotica* , but due to Madonna 's wish to soften her public image at the time , she decided to move towards an R & B sound collaborating with well @-@ known R & B producers and took a more appropriate image for the general public .

After searching , Madonna chose to work with Babyface , whose previous collaborations with artists like Whitney Houston , Boyz II Men , and Toni Braxton had resulted in successful smooth R & B songs . Through him , she met with then upcoming young producer from Atlanta called Dallas Austin , who had become famous for his work on girl group TLC 's debut album , *Oooooohhh ...* On the *TLC Tip* (1992) . Together they composed two songs for the album , " Secret " and " Sanctuary " .

The former was originally produced in its demo form by Pettibone , under the name " Something 's Coming Over Me " , however Austin reworked the demo and made it a different song musically . On September 27 , 1994 , the song was released as the lead single from Bedtime Stories . The cover art of the single showed a new look for Madonna , with blonde hair and style compared to the look of 1930s American actress , Jean Harlow . Shot by photographer Patrick Demarchelier in black @-@ and @-@ white , the image showed the singer slouched on a sofa with her dress down and revealing her translucent brassiere . Unusual for the mid @-@ 1990s , Madonna talked about the new single on the Internet leaving an audio message for her fans , as well as a snippet of the song .

Hello , all you Cyberheads ! Welcome to the 90 's version of intimacy . You can hear me ... You can even see me ... But you can 't touch me ... do you recognize my voice ? ... It 's Madonna . Often imitated , but never duplicated . Or , should I say , often irritated ? If you feel like it , you can download the sound file of my new single " Secret " , from my new album , Bedtime Stories , which comes out next month . I just shot the video in New York , and will be premiering an exclusive sample of it online . So check back soon . In the meantime , why don 't you post me a message and let me know what you think of my new song . And by the way , don 't believe any of those online imposters pretending to be me ... ain 't nothing like the real thing . Peace out .

= = Recording and composition = =

" Secret " was written and produced by Madonna and Austin , with Pettibone as co @-@ writer of the track . It was recorded from April to June 1994 at Axis Studios in New York and DARP Studios in Atlanta , GA . Alongside the production work , Austin also played the drums and the keyboards , while Tommy Martin played the acoustic guitars . Fred Jorio and Mark " Spike " Stent worked on the programming and engineering of the track while Tony Shimkin was the editor . Jon Gass and Alvin Speights mixed the song and finally Jessie Leavey , Craig Armstrong and Susie Katiyama did the strings and conducting sessions .

" Secret " was a departure from the style of music that Madonna had previously released ; up to that point in her career her music had mostly been big @-@ sounding dance tracks or melodic ballads . In the track , she mixed pop and Contemporary R & B genres . It begins with the sound of an acoustic guitar and wah @-@ wah and just the sound of Madonna 's voice singing over it , before opening up to a sparse , retro rhythm section . A descending chord sequence follows and around the one minute mark , the drums start with Madonna singing the chorus " Something 's coming over , mmmmmmmmm " . It is entirely supported by the strings and Madonna 's lower harmonies allude to songs by Kurt Cobain . According to Rikky Rooksby , author of The Complete Guide to the Music of Madonna , the descending chords are supported by the ascending strings ? an example of contrary motion used in music . During the middle section , another wah @-@ wah guitar solo is added alongside the strings . Near the end , the melodies add an upper harmony for differentiation with the verses .

According to Musicnotes.com , the song is set in the time signature of common time and progresses in 96 beats per minute . The composition is set in the key of E ? minor with Madonna 's vocal ranging from G ? 3 to G ? 4 . " Take a Bow " contains a basic sequence of B ? 7 ? E ? m7 ? D ? ? Cm7 ? C ? during the opening verses , and B7 ? Em ? D ? C during the chorus its chord progression . Madonna 's voice remains at the center of the song 's production , as she sings lyrics such as " happiness lies in your own hand " . Lyrically it talks about a lover having a secret as well as how Madonna realized that one 's happiness is under one 's control . In Madonna the Companion : Two Decades of Commentary , authors Allen Metz and Carol Benson write that the tone that Madonna uses when singing these lyrics suggests that she is discussing " self @-@ determinism , not auto @-@ eroticism " . Throughout the song Madonna also sings the lyrics " My baby 's got a secret , " however , she never discloses what the secret may be .

= = Remixes = =

Madonna released more than eight remixes of the song in different formats . At the time , " Secret "

was experiencing success on the US record charts , to keep the song current in dance clubs , Madonna requested remixes of the song from Junior Vasquez , who was a DJ at the Sound Factory nightclub in New York . According to him Madonna 's representatives " sent me a cassette of the song , just to get an idea what the song was ... [A] nd when it was 100 beats per minute I said , ' Oh god , what am I gonna do with this ? ' " Vasquez and his team of engineers first experimented with the track by making remixes closer to the original version . Then he used only Madonna 's vocals for the mixed versions , and re @-@ wrote and composed the music as brand new . He was sure of doing house mixes of the track but had to " speed @-@ up " Madonna 's vocals . Recording engineer Dennis Mitchell explained , " To do that we have to digitally manipulate her vocals , which is time compression ... It just digitally goes in and snipes out tiny little digital slices of the actual sound and squeezes it together so that her tempo is a new tempo but her pitch stays the same . " According to Vasquez , Madonna was " on top of everything " including the house mixes as well as the other mixes created .

The song also had dance mixes created by Vasquez . There are two versions of " Junior 's Luscious Mix " , those being a single edit and a longer version , which has a piano introduction and turns " Secret " into a dancefloor track . According to Larry Flick from Billboard these versions have " vibrant keyboards and an elastic bassline " . Like the house mixes , here also Madonna 's vocals were re @-@ edited to fit in with the faster beats . According to Jose F. Promis of AllMusic , the sped @-@ up vocals made Madonna 's voice have a " robotic , detached feel that the original doesn 't have . " Promis also noted that Vasquez 's " Sound Factory Mix " had " swirling instrumentals recalling flashing lights in a nightclub " . This remix also incorporated tribal percussion sounds and synth looping . Similarly he noted that the " Some Bizarre Mix " gave the song a " groovier , funkier spin " , while the " Allstar Mix " , gave it " a cold , hip @-@ hop feel " . Flick was positive towards all the remixes , noting that " this single is a promising preamble to what will likely be a cool , new chapter in the career of dance mu- sic 's most successful graduate . "

= = Critical reception = =

" Secret " received generally positive reviews from music critics . In his book *Madonna : An Intimate Biography* , author J. Randy Taraborrelli described the song as " clever " , adding that no matter how many time one listens to it , " it never ceases to intrigue " . Chris Wade , author of *The Music of Madonna* recalled that " Secret " had been his favorite song , and commended the track 's production , Madonna 's vocals and mixing . He declared it as " one of Madonna 's finest cuts from the whole of her 90s output . " Wade described the chorus as " sinister and catchy ; a strange eeriness about it that only the mystery of the forbidden can conjure . " Matthew Rettenmund wrote in his *Encyclopedia Madonnica* that " Secret " paved way a new direction musically for Madonna ; he believed that the track was more haunting musically than Madonna 's previous single " Who 's That Girl " (1987) and comparable to " Justify My Love " (1990) . Rettenmund complimented the cover artwork , saying that " a dozen years into her career , it was one of her most arresting poses shot by Demarchelier , a testament to the durability of her star appeal " . Author Lucy O 'Brien described the song in her book , *Madonna : Like an Icon* :

With its chunky backbeat , gentle strings and funky guitar motif , ' Secret ' is both languid and tense at the same time . The song has the air of quiet revelation and a relaxation of spirit . Madonna insisted later that the song wasn 't just about love but also about spiritual self @-@ empowerment . [Austin 's reworked demo] brought out a new warm , soulful tone in her voice , and making her swoony humming sound a central feature of the track .

Sal Cinquemani from *Slant Magazine* gave the song a rating of A , and noted that " Secret " was probably the most naked performance of Madonna 's career , with " acoustic guitars , expertly sweetened vocals and producer Dallas Austin 's signature R & B beats [which] soulfully transport the listener into Madonna 's troubled yet soothing world . " Barbara O 'Dair from *Rolling Stone* called the song " infectiously funky " , adding that her delivery of the lyrics " Happiness lies in your own hand / It took me much too long to understand " shows a downbeat restraint in her vocals that proves the singer is " drawn to sadness " . Stephen Thomas Erlewine of AllMusic listed it as one of

the best songs from *Bedtime Stories* , stating that along with other album tracks ? " Take a Bow " , " Inside of Me " , " Sanctuary " and " Bedtime Story " ? it slowly " works its melody into the subconscious as the bass pulses " . Paul Verna from *Billboard* described the song as a " pop smash " that is one of the most " seductive " songs from *Bedtime Stories* . Alex Needham of *NME* called the song an " underrated gem " , adding that the track has a " brilliant bluesy strut " . In his 2011 review of *Bedtime Stories* , Brett Callwood of the *Detroit Metro Times* called the song " spectacular " . Charlotte Robinson , writer from *PopMatters* , wrote that the gentle grooves of " Secret " , accompanied by acoustic guitar and delicate strings , make the song " seductive " .

NME magazine ranked " Secret " at number 30 in their list of the best songs of 1994 . *Slant Magazine* listed " Secret " as the 42nd " Best Singles of the 1990s " , stating that its " one of the most organic @-@ sounding singles of Madonna 's career , taking its sweet time to get where it 's going and not giving up too much along the way . The arrangement gets off on being withholding , and , at least for one glorious single , so does Madonna : When she sings , " You knew all along / What I never wanted to say , " she sounds positively rapturous . Scott Kearnan of *The Boston Globe* included the track at number 30 on his list of " Best Madonna Songs " , stating " its slinky R & B groove made ' Secret ' something special , even if it 's not remembered for an accompanying scandal or bawdy ' moment ' . We like to talk about her ability to produce controversy and headlines , but at the end of the day , here 's what Madonna makes best : pop music " . Louis Virtel of *The Backlot* listed the song at number 14 on his list of the " The 100 Greatest Madonna Songs " , calling it " meditative , moving " and " sexy as hell " . Rooksby concurred that " its a good track " but felt that the time could have been reduced from five minutes , which made it a little long . He also felt that the drums looping around the track made it a " bit monotonous " .

= = Commercial performance = =

In the United States it debuted at number 30 on the *Billboard* Hot 100 issue dated October 8 , 1994 . It was the third highest debut of Madonna 's music career at that time , following " *Erotica* " at number 13 (1992) and " *Rescue Me* " at number 15 (1991) . According to journalist Liz Smith , " Secret " became the most requested song on US radios after it was sent for airplay , being spun on 152 radio stations and gaining around 1 @,@ 900 spins . Following the release of the commercial CD formats the next week , the song debuted on the *Singles Sales* chart at number 31 with 18 @,@ 000 units sold . Three weeks later it peaked on the chart at number three , staying for a total of 22 weeks ; 11 of those were spent within the top ten . It also peaked at number three on both the US Hot 100 Airplay and *Mainstream Top 40* charts and at number two on the *Adult Contemporary* chart . On the *Hot Dance Club Songs* chart it peaked at number one for two weeks , aided by the remixes from Vasquez . At the Year @-@ end Hot 100 ranking for 1994 , " Secret " was placed at number 84 and for 1995 , it was ranked at number 71 . " Secret " was certified gold by the *Recording Industry Association of America* (*RIAA*) on January 5 , 1995 , for shipment of 500 @,@ 000 copies of the single . In Canada the song debuted at number 91 on the *RPM Singles Chart* the week of October 3 , 1994 , eventually peaking at number one for three consecutive weeks starting from November 14 , 1994 . On the *RPM 1994 Year @-@ End Chart* , the song finished at number 23 .

In the United Kingdom " Secret " debuted and peaked at number five on the *UK Singles Chart* , staying on the chart for a total of ten weeks . According to the *Official Charts Company* , the song has sold a total of 117 @,@ 957 copies in that region as of 2008 . " Secret " became her 35th consecutive top @-@ ten single since " *Like a Virgin* " (1984) , which remains an unequalled record in British chart history . On the *French Singles Chart* , " Secret " peaked at number two for two weeks , staying on the chart for a total of 30 weeks . It placed at number 26 on the year @-@ end chart and was eventually certified silver by the *Syndicat National de l'Édition Phonographique* (*SNEP*) for shipment of 125 @,@ 000 copies ; the song has sold a total of 255 @,@ 000 copies in France . The song also peaked at number one in Finland as well as Switzerland , charting on the *Swiss Singles Chart* for a total of 19 weeks . The song also placed within the top 10 on the charts in Italy , Spain , and Denmark , peaking at number three , number four , and number eight respectively . In Austria , the single missed the top 10 , peaking at number 11 , while in Ireland it peaked at

number 16 on the Irish Singles Chart . In Sweden , the song peaked at number 12 and spent a total of 16 cumulative weeks on the chart .

" Secret " entered the ARIA Singles Chart at its peak of number five the week of October 23 , 1994 , eventually charting for a total of fourteen weeks . It later landed at number 46 position on the Australian singles year @-@ end chart . The Australian Recording Industry Association (ARIA) certified it gold for shipment of 35 @,@ 000 copies . In New Zealand , the song entered the New Zealand Singles Chart at number 31 the week of November 6 , 1994 , eventually peaked at number five , remaining on the chart for a total of eight weeks .

= = Music video = =

= = = Conception and development = = =

According to O 'Brien , the general critical consensus about Bedtime Stories was " Madonna in retreat . Still smarting from criticism over the Sex book , she [evolved] into a softer , more gentle image . Yet despite the pastel tones of her new look , there was also a sense of grit . She combined this to startling effect with the music video for ' Secret ' . " Madonna knew that a lot was riding on her first visual after the Erotica era , and wanted to create an effect with it . The video was directed by Melodie McDaniel , who had previously gained acclaim as a photographer for album artwork and also as music video director for bands like The Cranberries and Porno for Pyros . However , Madonna was more interested in one of McDaniel 's earlier short films , where she portrayed baptism combining with voodoo rituals . She enlisted McDaniel and explained that she was " drawn to the rawness of [McDaniel 's] film " . Madonna wanted to tone down her image and according to McDaniel :

She was ready to go there ... Madonna had a blonde Jean Harlow look at the time . I wanted to combine that old classic Hollywood mix with the edginess of modern contemporary , but make it feel timeless . I was trying to think of something different , something real ... It was awesome I got this break , but I was freaked out . I was jumping from young artists to working with an icon ... I think she was drawn to the rawness of my work .

Before meeting with Madonna , McDaniel first listened to the song and found it inspiring . When asked by the singer about her references for the video , McDaniel presented her with pictures from her favorite 1970s photographer , Bill Burke , who took pictures of people considered as freaks or inbred . Another reference was the photography book , East 100 Street by Bruce Davidson , which showed pictures of people in Spanish Harlem . Madonna let the director live in her New York apartment to continue research and asked her to go through her book collections , including those by Helmut Newton and Richard Avedon . Madonna also started working with a stylist from McDaniel 's team called Brigitte Echols , for the fashion and wardrobes in the video . Echols had gone to a low @-@ rent mall called Crenshaw Swap Meet and bought a \$ 180 gold necklace with the name " Madonna " in it , inside a jewelry box . Madonna liked it and together they decided on the wardrobe , including skirts and tops , vintage clothes from costume houses , La Perla bra , and two designs from then unknown Marc Jacobs . Echols described Madonna 's approach to style as " collaborative " .

= = = Filming and release = = =

The video was filmed during September 9 ? 11 , 1994 at the Lenox Lounge and on location on Lenox Avenue in Harlem . McDaniel and her team scouted out low @-@ rent , speak @-@ easy locations and they did street @-@ casting , assembling off @-@ beat characters , from transvestites to card tricksters and edgy Harlem teenagers . However , when it came to filming there was a problem ? McDaniel 's approach was to start the camera and let the cast improvise , but Madonna wanted direction . She would sit on the chair and when McDaniel said " Action " , she would still sit there saying impatiently , " What am I doing ? What am I doing ? Hello ? " In reality , McDaniel

recalled that she was overawed by Madonna 's big entourage who had come to Harlem for the shoot , hence she held herself from speaking her mind about the singer 's look . When McDaniel explained to the singer that she wanted her to appear edgy like Jennifer Jason Leigh 's character in the 1990 drama film Last Exit to Brooklyn , the singer was annoyed . Madonna had her hair and makeup re @-@ done and it was the final look for the video .

Echols recalled that the first scenes shot were those of Madonna walking down Lenox Avenue . While filming , the singer noticed a black leather coat with fur trim , worn by Fatima , the assistant director . Madonna asked for the coat from Fatima and ended up wearing it in the video . Echols also noted that Madonna had a close relationship with the cinematographer , and knew from which angle her shots would be the best and which lights to be used . After the misunderstandings regarding looks , and the plot direction were cleared , the filming resumed and was finished within three days . The final scenes were with model Jason Olive in a Harlem house , with Madonna climbing steps and reaching him and their supposed child .

The video premiered on October 4 , 1994 , on MTV . It begins with showing the neighborhood of Harlem , with Madonna as a singer in a small jazz club . She simply sits in the club with her band and sings for her small , mostly black and Latino audience . Interspersed through out the video are scenes of people living in Harlem , doing their daily chores , including a supporting cast of transvestite prostitutes , a pimp , and a black gang member who shows off the scars on his body . During the intermediate verses , Madonna is shown writhing in the lap of an older , maternal woman , who symbolically baptizes her by splashing water on her forehead . Near the video 's end , Madonna walks through the neighborhood and climbs a set of stairs to have a reunion with her family , a young Latin man and their supposed son . The video ends with Madonna smiling towards the camera while sitting at the nightclub .

= = = Reception and aftermath = = =

The " Secret " music video was a hit on MTV , being played numerous times by the channel . It also generated discussions in academia regarding the supposed " secret " of the song . According to the book Madonna 's Drowned Worlds , author Santiago Fouz @-@ Hernández argues that the young son that is revealed at the end of the video is in actuality Madonna 's lover 's secret . Throughout the video , scenes of Madonna are interspersed with scenes of drag queens primping , and religious iconography such as rebirth and damnation . In his book From Hegel to Madonna , author Robert Miklitsch states that the music video for " Secret " is a departure from the various themes ? repression and loss , anger and aggression ? explored so vividly on Bedtime Stories . Miklitsch goes on to say that , although the video depicts images of cleansing rebirth , the fact that Madonna announced that she was pregnant in 1996 shows that , in retrospect , " Secret " may have been less about cleansing rebirth , and instead more about maternity as birth .

Rettenmund had a different interpretation of the video , calling it as a " subtly orchestrated story of the singer 's addiction to ? and almost spiritual deliverance from ? heroin " . He found contrast in Madonna 's white blonde character ? with hyper @-@ glamor , heavy mascara , pierced nose and navel , a clingy blouse and vintage high heels ? to the neighborhood of Harlem , where Madonna is portrayed as a " Billie Holiday @-@ esque singer in the jazz club " . At the end of the video , Madonna climbs up the stairs to her lover 's room , Rettenmund found references to the music videos for the singles " Like a Virgin " (1984) and " Papa Don 't Preach " (1986) , both of which had the singer climbing the stairs but never reaching the destination , unlike " Secret " . Rettenmund also observed that " Secret " could serve as a follow @-@ up to the music video for " Borderline " with the events happening ten years and Madonna all grownup . He concluded by saying that in lieu of the singer 's 1994 interview with The Face magazine , where she expressed her desire to have a family , the video emphasized on Madonna 's interest in a partner and a child .

= = Live performances = =

On February 18 , 1995 , Madonna arrived in Europe to promote Bedtime Stories . During the same

day , she performed " Secret " and " Take a Bow " on German TV show Wetten , dass .. ? , while she was also interviewed on the program . " Secret " was performed on Madonna 's 2001 Drowned World Tour , during the cowgirl section of the show . The performance was accompanied by a video montage of riverside baptism , whirling dervishes ceremonies and Buddhist prayers ; the footage was taken from McDaniel 's film which had inspired Madonna for the performance as well as enlisting her . Alexis Petridis of The Guardian called the performance " a gorgeous acoustic reading . " Writing for The Victoria Advocate , Steve Dollar praised the performance , saying that the song " has grown in depth " over time . During the New York City performance of " Secret " , she dedicated the song to its inhabitants . The performance of the song on August 26 , 2001 , at The Palace of Auburn Hills was recorded and released in the live video album , Drowned World Tour 2001 .

In November 2008 , " Secret " was performed a cappella at the Houston stop of her Sticky & Sweet Tour as fan request . After the performance , Madonna said : " Alright Texas ! That was really good . I 'd forgotten that song " . During the Vancouver stop on her Rebel Heart Tour in 2015 , Madonna again performed an acoustic rendition of the song , dedicating it to a " special guest " in the audience , which was assumed by media to be her ex @-@ husband Sean Penn , who was in the audience . The singer admitted she had not practiced the performance , and according to Vancouver Sun , it " came across as charitably , unpracticed (if well @-@ intentioned) " .

= = Track listings and versions = =

= = Credits and personnel = =

Credits and personnel adapted from Bedtime Stories album liner notes .

= = Charts = =

= = Certifications = =