

= Express Yourself (Madonna song) =

" Express Yourself " is a song by American singer @-@ songwriter Madonna , from her fourth studio album Like a Prayer (1989) . It was released as the second single from the album on May 9 , 1989 by Sire Records . The song was included on the greatest hits compilation albums The Immaculate Collection (1990) , and Celebration (2009) . " Express Yourself " was the first song that Madonna and producer Stephen Bray collaborated on for Like a Prayer . Written and produced by them , the song was a tribute to American funk and soul band Sly and the Family Stone . The main inspiration behind the song is female empowerment , urging women never to go for second @-@ best and to always express their inner feelings .

" Express Yourself " is an upbeat dance @-@ pop song that features instrumentation from brass , hand claps and drum beats , while the chorus is backed by the sound of saxophone and percussion . The lyrics talk about rejecting material pleasures and only accepting the best for oneself ; subtexts are employed throughout the song . " Express Yourself " received positive reviews from critics , who applauded the gender equality message of the song and complimented the song for being a hymn to freedom and encouragement to women and all oppressed minorities . Commercially , the song peaked at number two on the Billboard Hot 100 and became Madonna 's sixth number @-@ one hit on the European Hot 100 Singles chart . It also reached the top of the singles charts in Canada , Italy and Switzerland , and the top five elsewhere .

The accompanying music video , directed by David Fincher , was inspired by the Fritz Lang classic film Metropolis (1927) . It had a total budget of \$ 5 million (\$ 9 @.@ 54 million in 2016 dollars) , which made it the most expensive music video made up to then , and currently the third most expensive of all time . The video portrayed a city full of tall skyscrapers and railway lines . Madonna played the part of a glamorous lady and chained masochist , with muscular men acting as her workers . In the end , she picks one of them ? played by model Cameron Alborzian ? as her date . Critics noted the video for its exploitation of female sexuality and came to the conclusion that Madonna 's masculine image in the video was gender @-@ bending .

" Express Yourself " has been performed on four of Madonna 's world tours , and has been covered by the female leads of the Fox TV show Glee , who performed the song in the episode titled " The Power of Madonna " . The song and the video are noted for their freedom expression and feminist aspects , and its postmodern nature entranced academics , by resisting definition . It has also left its mark on the work of contemporary music artists , including the Spice Girls , Christina Aguilera and Lady Gaga .

= = Background = =

" Express Yourself " was released as the second single from her fourth studio album , Like a Prayer , on May 9 , 1989 , with " The Look of Love " , from the 1987 film soundtrack Who 's That Girl , on its B @-@ side . When Madonna started work on Like a Prayer , she considered many options , and thought about the musical direction for it . She had certain matters on her mind , including her troubled relationship with her ex @-@ husband Sean Penn , her family , her lost mother and even her belief in God . Madonna thought about lyrical ideas for the songs on topics that , until then , were personal mediation never to be shared with her public so openly and pointedly . She came to the realization that as she and her fans were growing up , and it was time for her to move away from the teen appeal to wider audiences , and en @-@ cash on the longevity of the album market . Madonna wanted her new sound to be calculative and indicative of what was fashionable , and ride the changing trend of music .

As Madonna considered her alternatives , producers Patrick Leonard and Stephen Bray had individually began to tinker with various instrumental tracks and musical ideas to present to her for consideration . " Express Yourself " was the first song that Madonna and Bray collaborated on for Like a Prayer , co @-@ written and co @-@ produced as a tribute to American funk and soul band Sly and the Family Stone . The main inspiration behind the song is female empowerment , urging women never to " go for second @-@ best " and to put their love " to the test " . Madonna explained

to Becky Johnston in the May 1989 issue of Interview :

" The ultimate thing behind the song is that if you don 't express yourself , if you don 't say what you want , then you 're not going to get it . And in effect you are chained down by your inability to say what you feel or go after what you want . No matter how in control you think are about sexuality in a relationship there is always the power struggle ... always a certain amount of compromise . Of being beholden , if you love them . You do it because you choose to . No one put the chain around this neck but me . I wrote ' Express Yourself ' to tell women around the world that pick and choose the best for yourself , before that chain around your neck , kills you instead . It 's my take on how man can express what they want , the same prerogative should be there for a woman too . "

= = Composition = =

" Express Yourself " begins with the sound of brass tinkling along , as Madonna chimes the opening line : " Come on girls , do you believe in love ? ' Cause I got something to say about it , And it goes something like this . " Handclaps and drum beats start as Madonna moves into the chorus of the song , with a thick vocal texture and high @-@ pitched background singing . The chorus is aided by instrumentation from a saxophone and percussion . Madonna then sings the first verse of the song , as a violin sound is added after she finishes the bridge , " Make you feel like a queen on the throne , make you love it till you never come down " , a male voice repeating the last line . A synthesizer is played after the second verse as Madonna continues chanting the words " Express yourself " with background vocals singing " Hey , hey , hey , hey " alongside her .

After a small saxophone interlude , a break @-@ down comes with Madonna singing in a fuller voice , as horns and percussion beats continue . Madonna changes the lyrics at the end to " express himself " , and after another repetition of the bridge and the intermediate verse , the chorus comes where she changes the lyrics back to the original title . The song ends with the words " Respect yourself " , fading out . Set within a simple song structure , " Express Yourself " plays with ambiguity through a subtle control of harmony and the avoidance of diatonic closure . The song is clearly in the key of G major , but the first note of the melody , " don 't " in B ? major , implies the G Dorian mode . This is also evident in Madonna 's vocal nuance on the words " express yourself " , which initially centers on G , before moving down a semitone to E minor , the raised 6th in G Dorian . Per the sheet music published by Alfred Publishing Co . Inc . , " Express Yourself " is set in time signature of common time , with a tempo of 120 beats per minute . Madonna 's voice range spans from G3 to C5 with a chord progression of G ? F / G ? C ? G .

According to Rikky Rooksby , author of The Complete Guide to the Music of Madonna , the lyrics of " Express Yourself " make it a simple love song , with Madonna exhorting the women in her audience not to go for second @-@ best , to express their feelings and get their men to express theirs . Lucy O 'Brien , author of Madonna : Like an Icon , described them as a " feminist call @-@ to @-@ arms " , with Madonna dismissing the satin sheets and gold baubles of material pleasures . As she said in the interview with Rolling Stone , " the lyrics are my way of saying if it doesn 't work , then you 're better off on your own . Quite possibly there were some personal feelings mixed in the lyrics as well . " Subtexts are employed throughout the song , especially in the line " What you need is a big strong hand , to lift you to your higher ground " , where the " big strong hand " is implied as one 's own hand , and not the typical male helping hand .

= = Critical reception = =

" Express Yourself " received mainly positive reviews from critics . J. Randy Taraborrelli , author of Madonna : An Intimate Biography called the song a " funky dance anthem " and reacted positively to its message of a " female call @-@ to @-@ arms in communication and self @-@ respect . " Stephen Holden of The New York Times observed that Madonna repudiated the philosophy of her previous single " Material Girl " (1985) in " Express Yourself " , which he described as " a 30 @-@ year @-@ old 's view of life unshadowed by rebellion and lingering lapsed Catholic pain . " In another article from the same newspaper , Carn James declared it as one of her most exuberant

songs . Santiago Fouz @-@ Hernández and Freya Jarman @-@ Ivens , authors of Madonna 's Drowned Worlds , complimented the lyrics of the song , and added that it apparently espouses " gender fluidity as a road to gender equality . " In his book Madonna As Postmodern Myth , journalist Georges Claude Guilbert described " Express Yourself " as a hymn to freedom , " an encouragement for all women and all oppressed minorities to resist , to express their ideas and their strength faced with tyranny . "

Biographer Mary Cross noted in her book Madonna : A Biography , how the song paved the way for its music video and became a testament to freedom . Authors Allen Metz and Carol Benson noted in their essays on Madonna , how she decimated " patriarchal , racist and capitalist constructions " , by the way she pronounced the word " self " in " Express Yourself " . They added that the opening line " Don 't go for second best , baby " transformed the song into a postmodernist anthem . Scholar Sheila Whiteley noted in her book Women and Popular Music : Sexuality , Identity , and Subjectivity , that Madonna 's acknowledgement of the pastiche and of being capable of imitating musical style was interesting to her , but given Madonna 's ability to manipulate image , the musical exuberance of " Express Yourself " did not appear surprising . Mark Bego , author of Madonna : Blond Ambition declared that " the song that most reflected the Madonna everyone had come to know and be shocked by was ' Express Yourself ' . " O 'Brien was impressed with the song , and gave a detailed review :

" Express Yourself " is a feminist call @-@ to @-@ arms , complete with muscular brass playing and soulful voice . Here Madonna is the anti @-@ materialism girl , exhorting her female audiences to respect themselves . That means having a man who loves your head and your heart . If he doesn 't treat you right (and here 's the revolutionary rhetoric) you 're better off on your own . Like a female preacher , Madonna emphasizes each word of the chorus , invoking God and the power of orgasm . In parts Cosmo @-@ woman , girl @-@ talk , and swinging dance track , it presages the deliciously declarative stance of " Vogue " and shows Madonna moving from introspective to survivalist mode .

Professor Maury Dean wrote in his book Rock ' n ' Roll Gold Rush : A Singles Un @-@ Cyclopedia , that the main appeal of " Express Yourself " lay in its teen appeal , although he understood that at its core , it was addressing a very important issue of female liberation . Kevin Phinney from Austin American @-@ Statesman commented that with " Express Yourself " , Madonna struck out her " Material Girl " persona , there by demonstrating once more that no image of hers is concrete . Based on the lyrics of the song , Ken Blakely of Philadelphia Daily News declared the song as a rare example of good taste and good advice from Like a Prayer . Andy Goldberg from The Jerusalem Post was impressed with Madonna 's vocals on the song , complimenting the soul influences . Rolling Stone 's J. D. Considine called " Express Yourself " an unabashed groove tune and felt that it seemed " smart and sassy , right down to Madonna 's soul @-@ style testimony on the intro : ' Come on , girls , do you believe in love ? " Don McCleese from Chicago Sun @-@ Times declared the song as one of the highlights of the album , feeling that it would become anthemic . Sal Cinquemani from Slant magazine , while reviewing Like a Prayer , announced " Express Yourself " as the most soulful performance of Madonna 's career . He added that the song " turned Madonna 's ' Material Girl ' image on its head , denouncing material things for a little r @-@ e @-@ s @-@ p @-@ e @-@ c @-@ t . " Stephen Thomas Erlewine from Allmusic felt that the song consisted of " deep funk " music .

= = Chart performance = =

In the United States , " Express Yourself " was the highest debuting single at number 41 on the Billboard Hot 100 , for the issue dated June 3 , 1989 , and after four weeks reached the top @-@ ten of the chart , at number six . It eventually peaked at number two , held at the runner @-@ up spot for two weeks by the Simply Red song , " If You Don 't Know Me by Now " and the next week by Martika 's " Toy Soldiers " . " Express Yourself " was present for a total of 16 weeks on the Hot 100 , and placed at number 55 on the year @-@ end chart . The song reached the top of the Dance Club Songs chart of Billboard , while on the Hot Adult Contemporary chart , it peaked outside the top

@-@ ten , at number 12 . " Express Yourself " was certified gold by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) in August 1989 , for shipment of 500 @,@ 000 copies of the single across United States . In Canada , the song debuted at number 82 on the RPM Singles Chart and reached the top in its ninth week . It was present on the chart for 17 weeks and was the eighth best @-@ selling Canadian single for 1989 .

In Australia , " Express Yourself " debuted on the ARIA Singles Chart at number 36 on June 4 , 1989 . After five weeks , the song reached a peak of number five on the chart , staying there for one week , before descending the chart . It was present for a total of 19 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 , " Express Yourself " was the 28th best @-@ selling Australian single of 1989 . In New Zealand , the song debuted at number five on the RIANZ Singles Chart , and reaching a peak of number two after three weeks . It was present for a total of 12 weeks on the chart .

" Express Yourself " was released in the United Kingdom on June 3 , 1989 , and entered the UK Singles Chart at number ten , moving to its peak of number five the next week . " Express Yourself " was the 20th best @-@ selling song of 1989 in the UK , with the British Phonographic Industry (BPI) certifying it silver , for shipment of 200 @,@ 000 copies of the single . According to the Official Charts Company , the song has sold 209 @,@ 000 copies there . " Express Yourself " was Madonna 's sixth number one single on the Eurochart Hot 100 Singles chart , reaching the top on July 1 , 1989 , and staying at number one for three weeks . In Belgium , " Express Yourself " debuted at number 16 on the Ultratop chart on June 10 , 1989 , and reached a peak of number three . In the Netherlands , " Express Yourself " debuted at number 27 on the Dutch Top 40 , and reached a peak of five on July 1 , 1989 . The song reached a peak of number three in Germany , where it remained for two weeks , before spending a total of 18 weeks on the chart . On the Swiss Singles Chart , " Express Yourself " was one of the highest debuting song on the issued dated June 11 , 1989 . After seven weeks , the song reached the top of the chart for one week , becoming Madonna 's third number @-@ one single there .

= = Music video = =

= = = Development = = =

The music video was directed by David Fincher and filmed in April 1989 , at Culver Studios in Culver City , California . It was produced by Gregg Fienberg , under Propaganda Films , with editing by Scott Chestnut , principal photography by Mark Plummer , and Vance Lorenzini as the production designer . " Express Yourself " music video was inspired by the Fritz Lang classic film Metropolis (1927) , and featured an epigraph at the end of the video from the film : " Without the Heart , there can be no understanding between the hand and the mind " . The video marked the first appearance of the Shep Pettibone remix of the song . It had a total budget of \$ 5 million (\$ 9 @.@ 54 million in 2016 dollars) , which made it the most expensive music video in history at the time it was made , and currently the third most expensive of all time . " Express Yourself " had its world @-@ premiere on May 17 , 1989 , on MTV and was an MTV exclusive for three weeks , being aired every hour on the music channel . The concept of the video was to portray Madonna as a glamorous lady and chained masochist , with muscular men acting as her workers . In the end , she picks one of them ? played by model Cameron Alborzian ? as her date . When Fincher explained this concept to Madonna , she was intrigued and decided to portray a masculine persona . She was dating actor Warren Beatty at that time , and asked him to play the part of a slave working at a factory ; Beatty politely refused , saying later that " Madonna wanted the video as a show case of her sexual prowess , I never wanted to be a part of it . " She then thought about Metropolis and of its scenes displaying factory workers and a city with tall skyscrapers . Fincher liked the concept and it became the main backdrop for the video . In Madonna ' Talking ' : Madonna in Her Own Words , she commented about the development of the video .

This one I had the most amount of input . I oversaw everything ? the building of the sets , everyone 's costumes , I had meetings with make @-@ up and hair and the cinematographer , everybody . Casting , finding the right cat ? just every aspect . Kind of like making a little movie . We basically sat down and just threw out all every idea we could possibly conceive of and of all the things we wanted . All the imagery we wanted ? and I had a few set ideas , for instance the cat and the idea of Metropolis . I definitely wanted to have that influence , that look on all the men ? the workers , diligently , methodically working away .

Madonna mentioned jokingly in a 1990 BBC Television interview on the program Omnibus , that the main theme of the video and the cat metaphor represented that " Pussy rules the world " . She added that the idea of the cat licking the milk and then pour it over , was the director 's . " It 's great but believe me I fought him on that . I didn 't want to do it . I thought it 's just so over the top and silly and kind of cliched , an art student or a film student 's kind of trick . I 'm glad that I gave in to him . "

= = = Synopsis = = =

The video opens with the view of a city populated with skyscrapers , intermingling railway lines and aero @-@ crafts . Steam blows out of the funnels of a factory as big machines are shown . Madonna , wearing black lingerie , appears on the back of a statue of an angry looking swan , and utters the line : " Come on girls , do you believe in love ? " This is followed by the chorus , showing the interiors of the factory where the workers slave at the machines , as rain pour incessantly on them . Amidst the smoke filled environment , the chiseled torso of the male workers are shown , as they strip off their shirts , with water splashing all around . Madonna is then shown in a light @-@ green gown , holding a black cat in her lap , looking across the factory from her sitting room of her penthouse office . As she sings the first verse , the workers perform choreographed dance routine inside the factory . Madonna lies down on a sofa and the cat escapes from her lap , as her singing reaches the owner of the factory , through a series of speakers . He becomes nervous hearing her voice and looks down to find one of the workers staring up and looking for the source of the voice .

With the beginning of the second verse , Madonna moves into her bedroom , wearing a very feminine lingerie looking outfit . She moves behind different white screens and dances in suggestive manner , her silhouette reflecting it from the other side of the screens . In the meantime the worker continues to think about Madonna 's voice and dreams of her eyes amidst smokes . He then sees Madonna standing atop a long flight of stairs inside the factory , wearing a pinstripe suit and displaying a monocle glass . She dances on a platform , holding her crotch sometimes , and briefly tears open her jacket to exposes her bra , as two men pull at levers beside the steps . In the meantime , the owner of the factory listens to live musicians in his room , with a remote control , as Madonna is shown lying naked on her bed , with one end of a chain attached to her neck , the other end going long down into the factory . As the owner leers at the musicians in the room , the worker is shown caressing Madonna 's cat , while looking up expectantly towards her room . Perhaps the owner in a suit is Madonna 's husband and she is trying to escape him .

As the final verse of the song begins , a soaked Madonna , wearing the same black lingerie , like a stalking cat , is shown crawling on the floor among her furniture , like under the table with lightning flashing , along with a brief scene through a clear globe held up by 3 male statues , the scene interspersed with Madonna sitting on a sofa and smoking . The worker ultimately gets up from his steel bed and , carrying Madonna 's cat , walks towards Madonna 's room as she reaches for a bowl of milk , and licks it like a cat . She pours it over her shoulder and it reaches the worker 's face , who travels up the building in an elevator , holding her cat , on a quest to return it . A boxing / wrestling match starts among the other workers of the factory , as a seemingly vulnerable Madonna , acting like a cat , is now shown sitting naked on her bed . The worker reaches her room , returns her cat , takes her into his arm , and makes love to her as the door closes behind them . The owner of the factory using the same monocle glass sees the empty position where the worker was and looks up at both the worker and Madonna , who are having sex . He seems to have lost control of the factory and Madonna with another man , but he doesn 't mind . The video ends with a last shot of the city @-@ line , with Madonna 's eyes above the sky , and over the city which may show that she had

control all along , and the epigraph on top of a series of gears . It ends with a quote , " Without the heart , there can be no understanding between the hand and the mind " .

= = = Reception and analysis = = =

Authors Santiago Fouz @-@ Hernández and Freya Jarman @-@ Ivens commented that " the video portrayed the deconstructive gender @-@ bending approach associated with free play and self @-@ reflexivity of images in postmodernism . " They had initially thought the video as a feminist approach to sexuality , leading them to say that " the video might also relate to several core political questions raised by feminism . " However , they deduced that the scenes showing Madonna in a seductive manner and chained to her bed do not portray women in an empowering position , but emphasizes the fact that women can be in control because of their sexual prowess . Jarman @-@ Ivens added that the epigraph establishes the status @-@ quo , with a clear distinction of the body (workers , hand , labors) and the mind (elite , intellect capital) . Unlike Metropolis , where the line denoted the binary oppositions of the labor class against the elitist , in the video Madonna did not distinguish between the two . Jarman @-@ Ivens noted that the video portrayed both men and women being looked at , actively or passively . The body and the hand are not separate there , instead the heart , hand and head are portrayed as a balance in everybody , male or female . Scholar Theodore Gracyk also noted of the initial portrayal of female sexuality in the video , in his book , *I Wanna Be Me : Rock Music and the Politics of Identity* , and criticized the video for its portrayal of male domination . However , on close inspection , Gracyk came to the conclusion that " *Express Yourself* " was a smart move for Madonna , as it actually portrayed women in a much stronger position . Author John Evan Seery wrote in his book *Political Theory for Mortals* , that " Madonna with her ' *Express Yourself* ' video splicing together images of machines with images of sex , ... represents the ultimate cyborg of late twentieth @-@ century America . " Allen Metz felt that the scenes of Madonna grabbing her crotch and dancing were reminiscent of " Michael Jackson 's androgynous imitation of phallic masculinity . " He went on to compliment the video for its gender @-@ bending depiction .

Michelle Gibson and Deborah Townsend Meem , authors of *Femme / Butch* , commended the video for showing a shift in power between the sexes , declaring that " Madonna assertively claimed all possible gender space like Marlene Dietrich . " Professor Carol Vernallis noted in her book , *Experiencing Music Video* that the diffused light around Madonna in the video was adopted to mimic the diffusion of sound and make the borders around Madonna appear soft , and her body spread outwards . In the book *The 1980s* , authors Bob Batchelor and Scott Stoddart called " *Express Yourself* " as one of Madonna 's most challenging videos . They noted the video for its " exploitation " of the male body and sexualizing them as an object of desire . The authors also added that the video " was a colorful homage to the term gaze , but Madonna is the bearer of it ? not men . " Batchelor explained that the scenes of Madonna performing alone in her room and atop the stairs suggested that she was the object of the gaze , however it seemed to them that she was mocking the movement of the men below . " She controls the mind of the men below , with a form of siren 's song of female empowerment , signalling that the men do move in unison to her song " , Stoddart concluded . Elizabeth Edwards , one of the authors of *Visual Sense : A Cultural Reader* , explained that the shot of Madonna crawling on the floor , while another image of hers watches from a nearby sofa , illustrated the mutation that Madonna 's image was undergoing . According to her , Madonna was acting out self @-@ consciousness by " watching herself " . She concluded by saying , " ' *Express Yourself* ' gives its viewers a whole new series of image references to traditional American gendered and sexual icons ? male and female ? and a whole new level of irony . " Shari Benstock and Suzanne Ferriss , authors of *On Fashion* , deconstructed the video for its display of the artificiality of images of gender . Sal Cinquemani from *Slant Magazine* reviewed the video in 2003 , and commented that the video " is the embodiment of ' queer chic ' , a bombastic masterpiece that heralds Madonna 's uncanny ability to use her consumer @-@ driven image to code her feminist politics . "

At the 1989 MTV Video Music Awards , " *Express Yourself* " was nominated in the categories of

Best Female Video , Best Editing , Best Cinematography , Best Direction and Best Art Direction , winning the last three categories . Billboard also honored the video as the Best Music Video of the year , at their Music Video Awards for 1989 . The music video of " Express Yourself " is ranked at number one on Slant Magazine 's " 100 Greatest Music Videos " . It is also placed at number ten on both Rolling Stone 's " The 100 Top Music Videos " and MTV 's " 100 Greatest Videos Ever Made " , as well as number three on MuchMusic 's list of " Top 100 Videos of The Century " . David Dale from Sydney Morning Herald listed it as one of the Most Influential Videos of All Time , at number 18 . Time magazine listed it at number eight on their countdown of The 30 @-@ All Time Best Music Videos .

= = Live performances = =

Madonna 's first live performance of " Express Yourself " was at the 1989 MTV Video Music Awards . She started the performance by descending from a flight of stairs , wearing a pin @-@ striped suit and a monocle . Later she removed the coat to reveal her bustier , and together with her backup singers Niki Haris and Donna De Lory , performed a dance routine called voguing . Ian Inglis , author of Performance and Popular Music : History , Place and Time noted that the historical importance of Madonna 's performance at the Video Music Awards was due to the televisual venue . Inglis explained that since Madonna 's performance was striking primarily as a high @-@ energy , provocatively choreographed , dance production number , it went on to highlight the ' TV ' part of MTV , and in a way heralded her and the network as a cultural arbiter .

Madonna included the song in the set list of her Blond Ambition World Tour in 1990 , which featured a version based on the Non @-@ Stop Express remix of the song and included lyrics from " Everybody " during the introduction . The set was inspired by Metropolis and the themes were taken from the factory seen in the music video . It included a number of funnels billowing smoke , steel piping , cables hanging above and a flight of stairs in the middle . As the show started , the set was hurled onstage and Madonna 's male dancers , with bare torso , appeared behind the steel structures . They did a choreographed routine on the stage , and towards the end Madonna appeared atop the flight of stairs . She was dressed in a pin @-@ striped suit with holes cut in it , so that her brassiere poked out of them . Underneath she wore a peach colored corset with a pointed conical bra , designed by Jean Paul Gaultier . She also held a monocle in her hand . Accompanied by her two female dancers dressed in a similar attire , Madonna did a straightforward vocal rendition of the track , and an elaborate choreography , which included voguing , humping , simulated masturbation and momentary storage of the performers ' microphone inside their bras . At one point Madonna opened the suit , to reveal the corset with the bra , and tassels hanging from its sides . Two different performances were taped and released on video , the Blond Ambition ? Japan Tour 90 , taped in Yokohama , Japan , on April 27 , 1990 , and the Live ! ? Blond Ambition World Tour 90 , taped in Nice , France , on August 5 , 1990 . It was also one of the performances included in the documentary , Madonna : Truth or Dare (1990) .

She also performed a disco @-@ styled version of the song during The Girlie Show World Tour in 1993 . The stage was decked in Mylar curtains and glittering disco balls . The performance began with a distorted voice claiming " I 'm gonna take you to a place you 've never been before " . Afterwards , Madonna descended from the ceiling on a giant disco ball , wearing a blond afro wig , 1970 's style halters and royal blue bell @-@ bottom pants . Then her two back @-@ up dancers appeared on the stage and the three women started singing the song together . The end of the performance was connected to the next song , " Deeper and Deeper " . According to Guilbert , Madonna was inspired by actress Marlene Dietrich in the 1932 film Blonde Venus for the performance . It was included on The Girlie Show ? Live Down Under home video release , recorded on November 19 , 1993 , at Sydney , Australia . " Express Yourself " was included in the military segment of the Re @-@ Invention World Tour in 2004 , with the opening line altered to " Come on boys ! " . She and her dancers were dressed in military gear and performed a rifle choreography , with Madonna acting as a sergeant . As Drew Sterwald from News Press noted , the song in its military version was talking about both personal love , as well as patriotic love . Jon Pareles of The

New York Times commented that the song was contravened as cynical , when Madonna sang the line , " What you need is a big , strong hand / To lift you to your higher ground " , and raised a rifle above her head . Author Dirk Timmerman pointed out that " in the context of the show , with [war @-@ induced] performances like ' American Life ' and ' Imagine ' , it added to the anti @-@ war message of the tour . " In 2008 , during the Sticky & Sweet Tour , she performed " Express Yourself " as the request song in some of her shows , including the show at Madison Square Garden in New York .

In 2012 , she performed an excerpt of the song at the Super Bowl XLVI Halftime Show with Cee Lo Green and a large marching band . That same year , " Express Yourself " was included on the MDNA Tour where it was given a majorette theme and was the opening song of the show 's second segment titled Prophecy , where a mix of joyful songs that " bring people together " were performed . Madonna appeared onstage and sang the song dressed in a white majorette uniform with ruby @-@ red stripes and knee @-@ high white boots designed by Miu Miu , while her female back @-@ up dancers wore similar costumes in red . During the performance she also twirled a baton and walked around the stage leading a group of back @-@ up dancers who played the drums and acted the role of a marching band . Halfway through the song , Madonna sang the chorus of Lady Gaga 's " Born This Way " , as the chord progression and melody of " Born This Way " was heavily compared to that of " Express Yourself " upon its release , many speculated that Madonna was " dissing " Gaga and the song . Towards the end of the performance Madonna also sang the chorus of her own song " She 's Not Me " from her eleventh studio album Hard Candy (2008) . Critics were positive towards the performance , Melissa Ruggieri from Access Atlanta felt that by singing the chorus of Lady Gaga 's " Born This Way " while performing " Express Yourself " , Madonna was " proving how it swipes the same melody line , then twisted the knife in that perfectly Madonna way by adding the chorus of her own ' She 's Not Me ' " . The performance was included in the live album MDNA World Tour released on September 6 , 2013 but the " Born This Way " sample was not credited in the album 's liner notes .

= = Cover versions and usage in media = =

Kelly Clarkson performed " Express Yourself " on her first audition for the first season of singing television series American Idol . She went on to win the competition and built a successful music career . The 1999 compilation album , Virgin Voices : A Tribute To Madonna , Vol . 1 , features a cover version by Information Society . The Chipettes released a cover version of the song (with two brief lines sung by Alvin and the Chipmunks) for the 1991 album The Chipmunks Rock the House . In 2010 , the female leads of the Fox TV show Glee performed the song in the episode titled " The Power of Madonna " . When the fictional character Will Schuester observes a cheer leading group in the episode performing a routine with stilts to Madonna 's " Ray of Light " , he is inspired to set a Madonna @-@ themed assignment for the members of the fictional Glee club , New Directions . To this , the female members of the club perform " Express Yourself " , much to the uneasiness of the male members . This version was released on the soundtrack album Glee : The Music , The Power of Madonna , and reached number 132 on the UK Singles Chart . Nearly 30 years after the " Like a Prayer " controversy , " Express Yourself " was featured in a Pepsi commercial for Super Bowl 50 . Chad Stubbs , the VP marketing of Pepsi , explained the song choose , " It was within that album and era that we had worked with Madonna before . "

= = Legacy = =

" Express Yourself " is noted both for its song and its accompanying music video , both of which are considered feminist odes to freedom . As author María José Coperiás Aguilar wrote in her book Culture and Power , the release of the song was in context of the anti @-@ feminist or the " backlash " ideology dominant in the US , since the rise of the " New Right " in the 1980s and the government of Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush . Aguilar went on to explain that the 1980s and the 1990s were characterized by a conservative reaction against the ? excesses ? of the 1960s

and 70s . This reaction was channeled mainly by the media 's strong attacks against feminism , generally describing activists as " tortured people with hairy legs " , " radical , bitter , man @-@ hating , separatist and lesbian " , accompanied by messages advocating a feminization of women that turned them into beautiful ornamental objects , and tended to increase the cultural differences between the sexes . " Express Yourself " appeared as a refutation of some of these reactionary premises . The title , Aguilar noted , seemed to raise the question of the urgency of a feminine voice to develop and emerge ? a concern that recalled the tradition of French feminists like H       Cixous and Luce Irigaray .

The video stood out conspicuously to Aguilar for its chaotic texture through the rapid editing of the multiple shots that constituted it . The sudden and continuous changes of camera angles , scenes and the distance and mood seemed to produce an " apparently incoherent combination of images that offered no stable anchor to provide the whole with a definitive interpretation " , she added . Since chaos has traditionally been associated with the female ontogenetic principle as opposed to male principle of order , the video in turn came to be associated with duality between order / chaos , male / female , good / evil , light / dark etc . Aguilar also drew parallel between Metropolis and the music video . Madonna borrowed different phallic symbolism from the film , including the smoke @-@ billowing chimneys , the tall skyscrapers and the oppressive environment of industrial work . However , unlike Metropolis which portrayed repression of a rebellious proletariat , the chaotic nature of " Express Yourself " video showed freedom instead . Caryn James from The New York Times added that " asked about the video , [Madonna] made a distinction that any honest feminist would respect , however politically incorrect it may seem . ' I have chained myself ' , she said . ' There wasn 't a man that put that chain on me . ' You don 't have to buy Madonna 's next loopy bit of symbolism ? ' I was chained to my desires ' ? to believe the feminist subtext she finds in the video . ' I do everything by my own volition . I 'm in charge , O.K. ' Madonna in chains , though , is far removed from those unfortunate women who don 't know that they have options . " Madonna also complained about the feminist criticisms of her " crotch @-@ grabbing " , saying that " if male singers like Michael Jackson can get away with it , why can 't women ? " Theorist Douglas Kellner further asserted that the video was a feminist critique of male fighting and brutality , with images of the male workers engaged in a boxing match at the end . According to him , Madonna deliberately appropriated traditional feminine images in the beginning of the video , but contrasted them with her " crotch @-@ hugging " male poses near the end , and discordant images of women assuming the male position . As feminist author Susan Bordo pointed out , " it is the postmodern nature of the video that has most entranced academic critics , and its various ways of constituting identities that refuse stability , that remain fluid , that resist definition . "

" Express Yourself " is also notable for its influence on numerous music artists . Spice Girls member Melanie C said " Madonna was doing the girl power thing a long time before the Spice Girls ... ' Express Yourself ' is one of the routines that I know and I used to really like doing that one because it is where she shows her bra and holds her crotch . " In 2010 , singer Christina Aguilera paid tribute to " Express Yourself " with the music video of her single , " Not Myself Tonight " . She commented " One of my favorite videos ever is ' Express Yourself ' by Madonna which came across as really strong and empowering which I always try to incorporate through my expression of sexuality ... I love the direct reference I made to Madonna with the eye glass moment and the smoke and stairs . I was paying tribute to a very strong woman who has paved the way before . " James Montgomery from MTV deemed " Express Yourself " as the primary influence of Aguilera 's video with scenes like Aguilera displaying a monocle , standing atop a flight of stairs and crawling across the floor while pouring a black liquid over herself . Similarities were also noted between " Express Yourself " and singer Lady Gaga 's 2011 single " Born This Way " both in subject matter and composition . " I certainly think [Gaga] references me a lot in her work , " Madonna said in the ABC interview . " And sometimes I think it 's amusing and flattering and well @-@ done . When I heard [' Born This Way '] on the radio ... I said , ' that sounds very familiar . " Gaga herself addressed the comparisons on The Tonight Show with Jay Leno , explaining that she had received an e @-@ mail from Madonna 's representatives , who had mentioned their support for " Born This Way " . CNN later reported that Madonna 's representatives were not aware that the singer , or her team , had sent Gaga an e @-@

mail regarding the situation . When accused of plagiarism by the media , Gaga addressed the comparisons to " Express Yourself " in an interview with NME by saying : " If you put the songs next to each other , side by side , the only similarities are the chord progression . It 's the same one that has been in disco music for the last 50 years . Just because I 'm the first fucking artist in 25 years to think of putting it on Top 40 radio , it doesn 't mean I 'm a plagiarist , it means I 'm fucking smart . Sorry . "

= = Track listing and formats = =

= = Credits and personnel = =

Madonna ? songwriter , producer , vocals
Stephen Bray ? songwriter , producer , remixer , arranger
Bob Rosa ? engineering
Fred McFarlane ? programming
Bob Ludwig ? mastering
Bill Bottrell ? mixing
Shep Pettibone ? arranger , remixer
Herb Ritts ? cover art photographer
Kama Logan ? typography
Jeri Heiden ? cover art designer
Credits and personnel adapted from Like a Prayer album liner notes .

= = Charts and certifications = =

= = Certifications = =