

# No.1 Like a Prayer

Like a Prayer, 1989

**E**VER SINCE HER EARLY DAYS, Madonna has been obsessed with the taboo connection between sex and spirituality. She tapped into that idea for her greatest song, the 1989 gospel-disco smash “Like a Prayer.” When Madonna testifies, “I’m down on my knees/I wanna take you there,” she could be singing about praying or oral sex or – most likely – both. As she told *ROLLING STONE* at the time, “I pray when

I’m in trouble or when I’m happy. When I feel any kind of extreme.” It wouldn’t be Madonna’s style to drop such a personal song without a huge scandal to go with it. But even by her standards, “Like a Prayer” stirred up some controversy. The song debuted as a soft-drink ad – except the entire ad campaign was instantly torpedoed once the world got a look at the video. It’s a cleavage-and-blasphemy cocktail where Madonna visits a Catholic church, has hot sex with a black-saint statue, dances in front of burning crosses and experiences stigmata. Yet somehow, the video is nowhere near as shocking as the song itself – all of Madonna’s musical and emotional extremes, packed into five roof-shaking minutes.

**SHE’LL TAKE YOU THERE**  
At a 1989 photo shoot to promote “Like a Prayer.”

