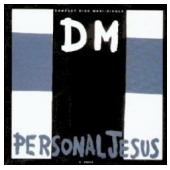
Depeche Mode - Personal Jesus

Depeche Mode's breakthrough single in the U.S. was based on a surprising source: Priscilla Presley's 1985 biography **Elvis and Me.** *“It's about how Elvis was her man and her mentor and how often that happens in love relationships,”* Martin Gore, the song's composer, said:
“How everybody's heart is like a god in some way, and that's not a very balanced view of someone, is it?”

Personal Jesus

“Personal Jesus” is Depeche Mode’s 23rd UK single, released on 29 August 1989, and the first single from the album Violator. The single reached No. 13 on the UK Singles Chart and No. 28 on the Billboard Hot 100. In Germany, the single is the band's longest charting song, staying on the country's Singles Chart for 27 weeks.



Personal Jesus, cover

When **Depeche Mode's** original members united in 1980, in the working-class London suburb Basildon, they gravitated toward synthesizers and drum machines in part because they were easy to carry around and didn't require amplifiers. In fact, they took the train to their early gigs in local pubs.

Depeche Mode 1984

Dave Gahan, Alan Wilder, Andrew Fletcher, Martin Gore

Whereas a more traditional four-piece rock band might feature three members playing instruments and the fourth singing and perhaps playing guitar or bass, the lineup of this British group — whose name was inspired by a French fashion magazine — was described like this in a 1993 press release: *"Dave (Gahan) is the singer, Martin (Gore) the songwriter, Alan (Wilder) the musician, and Andrew (Fletcher) the coordinator."*

Depeche Mode

In 1984 the band released the critically and commercially groundbreaking "Some Great Reward" (Number 51), whose songs ranged from the bitter and shocking "Blasphemous Rumours" to "People Are People," a catchy plea for tolerance that went to Number 13 in the U.S., where Depeche Mode had previously been considered an obscure alternative act.

Depeche Mode

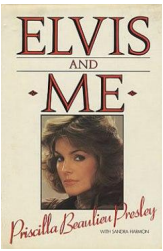
In spite of its success in America, where they were selling out arenas, Depeche Mode didn't have another U.S. hit until "Personal Jesus", its first gold single. Violator, the album that single introduced, also yielded the group's first Top 10 single, "Enjoy the Silence" (Number 8, 1990). Songs of Faith and Devotion (1993) was heralded by critics as a bold foray into warmer musical textures and more spiritual imagery. It also entered the American pop album chart at Number One.

Personal Jesus

In mid-1989, the band began recording in Milan, Italy. The result of this session was the single “ **Personal Jesus”,**
which featured a catchy bluesy riff and drum-based sound, radically different from anything the band had released thus far. Whilst not the first Depeche Mode song to feature guitar parts, it was the first time a guitar was used as a dominant instrument in a Depeche Mode song.

Album Violator

Gore's lyric was one of his simplest ever -- apparently inspired by Priscilla Presley's depiction of her life with Elvis -- but was delivered by Gahan with strutting, sly panache and power. Prior to its release, advertisements were placed in the personal columns of regional newspapers in the UK with the words *"Your own personal Jesus."* Later, the ads included a phone number one could dial to hear the song.



Elvis and Me by Priscilla Presley

Johnny Cash did a stripped-down version on his 2002 album American IV, The Man Comes Around. Martin Gore revealed to The London Times that the band were unaware that Cash had covered this song. When they heard about the Country legend's recording, the threesome were naturally thrilled. Said Gore: *"I think when you're somebody of Johnny Cash's caliber, you don't ask for permission."*

Johnny Cash

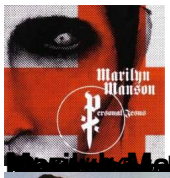
Cash explained why he chose to cover this song (as quoted in Mojo October 2013) *"I heard that as a gospel song. And if you think of it as a gospel song, it works really well. We didn't have any major disagreement over that song, I just heard that a couple of people had recorded it, the writer wanted me to try it, and I did, and I loved it. And I went for it."*

Johnny Cash - Personal Jesus

Marilyn Manson covered this on their 2004 album Lest We Forget. The cover does not deviate in any large degree from Depeche Mode's original version, apart from additional guitar distortion. Manson speaks: *"It could have been a farewell to music for me because I was getting very frustrated with my ability to get across my ideas. I got to the point where I was thinking about maybe this should be it for me, but then while I was putting all these songs together I started realising what had shaped my career - my singles, politics and religion - and I heard Personal Jesus on the radio. It was done in the same year that we started the band, but it had a whole different meaning to me this time."*

Marilyn Manson

In 2004, **"Personal Jesus"** was ranked No. 368 in Rolling Stone's list of "The 500 Greatest Songs of All Time", and in September 2006 it was voted as one of the "100 Greatest Songs Ever" in Q magazine.



Depeche Mode