Bette Davis Eyes

(Kim Carnes)

[Verse 1]
Her hair is Harlow gold
Her lips sweet surprise
Her hands are never cold
She's got Bette Davis eyes

She'll turn her music on you
You won't have to think twice
She's pure as New York snow
She's got Bette Davis eyes

[Chorus #1]
And she'll tease you
She'll unease you
All the better just to please you
She's precocious and she knows just
What it takes to make a pro blush
She got Greta Garbo stand off sighs
She's got Bette Davis eyes

[Verse 2]
She'll let you take her home
It whets her appetite
She'll lay you on her throne
She's got Bette Davis eyes

She'll take a tumble on you
Roll you like you were dice
Until you come out blue
She's got Bette Davis eyes

[Chorus #2]
She'll expose you
When she snows you
Off your feet with the crumbs she throws you
She's ferocious and she knows just
What it takes to make a pro blush
All the boys think she's a spy
She's got Bette Davis eyes

And she'll tease you
She'll unease you
All the better just to please you
She's precocious and she knows just
What it takes to make a pro blush
All the boys think she's a spy
She's got Bette Davis eyes

She'll tease you
She'll unease you
Just to please ya
She's got Bette Davis eyes

She'll expose you
When she snows you
She knows ya
She's got Bette Davis eyes

Bette Davis Eyes was written in 1974 by Donna Weiss and Jackie DeShannon. DeShannon recorded the song that same year on her album New Arrangement. In this original incarnation, the track is performed in an "R&B lite" arrangement, featuring a prominent uptempo piano part, as well as flourishes of pedal steel guitar and horns. However, it was not until 1981, when Kim Carnes recorded her version of the song in a radically different synthesizer-based arrangement, that "Bette Davis Eyes" became a commercial success.

The Carnes version spent nine non-consecutive weeks on top of the US Billboard Hot 100 (interrupted for one week by the "Stars on 45 Medley") and was Billboard's biggest hit of the year for 1981. The single also reached No. 5 on Billboard's Top Tracks charts and No. 26 on the Dance charts. The song won the Grammy Awards for Song of the Year and Record of the Year. The song was also a number one hit in 21 countries and peaked at number 10 in the United Kingdom, her only Top 40 hit there to date.

According to producer Val Garay, the original demo of the tune that was brought to him sounded like "a Leon Russell track, with this beer-barrel polka piano part." The demo can be heard in a Val Garay interview on TAXI TV at 21:50. Keyboardist Bill Cuomo came up with the signature synth riff, using the Sequential Circuits Prophet-5 synthesizer, which now defines Carnes's version. The song was recorded in the studio on the first take.

Bette Davis, then 73 years old, wrote letters to Carnes, Weiss, and DeShannon to thank all three of them for making her "a part of modern times," and said her grandson now looked up to her. After their Grammy wins, Davis sent them roses as well.

The song was ranked at number 12 on Billboard's list of the top 100 songs in the first 50 years of the Billboard Hot 100 chart. Cleopatra Records released a re-recording of the song as a single in 2007.

There is much confusion over whether the lyrics are "she knows just what it takes to make a crow blush" or "... pro blush". Jackie DeShannon sings "crow" in her version, and Kim Carnes recorded it as "pro." The phrase "could make a crow blush" is an early 20th-century Midwestern United States colloquialism meaning that one could unease someone with little effort, perhaps the arranger of Carnes's version was unfamiliar with the term. Others have misheard the lyrics as "she knows just what it takes to makes a girl blush," suggesting a bisexual undertone, although this was unintended by either DeShannon or Weiss.