

Rebel Rebel

(David Bowie)

{Intro}

Doo doo doo-doo doo doo doo doo
Doo doo doo-doo doo doo doo doo
Doo doo doo-doo doo doo doo doo

You've got your mother in a whirl
She's not sure if you're a boy or a girl
Hey babe, your hair's alright
Hey babe, let's go out tonight
You like me, and I like it all
We like dancing and we look divine
You love bands when they're playing hard
You want more and you want it fast
They put you down, they say I'm wrong
You tacky thing, you put them on

Rebel Rebel, you've torn your dress
Rebel Rebel, your face is a mess
Rebel Rebel, how could they know?
Hot tramp, I love you so!

{Bridge}

Don't ya?
Doo doo doo-doo doo doo doo doo

You've got your mother in a whirl cause
she's
Not sure if you're a boy or a girl
Hey babe, your hair's alright
Hey babe, let's stay out tonight
You like me, and I like it all
We like dancing and we look divine
You love bands when they're playing hard
You want more and you want it fast
They put you down, they say I'm wrong
You tacky thing, you put them on

Rebel Rebel, you've torn your dress
Rebel Rebel, your face is a mess

Rebel Rebel, how could they know?
Hot tramp, I love you so!

Don't ya?
Oh?
Doo doo doo-doo doo doo doo doo
Doo doo doo-doo doo doo doo doo

Rebel Rebel, you've torn your dress
Rebel Rebel, your face is a mess
Rebel Rebel, how could they know?
Hot tramp, I love you so!

{Bridge}

You've torn your dress, your face is a mess
You can't get enough, but enough ain't the
test
You've got your transmission and your live
wire
You got your cue line and a handful of ludes
You wanna be there when they count up the
dudes
And I love your dress
You're a juvenile success
Because your face is a mess
So how could they know?
I said, how could they know?

So what you wanna know
Calamity's child, chi-chi, chi-chi
Where'd you wanna go?
What can I do for you? Looks like you've
been there too
Cause you've torn your dress
And your face is a mess
Ooo, your face is a mess
Ooo, ooo, so how could they know?
Eh, eh, how could they know?
Eh, eh

"Rebel Rebel" was released in 1974 as a single from the album *Diamond Dogs*. Cited as his most-covered track, it has been described as being effectively Bowie's farewell to the glam rock movement that he had helped pioneer, as well as being a proto-punk track.

Originally written for an aborted Ziggy Stardust musical in late 1973, "Rebel Rebel" – completed in January 1974 and released the following month – was Bowie's last single in the glam rock style that had been his trademark. It was also his first hit since 1969 not to feature lead guitarist Mick Ronson; Bowie himself played guitar on this and almost all other tracks from *Diamond Dogs*, producing what NME critics Roy Carr and Charles Shaar Murray called "a rocking dirty noise that owed as much to Keith Richards as it did to the departed Ronno".

The song is notable for its gender-bending lyrics ("You got your mother in a whirl / She's not sure if you're a boy or a girl") as well as its distinctive riff, which rock journalist Kris Needs has described as "a classic stick-in-the-head like the Stones' 'Satisfaction'". Bowie himself later said, "It's a fabulous riff! Just fabulous! When I stumbled onto it, it was 'Oh, thank you!'"

The single quickly became a glam anthem, the female equivalent of Bowie's earlier hit for Mott the Hoople, "All the Young Dudes". It reached No. 5 in the UK and No. 64 in the USA. The single and album versions, released three months apart, feature slightly different mixes.

The US release initially featured a different recording altogether, a radically revised mix that Bowie cut in New York in April 1974. The US single, credited to simply 'Bowie', is shorter (2:58) and more uptempo, dense and camp than the UK single, featuring percussion by Geoff MacCormack, an original backing vocal line, and a new arrangement. Within a couple of months it was withdrawn and replaced by the UK single version, but the same arrangement was used on Bowie's North American tour in 1974, appearing on the concert album *David Live*.

After retiring the song on his 1990 *Sound+Vision* Tour, Bowie brought "Rebel Rebel" back for the 1999 *Hours* promotional tour. In early 2003, Bowie recorded a new version of the song, featuring an arrangement by Mark Plati and without the reference to *Quaaludes* present in the original. This was issued on a bonus disc that came with some versions of the *Reality* album the same year, and on the 30th Anniversary Edition of *Diamond Dogs* in 2004. Also in 2004, the track was blended in a mash-up with the *Reality* song "Never Get Old"; the result was issued as the single "Rebel Never Gets Old".