

## Roxanne

(The Police)

Ah ha ha ha

[Verse 1]

Roxanne

You don't have to put on the red  
light Those days are over  
You don't have to sell your body to  
the night Roxanne  
You don't have to wear that dress  
tonight Walk the streets for money  
You don't care if it's wrong or if it's  
right

[Pre-Chorus]

Roxanne

You don't have to put on the red  
light Roxanne  
You don't have to put on the red light

[Chorus]

(Roxanne) Put on the red  
light (Roxanne) Put on the  
red light (Roxanne) Put on  
the red light (Roxanne)  
Put on the red light  
(Roxanne) Put on the red  
light Oh

[Verse 2]

I loved you since I  
knew ya I wouldn't talk  
down to ya  
I have to tell you just how I feel

I won't share you with  
another boy I know my mind  
is made up  
So put away your make up  
Told you once I won't tell you again  
it's a bad way

[Pre-Chorus]

Roxanne

You don't have to put on the red light  
Roxanne  
You don't have to put on the red light

[Chorus]

(Roxanne) You don't have to put on  
the red light  
(Roxanne) Put on the red  
light (Roxanne) Put on the  
red light (Roxanne) Put on  
the red light (Roxanne)  
Put on the red light  
(Roxanne) Put on the red  
light (Roxanne) Put on the  
red light (Roxanne) Put on  
the red light (Roxanne)  
Put on the red light  
(Roxanne) Put on the red  
light  
(Roxanne) You don't have to put on  
the red light  
(Roxanne) Put on the red  
light (Roxanne) Put on the  
red light (Roxanne) Put on  
the red light (Roxanne)  
Put on the red light

"Roxanne" was written by lead singer and bassist Sting, the song was released in April 1978 as a single from the The Police's debut album *Outlandos d'Amour*. It was written from the point of view of a man who falls in love with a prostitute. On re-release in 1979, the song peaked at number 12 on the UK Singles Chart.

The song ranked No. 388 on the Rolling Stone's "500 Greatest Songs of All Time" and was voted No. 85 by VH1 on its list of the "100 Greatest Rock Songs".

In 2008, "Roxanne" was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame.

Police lead singer Sting wrote the song, inspired by the prostitutes he saw near the band's seedy hotel in Paris, France, where the Police were lodged in October 1977 to perform at the Nashville Club. The song's title comes from the name of the character in the play *Cyrano de Bergerac*, an old poster of which was hanging in the hotel foyer.

Sting had originally conceived the song as a bossa nova, although he credits Police drummer Stewart Copeland for suggesting its final rhythmic form as a tango. During recording, Sting accidentally sat down on a piano keyboard in the studio, resulting in the atonal piano chord and laughter preserved at the beginning of the track. The Police were initially diffident about the song, but Miles Copeland III was immediately enthusiastic after hearing it; he became their manager and got them their first record deal with A&M Records.

We went into Surrey Sound Studios and it was working pretty well. We recorded a few tracks, one of which I wrote more or less as a throwaway. That was 'Roxanne', I didn't think much more about it until we played the album to Miles Copeland who is, of course, Stewart's brother and a bit of an entrepreneur, though he'd never been particularly interested in The Police. In fact, he'd kept away from it to say the least. He did come along to the sessions while we were putting the first album together but more or less just to offer brotherly advice to Stewart. He heard the album and quite liked it. When we got to Roxanne, we were a bit embarrassed because the song was a bit of an anachronism, because compared with our usual material it was slow, quiet and melodic. Far from saying he thought it was a piece of shit, he said it was amazing. I thought, 'He likes this song. This is fantastic!

— Sting, *A Visual Documentary*, 1978

The song's international success spurred a UK re-release of "Roxanne" in April 1979. This re-release of the song was a hit, reaching number 12 in the UK Singles Chart. A live solo version performed by Sting from the 1982 album *The Secret Policeman's Other Ball* received moderate airplay on album-oriented rock radio and reached number 28 on the Billboard Top Tracks chart. The song went on to become a staple of Sting's performances during his solo career, and it was performed when The Police reunited in 2003 for their induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.