

TUNE INTO ENGLISH

Aretha Franklin's Respect

La canzone composta da Otis Redding che fece conoscere al mondo intero l'incredibile voce di Aretha Franklin in realtà aveva un tono fortemente maschilista. Tuttavia, la cantante modificò il testo e la musica per trasformarla in un potente inno femminista.

LOWER INTERMEDIATE B1

ON CD 18

GLOSSARY

- 1 solo: da solista
- 2 to release: pubblicare
- 3 somewhat: alquanto
- 4 housewife: casalinga
- 5 plea: richiesta
- 6 to get home: arrivare a casa
- 7 to add: aggiungere
- 8 bridge: intermezzo
- 9 to sock: colpire
- 10 call-and-response: botta e risposta
- 11 to interplay: interagire
- 12 backing singers: coriste
- 13 anthem: inno
- 14 bold: audace
- 15 at all: per niente
- 16 to be gone: scomparire
- 17 guess what?: sai cosa?
- 18 to take care: prendersi cura
- 19 to walk in: entrare
- 20 unfairly: ingiustamente
- 21 proper: giusto
- 22 to whip: frustare
- 23 to beat: colpire
- 24 rope: corda
- 25 punishment: punizione
- 26 command: ordine
- 27 supply: scorte
- 28 fool: pazzo
- 29 to lack: mancare

Respect was Aretha Franklin's only solo¹ number one single and her first international hit. The original version, written and released² by Otis Redding in 1965, was a somewhat³ misogynistic message from a working man to a housewife⁴, but when Aretha heard it she decided it needed an answer from a woman's perspective.

Working with her two sisters, she began by changing the pronouns in Otis' version, so instead of a plea⁵ for respect "when I get home⁶", she sings "when you get home". She then added⁷ a bridge⁸ with the iconic R-E-S-P-E-C-T and 'Sock⁹ it to me' call-and-response¹⁰.

Lyrically the song is very easy, using almost only the present simple and continuous, with one

example of 'going to' for future (or 'gonna'). As the song progresses she introduces the imperative, which was almost absent from the Otis Redding version, interplaying¹¹ with her backing singers¹², indicative of her intention of making this a strong declaration of female empowerment and unity.

Released in 1967 in a difficult period of American history, *Respect*, a song by a black woman, became an anthem¹³ for the civil rights and women's rights movements. In a 2017 interview Aretha said,

"I don't think (the song's sentiment) is bold¹⁴ at all¹⁵. I think it's quite natural that we all want respect — and should get it." ☺



I'm askin': it is easier to sing the final 'n' sound than the 'g' sound, so very frequently songs (and informal speech) often pronounce the gerund as 'in' instead of 'ing'.

I ain't gonna: this is also informal and often used in songs, meaning 'isn't' or, as in this case, 'I'm (I am) not'. 'Gonna' is an informal pronunciation of 'going to'.

I'm about to do something: means 'I'm going to do something very soon'.

Whip it to me, sock it to me: these phrases had sexual connotations in the 1960s, although Aretha denied this was meant in the song. "To whip²² means 'to beat²³ with a flexible piece of rope²⁴ or something similar as punishment²⁵."

whoa, babe: 'whoa' is a command²⁶, used to slow or cease something, often to make an animal stop.

you're running out of fools: 'to run out of' something means 'to have used up all the supply²⁷, while a 'fool²⁸' is a 'person lacking²⁹ in judgment or prudence', so someone who is easily manipulated.

What you want, baby, I got it ←
What you need, do you know I got it?
All I'm askin' is for a little respect when you get home (just a little bit)
Hey baby (just a little bit) when you get home (just a little bit) mister (just a little bit)

I ain't gonna do you wrong while you're gone¹⁶
Ain't gonna do you wrong 'cause I don't wanna ←
All I'm askin' is for a little respect when you come home (just a little bit)
Baby (just a little bit) when you get home (just a little bit)
Yeah (just a little bit)

I'm about to give you all of my money
And all I'm askin' in return, honey is to give me my propers ←
when you get home (just a, just a, just a, just a)
Yeah, baby (just a, just a, just a, just a)
When you get home (just a little bit)
Yeah (just a little bit)

Ooh, your kisses. Sweeter than honey ←
And guess what?¹⁷ So is my money
All I want you to do for me
Is give it to me when you get home (re, re, re, re) ←
Yeah baby (re, re, re, re)
Whip it to me (respect, just a little bit)
When you get home, now (just a little bit)

R-E-S-P-E-C-T
Find out what it means to me
R-E-S-P-E-C-T
Take care¹⁸, TCB ←

Oh (sock it to me, sock it to me, sock it to me)
A little respect (sock it to me, sock it to me)
Whoa, babe (just a little bit)
A little respect (just a little bit)
I get tired (just a little bit)
Keep on tryin' (just a little bit)
You're runnin' out of fools (just a little bit)
And I ain't lyin' (just a little bit)
(Re, re, re, re) when you come home (Re, re, re, re)
Or you might walk in¹⁹ (respect, just a little bit)
And find out I'm gone (just a little bit)

I got it: this should be 'I've (I have) got it'. Songs and informal speech often incorrectly eliminate the auxiliary.

do you wrong: 'to do someone wrong' means 'to treat someone unfairly²⁰'.

wanna: an informal pronunciation of 'want to'.

propers: this is an abbreviation of 'proper²¹ respect'.

sweeter than honey: this describes the kisses, so the verb 'to be' is implied ('your kisses are sweeter than honey').

re, re, re, re: as well as the first part of 'respect' this was also Aretha's nickname (A-RE-tha).

to find out: a phrasal verb meaning 'to discover'.

TCB: an acronym for 'take care of business'.

Scan this QR code with your smartphone or tablet and listen to the original song on YouTube while reading the lyrics.

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