

Brown Sugar

(The Rolling Stones)

[Verse 1]

Gold coast slave ship bound for cotton fields
Sold in the market down in New Orleans
Scarred old slaver knows he's doing alright
Hear him whip the women just around midnight

[Chorus]

Brown sugar how come you taste so good
Brown sugar just like a young girl should- ah hum oh..
Woo!

[Verse 2]

Drums beating, cold English blood runs hot
Lady of the house wonderin' when it's gonna stop
House boy knows that he's doing alright
You shoulda heard em just around midnight

[Chorus]

Brown sugar how come you taste so good
Brown sugar just like a young girl should- ah hum oh..
Woo!

[Bridge]

Ah, get down on brown, brown sugar, how come you taste so good?
Ah, get down, get down brown sugar, just like a black girl should

[Verse 3]

Ah I bet your mama was a tent show queen
And all her boyfriends were sweet sixteen
I'm no schoolboy but I know what I like
You shoulda heard me just around midnight

[Chorus]

Brown sugar how come you taste so good, baby?
Ah, come down brown sugar, just like a young girl should, yeah

[Outro]

I said yeah, yeah, yeah, woo!
How come you...how come you taste so good?
Yeah, yeah, yeah, woo!
Just like a...just like a black girl should
Yeah, yeah, yeah, woo!

Keith, in his book *Life*, writes about Jagger's writing process for Brown Sugar, saying "I watched Mick write the lyrics. It took him maybe forty-five minutes; it was disgusting. He wrote it down as fast as he could move his hand. I'd never seen anything like it. He had one of those yellow legal pads, and he'd write a verse a page, just write a verse and then turn the page, and when he had three pages filled, we started to cut it. It was amazing."

Originally recorded over a three-day period at Muscle Shoals Sound Studio in Muscle Shoals, Alabama, from 2–4 December 1969, the song was not released until over a year later due to legal wranglings with the band's former label, though at the request of guitarist Mick Taylor, they debuted the number live during the infamous concert at Altamont on 6 December. The song was likely written with Marsha Hunt in mind; Hunt was Jagger's secret girlfriend and mother of his first child Karis. It is also claimed it was written with Claudia Lennear in mind. Lennear made this claim on BBC's Radio 4 (25 February 2014). Lennear is also the inspiration behind David Bowie's "Lady Grinning Soul".

In the documentary film *Gimme Shelter* (1970), an alternative mix of the song is played back to the band while they relax in a hotel in Alabama.

The song, with its prominent blues-rock riffs, dual horn/guitar instrumental break, and danceable rock rhythms, is representative of the Stones' definitive middle period and the tough, bluesy hard-rock most often associated with the group. In the liner notes to the compilation album *Jump Back* (1993), Jagger says, "The lyric was all to do with the dual combination of drugs and girls. This song was a very instant thing, a definite high point."

In the Rolling Stone interview (14 December 1995, RS 723) with Jagger, he spoke at length about the song, its inspiration and success. He attributed the success of the song to a "good groove". After noting that the lyrics could mean so many lewd subjects, he again noted that the combination of those subjects, the lyrical ambiguity was partially why the song was considered successful. He noted, "That makes it... the whole mess thrown in. God knows what I'm on about on that song. It's such a mishmash. All the nasty subjects in one go... I never would write that song now." When Jann Wenner asked him why, Jagger replied, "I would probably censor myself. I'd think, 'Oh God, I can't. I've got to stop. I can't just write raw like that.'"

The lyrical subject matter has often been a point of interest and controversy. Described by rock critic Robert Christgau as "a rocker so compelling that it discourages exegesis", "Brown Sugar"'s popularity indeed often overshadowed its scandalous lyrics, which were essentially a pastiche of a number of taboo subjects, including slavery, rape, interracial sex, cunnilingus, sadomasochism, lost virginity and heroin.