

Start Me Up

(The Rolling Stones)

[Chorus 1]

If you start me up
If you start me up I'll never stop
You can start me up
You can start me up I'll never stop

[Verse]

I've been running hot
You got me ticking going to blow my top
If you start me up
If you start me up I'll never stop
Never stop, never stop, never stop

[Chorus 2]

You make a grown man cry

[Verse]

Spread out the oil, the gasoline
I walk smooth, ride in a mean, mean
machine

[Chorus 1]

[Verse]

If you start it up
Kick on the starter give it all you got, you
got, you got
I can't compete with the riders in the other
heats
If you rough it up

If you like it you can slide it up
Slide it up, slide it up, slide it up
Don't make a grown man cry
My eyes dilate, my lips go green
My hands are greasy
She's a mean, mean machine

Start it up

If start me up
Ahh... give it all you got
You got to never, never, never stop
Slide it up, baby just slide it up
Slide it up, slide it up, never, never, never

You make a grown man cry
Ride like the wind at double speed
I'll take you places that you've never, never
seen
If you start it up
Love the day when we will never stop, never
stop
Never, never, never stop
Tough me up
Never stop, never stop

[Outro]

You, you, you make a grown man cry
You, you make a dead man come
You, you make a dead man come

"Start Me Up" is a song by the Rolling Stones featured on the 1981 album *Tattoo You*. Released as the album's lead single, it reached #1 on Australian Kent Music Report, #2 on the Billboard Hot 100 and #7 on the UK Singles Chart.

The basic track "Start Me Up" was recorded between the January and March 1978 sessions for the Rolling Stones' album *Some Girls*. The song was at first cut as a reggae-rock track named 'Never Stop', but after dozens of takes the band stopped recording it and it was shelved. "Start Me Up" failed to make the cut for the album, being shelved into the vault. Of the song's history, Richards has commented:

"It was one of those things we cut a lot of times; one of those cuts that you can play forever and ever in the studio. Twenty minutes go by and you're still locked into those two chords... Sometimes you become conscious of the fact that, 'Oh, it's "Brown Sugar" again,' so you begin to explore other rhythmic possibilities. It's basically trial and error. As I said, that one was pretty locked into a reggae rhythm for quite a few weeks. We were cutting it for *Emotional Rescue*, but it was nowhere near coming through, and we put it aside and almost forgot about it."

In 1981, with the band looking to tour, engineer Chris Kimsey proposed to lead singer Mick Jagger that archived songs could comprise the set. While searching through the vaults, Kimsey found the two takes of the song with a more rock vibe among some fifty reggae versions. Overdubs were completed on the track in early 1981 in New York City at the recording studios Electric Lady Studios and The Hit Factory. On the band's recording style for this track in particular, Kimsey commented in 2004:

"Including run-throughs, 'Start Me Up' took about six hours to record. You see, if they all played the right chords in the right time, went to the chorus at the right time and got to the middle eight together, that was a master. It was like, 'Oh, wow!' Don't forget, they would never sit down and work out a song. They would jam it and the song would evolve out of that. That's their magic..."

The infectious "thump" to the song was achieved using mixer Bob Clearmountain's famed "bathroom reverb", a process involving the recording of some of the song's vocal and drum tracks with a miked speaker in the bathroom of the Power Station recording studio in New York City. It was there where final touches were added to the song, including Jagger's switch of the main lyrics from "start it up" to "start me up."

The song opens with what has since become a trademark riff for Richards. It is this, coupled with Charlie Watts' steady backbeat and Bill Wyman's echoing bass that comprises most of the song. Lead guitarist Ronnie Wood can clearly be heard playing a layered variation of Richards' main riff (often live versions of the song are lengthened by giving Wood a solo near the middle of the song, pieces of which can be heard throughout the original recording). Throughout the song Jagger breaks in with a repeated bridge of "You make a grown man cry", followed by various pronouncements of his and his partner's sexual nature.

Percussion (cowbell and guiro) by Mike Carabello and handclaps by Jagger, Chris Kimsey and Barry Sage were added during overdub sessions in April and June 1981.