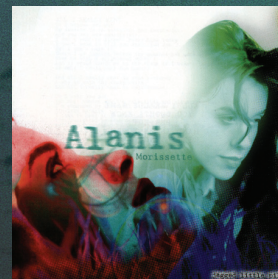


## BEHIND THE CLASSICS



Shawn Nicks/Courtesy of Maverick Records

**WRITTEN BY:** ALANIS MORISSETTE  
AND GLEN BALLARD  
**RECORDED AT:** GLEN BALLARD'S HOME  
STUDIO, LA.; WESTLAKE RECORDING STUDIOS,  
LA.; SIGNET SOUND STUDIOS, LA.  
**PRODUCED BY:** GLEN BALLARD  
**VOCALS:** ALANIS MORISSETTE  
**GUITAR:** DAVE NAVARRO  
**BASS:** FLEA  
**DRUMS:** MATT LAUG  
**PROGRAMMING:** GLEN BALLARD  
**FROM THE ALBUM:** *JAGGED LITTLE PILL* (1995)



## “You Oughta Know”

### ALANIS MORISSETTE

IN EARLY 1994, ALANIS MORISSETTE was adrift. She had released two dance-pop albums in her native Canada, but had grown disillusioned with that musical direction. She had tried writing songs with more than a hundred people without finding a partner she clicked with—until her publishing company suggested she try collaborating with Glen Ballard. Best known for his work with acts like Michael Jackson and Wilson Phillips, the veteran writer and producer seemed an odd fit for a 19-year-old artist looking to break out of the pop mold. Morissette nonetheless convened with Ballard at his home studio in Los Angeles—and creative sparks flew immediately. “When we got together,” she recalled later, “we were so connected, intellectually, cerebrally and musically, that it was very much an unsaid thing.”

The two recorded demos as they wrote, laying down a song a day in 12- to 16-hour shifts over several weeks in the summer of 1994. Morissette sang into an AKG C 12 mic dating from the mid-1950s, while Ballard played all the instruments and recorded the proceedings on his 16-bit Alesis Digital Audio Tape (ADAT) multitrack machine. Ballard encouraged Morissette

to be brutally honest in her lyrics in a way that she couldn't have in her previous guise as a pop princess, and one of the topics foremost on her mind at the time was a recent acrimonious breakup with a man 15 years her senior. One afternoon in Ballard's studio, she let her feelings of hurt and jealousy fly in a flurry of expletive-studded invective set to a roiling rock beat. “I was in so much pain, the best way for me to release it at that moment was to be angry,” she said. By the end of the day, “You Oughta Know” was complete.

Rather than attempt to recreate the spirit of their demos, Morissette and Ballard elected to keep the recordings and overdub additional instrumentation as needed—including Matt Laug's live drums for “You Oughta Know,” laid down at Westlake Recording Studios. Ballard handed the track over for remixing to engineer Jimmy Boyle, who asked Dave Navarro and Flea of the Red Hot Chili Peppers to lay down new guitar and bass tracks, respectively. “We just had the vocal to work from,” Navarro said. “It was just a good time, and we jammed until we found something we were both happy with.” The two completed their contributions within

a quick couple of hours at the now-defunct Signet Sound Studios in West Hollywood. “It was very instinctive,” Flea said. “I showed up, rocked out and split.”

The completed track proved an instant success when released as a single in July 1995, and before long speculation about the real-life target of the singer's ire was rife. Morissette has remained mum on the topic, but comedian and actor Dave Coulier is convinced the song was written about their relationship. “I listened to the song over and over again, and I said, ‘I have really hurt this person,’” he said. Concerned, Coulier got in touch with Morissette and the two spent a day together talking over their issues before departing as friends. “You Oughta Know” became the first of six hit singles from Morissette's album *Jagged Little Pill*, which eventually sold more than 33 million copies worldwide. She believes the song connected with listeners because of its naked honesty. “It may have been refreshing to those who felt horrified by their breakups,” she said. “They heard it and went, ‘Wow, she's not embarrassed, so maybe I shouldn't be.’”

—Chris Neal