



Take a Bow

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February 12, 2024 By [Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.](#)

I can't say for sure when I first heard Madonna on the radio, but I do remember grooving to "Holiday" and "Lucky Star" in middle school.

Soon after those early days, she was everywhere—and over 40 years later, Madonna remains musically and culturally relevant. That's not to say she hasn't had her ups and downs. As a fan, I've personally cycled through adoration and disappointment over and over again. That said, I'll always be thankful for her music and her unwavering support of the LGBTQ community and people living with HIV.

So it comes as no surprise to me that during every stop of her ongoing Celebration tour, Madonna celebrates the lives of those lost to the virus. While she sings "Live to Tell," images of her friends are projected all around her, followed by photos of people she never knew. The cover image of this issue of POZ captures a moment during the memorial when Madonna is elevated above the stage with those photos in the background.

Touted by many concertgoers as a highlight of the show, Madonna's HIV homage surprised some folks. Without knowing about her connections to the virus, it's understandable. In that spirit, we've set out to explore Madonna's AIDS advocacy through the past four decades. Go [here](#) for more on how she uplifts the HIV community.

Over the years, POZ has spotlighted several celebrities who've advocated for the HIV community. In fact, two of Madonna's dancers from her Blond Ambition tour and the "Vogue" video—[Salim "Slam" Gauwloos and Carlton Wilborn](#)—graced our July/August 2016 cover. They promoted Strike a Pose, a documentary about their time dancing for Madonna, and disclosed that they were both living with HIV while on that tour.

So when we realized that in all this time, POZ had never featured Madonna herself on the cover, we jumped at the opportunity.

Madonna was a fitting cover subject for this special issue dedicated to women. We're also pleased to highlight the many contributions of Naina Khanna, the co-executive director of Positive Women's Network-USA (PWN-USA). After more than a decade at the helm, she is moving on. Go [here](#) to read about her legacy and how PWN-USA has centered the voices of women living with

HIV.

As readers of POZ know all too well, HIV knows no borders. The virus remains a global threat. Enormous progress has been made in fighting HIV worldwide, but much is still left undone. And that's under the best of circumstances. When unthinkable challenges surface, such as war, HIV often tends to regain the upper hand. That is the case in Ukraine. Thankfully, activists such as Tatyana Lebed are on the front lines. Go [here](#) to learn more about her advocacy.

To read 10 ways you can become an HIV advocate, click [here](#).

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