

= Be Here Now (song) =

" Be Here Now " is a song by English musician George Harrison released on his 1973 album *Living in the Material World* . The recording features a sparse musical arrangement and recalls Harrison 's work with the Beatles during 1966 ? 68 , through its Indian @-@ inspired mood and use of drone @-@ like sitar . Part of Harrison 's inspiration for the composition was the popular book *Be Here Now* by spiritual teacher Ram Dass ? specifically , a story discussing the author 's change in identity from a Western academic to a guru in the Hindu faith . Harrison biographers interpret " Be Here Now " as a comment from him on the public 's nostalgia for the past following the Beatles ' break @-@ up .

Harrison wrote the song in Los Angeles in 1971 , while working on the soundtrack to the Ravi Shankar documentary *Raga* , and shortly before organising the Concert for Bangladesh . The recording took place in late 1972 at his Friar Park home , with musical contributions from Klaus Voormann , Nicky Hopkins , Gary Wright and Jim Keltner . Contrary to the song 's message , its release coincided with heightened speculation regarding a possible Beatles reunion , following Harrison , Ringo Starr and John Lennon recording together in Los Angeles in March 1973 .

" Be Here Now " has received critical attention for its dreamlike sound and the quality of Harrison 's acoustic guitar playing . Stephen Holden of *Rolling Stone* described the track as a " meltingly lovely meditation @-@ prayer " , while author Ian Inglis views it as a musical expression of " the spiritual , scientific , and metaphysical implications of time " . Singers Robyn Hitchcock and Ian Astbury have each covered the song .

= = Background and composition = =

In his 1980 autobiography , *I , Me , Mine* , George Harrison recalls coming up with the tune for " Be Here Now " while staying in Nichols Canyon , Los Angeles , in the spring of 1971 . At the time , Harrison was in Los Angeles producing the soundtrack to *Raga* , an Apple Films documentary about Indian sitarist Ravi Shankar . The same visit led to Harrison staging the Concert for Bangladesh in New York that summer , following a plea from Shankar , a Bengali Hindu , that something be done to raise international awareness for refugees of the Bangladesh Liberation War .

In his autobiography , Harrison says of writing the song : " I was almost falling asleep . I had the guitar in bed and the melody came fast . " In keeping with this description , " Be Here Now " is noted for its meditative and dreamlike qualities .

The song is in the musical key of A , with a time signature of 4 / 4 throughout . According to his handwritten note on the lyrics reproduced in *I , Me , Mine* , Harrison played the guitar part in open G tuning ? which would typically require the placing of a capo on the guitar 's second fret , to attain an open chord of A major . Author and music journalist Paul Trynka writes of " Be Here Now " containing " modal folk riffs " .

Harrison drew inspiration for his lyrics from " The Transformation : Dr. Richard Alpert , PhD. into Baba Ram Dass " . A humorous story , " The Transformation " was the first of four sections in Ram Dass 's book *Be Here Now* , a popular introductory text to Hindu spirituality . As Richard Alpert , Dass had been a Harvard academic and an associate of Timothy Leary during the early 1960s , before embracing Hinduism ? like Harrison in 1966 , via experimentation with hallucinogenic drugs ? and changing his name . Before the book 's publication in 1971 , according to musicologist Ian MacDonald , the phrase " Be here now " had become a " hippie maxim " , reflecting a fundamental contention of Hindu philosophy regarding the all @-@ importance of the present moment . For Harrison , the present meant his identity outside the public 's perception of him as a Beatle , a role he had already tired of in 1965 ? 66 , during the height of the band 's fame .

Author Ian Inglis writes of the parallels between " Be Here Now " and one of Harrison 's 1968 compositions for the Beatles , " Long , Long , Long " , due to the two songs ' " common subject matter : time " . In " Be Here Now " , Harrison delivers his message in simple terms , stating that " The past was " , whereas " Now is " .

According to theologian Dale Allison , the song also addresses the Hindu concept of maya ,

whereby the physical world is an illusion and the only truth is to realise the divine nature of one's soul. Harrison warns against what Allison terms "mistake [ing] the material world, which is only a grand illusion, for the real world", particularly in the lyrics to the song's middle eight:

Why try to live a life

That isn't real

No how?

A mind that wants to wander

'Round a corner

Is an unwise mind.

Harrison's musical biographer, Simon Leng, views "Be Here Now" as the singer questioning the validity of his role as a world-famous musician. Leng writes of Harrison yearning to escape "a Fab Four prehistory that so obsessed the media and his fans", and draws parallels between the former Beatle's predicament and a comedy sketch by Monty Python, featuring the character Arthur "Two Sheds" Jackson. In the sketch, Jackson is a composer of modern symphonies, yet the interviewer fixates on the trivial detail of how he acquired his unusual nickname.

In his book discussing the religious themes in Harrison's songwriting, Allison qualifies the literal message of "Be Here Now" by stating, "this song must be understood as an endorsement [of DASS's book]", yet it is "hardly the typical George". Allison cites a number of compositions from throughout Harrison's career, all covering issues of karma and reincarnation, as evidence that Harrison "encourages all of us to ponder our inescapable end and so imagine the future", rather than focusing only on the here and now. Harrison would return to the specific theme of "Be Here Now" in later songs such as "Flying Hour" and "Just for Today", the last of which adopts the here-and-now message as an inspirational statement for members of Alcoholics Anonymous.

= = Recording = =

Harrison recorded "Be Here Now" for his second post-Beatles solo album, *Living in the Material World*, sessions for which began in October 1972. With Phil McDonald serving as engineer, the recording took place at Apple Studio in London, according to the album credits. Bassist Klaus Voormann has stated that Harrison's Friar Park home studio in Oxfordshire was the true location, however, a contention supported by Jim Keltner, the drummer at the sessions. Harrison self-produced *Material World* and deliberately pared down the sound, keen to avoid the big production employed by Phil Spector on *All Things Must Pass*, his acclaimed 1970 triple album. Author Robert Rodriguez writes that as a producer Harrison "gave the tunes breathing space, allowing the instruments to sparkle", which included "a nearly imperceptible undercurrent of sitar" on "Be Here Now". Inglis views the recording as "musically evoking the mystery and profundity of time", as a complement to the song's lyrics.

Besides Harrison, the musicians on the song were his fellow Hindu convert Gary Wright (on organ), Nicky Hopkins (piano), and the rhythm section of Voormann and Keltner, all of whom served as the core band on *Material World*. Behind Harrison's acoustic guitar and the sitar drone, the sparse instrumentation provides what author Elliot Huntley terms "a lesson in understatement". In the search for a good sound, Voormann recorded his part, on standup bass, in one of the bathrooms at Friar Park; he remembers being interrupted during a take by longtime Beatles aide Mal Evans flushing the toilet.

In his book *The Beatles Forever*, Nicholas Schaffner describes Harrison's use of Indian instrumentation on "Be Here Now" and "Living in the Material World" as marking "a return to the quasi-Indian mode" of his work with the Beatles during 1966–68, following which, Harrison admitted, he had rarely played the sitar. Although Schaffner credits the part as a tambura, other commentators describe the instrument as a sitar.

Among the other tracks recorded for the album, "The Light That Has Lighted the World" and "Who Can See It" similarly reflect Harrison's desire to escape his Beatles past. In March 1973, following the completion of *Material World*, Harrison recorded "I'm the Greatest" in Los Angeles

with former bandmates Ringo Starr and John Lennon , for inclusion on Starr 's first rock solo album , Ringo . The session immediately led to rumours of a possible Beatles reunion , partly encouraged by the three musicians having severed ties with manager Allen Klein .

= = Release and reception = =

Apple Records released *Living in the Material World* on 30 May 1973 . " Be Here Now " appeared as the second track on side two of the original LP format , following what Rodriguez describes as the " funky uptempo " " The Lord Loves the One (That Loves the Lord) " . It marked the first of four consecutive ballads on that side , which some music critics objected to at the time . Never a fan of Harrison 's solo work , Robert Christgau would comment on the album : " Harrison sings as if he 's doing sitar impressions , and four different people , including a little man in my head who I never noticed before , have expressed intense gratitude when I turned the damned thing off during ' Be Here Now ' . "

By contrast , *Rolling Stone* 's Stephen Holden admired *Material World* as " a pop religious ceremony for all seasons " and described the song as " a meltingly lovely meditation @-@ prayer , the ultimate aural refinement of ' Blue Jay Way ' " . In his review for *Melody Maker* , Michael Watts wrote of " Be Here Now " ' s middle eight providing a " Confucius @-@ like ' truth ' " and commented that reading the album 's lyric sheet was " rather like finding yourself at the feet of some Tibetan [lama] " .

= = Retrospective appraisal and legacy = =

= = = Cultural influence and 2006 reissue = = =

The phrase " Be Here Now " was used by the English band Oasis for the title of their third album , issued in 1997 . Further to the group naming their hit song " Wonderwall " after Harrison 's 1968 solo album , as well as their appropriation of various musical influences from his work , Harrison was not flattered by the apparent compliment , and was outspoken in his criticism of the band following the release of *Be Here Now* .

Living in the Material World was reissued in remastered form in 2006 , five years after Harrison 's death from cancer at the age of 58 . Among reviews at that time , *Music Box* editor John Metzger wrote that the " meditative fragility " of " Be Here Now " contributes to " the Zen @-@ like beauty that emanates from Harrison 's hymns to a higher power " on the album , while two years before , in *The Rolling Stone Album Guide* , Mac Randall described the tune as " rank [ing] among Harrison 's prettiest " . In his 2006 album review , for *Mojo* , Mat Snow considered it a " wonderful song " that " blends two of George 's Beatle peaks , ' Blue Jay Way ' and ' Long , Long , Long ' , to movingly transcendental effect " . Less impressed , *PopMatters* ' Zeth Lundy bemoaned the stripped @-@ down sound of *Living in the Material World* after the " thunderous extravagance " of *All Things Must Pass* , such that " Be Here Now " was rendered " a little too slow @-@ moving and dramatically anaemic " .

Writing for *The Huffington Post* in 2011 , Steve Rabey cited Harrison 's drawing of inspiration from Dass 's book , as from the *Tao Te Ching* and *Autobiography of a Yogi* in other songs , as an example of his standing as both a " cafeteria Hindu " and " perhaps the most explicitly and consistently theological rock star of the last half @-@ century " . Rabey concludes : " While he failed to convert everyone to his beliefs , he nudged his [former] bandmates ? and his listener fans ? a bit further to the East , encouraging audiences to open themselves to new (or very old) spiritual influences . "

= = = Biographers ' assessment = = =

Among Beatles and Harrison biographers , Chip Madinger and Mark Easter admire the " hypnotic ,

droning effect " on " Be Here Now " , which they describe as " a lovely track " ; Elliot Huntley views the arrangement as a " masterpiece " ; and Alan Clayson praises the production and Harrison 's " decorative fingering and harmonics " on guitar , which he rates " on a par with the acoustic virtuosity of John Renbourn " . In The Rough Guide to the Beatles , Chris Ingham cites " the graceful ' Be Here Now ' " as an example of how Harrison 's " melodious gifts and distinctive ear for a harmony are in evidence throughout [Material World] " .

Ian Inglis admires the song as " one of Harrison 's most haunting and mysterious compositions " , and writes of the recording : " The gentle , largely acoustic backing , and Harrison 's achingly beautiful vocal give the song a nebulous , yearning quality , almost as if something barely understood is slipping out of sight . " Inglis likens " Be Here Now " to the performance monologue " Time " by English actress and author Joyce Grenfell , whose conclusion that " there is no such thing as time ? only this very minute , and I am in it " he finds echoed in Harrison 's " sense of wonder and helplessness in the face of the spiritual , scientific , and metaphysical implications of time " .

= = = 2014 appraisal = = =

The song continues to receive attention following the 2014 Apple Years Harrison reissues . In Mojo , Tom Doyle writes of Living in the Material World " spot [lighting] the spirituality and the dreaminess " in Harrison 's songwriting , through " the gentle , non @-@ preachy ' The Light That Has Lighted the World ' and ' Be Here Now ' , both great works of look @-@ around @-@ you wonder " . In a review for Blogcritics , Chaz Lipp views the production on the album as " meticulous " and superior to All Things Must Pass , such that " [t] he delicate melodies of songs like ' The Day the World Gets ' Round ' and ' Be Here Now ' are never lost in bombast . " Writing for PopMatters , Scot Elingburg pairs " Be Here Now " with " Don 't Let Me Wait Too Long " as Material World tracks that " offer much more than just Harrison 's Hindu @-@ inspired teachings ; they also offer up the chance for larger dialogue within music . "

Nick DeRiso , co @-@ founder of the music website Something Else ! , includes " Be Here Now " among the highlights of Harrison 's solo career on Apple Records , and describes the track as " [a] n enveloping moment of wonder " . New Zealand Herald music critic Graham Reid has similarly written of " Be Here Now " belonging among Harrison 's " finest work " , and he finds the song " every bit as emotionally revealing as anything by Lennon " .

In his review for Classic Rock magazine , Paul Trynka writes :

The towering achievement of this album is , you might say , the preachiest song , ' Be Here Now ' . A straightforward evocation of Buddhist philosophy , its modal folk riffs and wavering melody are enchanting . Writer Ian MacDonald suggested that Nick Drake 's ' River Man ' was based on this same Buddhist notion of mindfulness , and there 's a similar combination of dreaminess and fierce intensity in this song , which is a masterpiece .

= = Cover versions = =

Singer Robyn Hitchcock recorded the track , along with covers of songs by Johnny Cash , Bob Dylan , David Bowie and others , for a download @-@ only album released in December 2010 . Described by the website Slicing Up Eyeballs as a " pristine acoustic take " , Hitchcock 's version of " Be Here Now " appeared as the opening track on the collection .

Coinciding with the release of The Apple Years , " Be Here Now " was one of 27 Harrison songs played at George Fest , an all @-@ star concert organised by his son Dhani and held at the Fonda Theatre , Los Angeles , on 28 September 2014 . The song was performed by Cult vocalist Ian Astbury . In a review of the concert , for No Depression magazine , C.J. Gronner described Astbury 's performance as " my favorite part of the night " .

= = Personnel = =

According to Simon Leng :

George Harrison ? vocals , acoustic guitar , sitar , backing vocals

Nicky Hopkins ? piano

Gary Wright ? organ

Klaus Voormann ? standup bass

Jim Keltner ? drums