

= Let It Down =

" Let It Down " is a song by English musician George Harrison , released on his 1970 triple album All Things Must Pass . The recording was co -@-@ produced by Phil Spector and employs the latter 's Wall of Sound production technique to lavish effect . Its brash opening and choruses contrast with the ethereal quality of the verses ? a loud / soft approach that has been credited with influencing indie bands during the 1980s and 1990s .

Harrison wrote the song in 1968 and offered it to the Beatles in January 1969 for inclusion on what became their Let It Be album (1970) , also produced by Spector . It is one of several Harrison compositions that were turned down by the band and subsequently found acclaim on his first solo release following their break @-@ up . Harrison biographers recognise " Let It Down " as an erotic love song , perhaps written to a woman other than Pattie Boyd , his wife at the time . Separated by eighteen months , the song 's conception and recording marked two periods of romantic intrigue involving Harrison , Boyd and their friend Eric Clapton . Author Ian Inglis describes " Let It Down " as " a dynamic and passionate depiction of lust and desire " .

Harrison recorded the song in London , backed by a large cast of musicians , including the whole of Clapton 's newly formed band Derek and the Dominos , Gary Brooker , Gary Wright , Bobby Keys and the group Badfinger . With its dense mix of horns , orchestral strings and heavy rock instrumentation , commentators identify " Let It Down " as an extreme example of Spector 's influence on All Things Must Pass , an influence that also provided a disruptive element during the album 's creation . An acoustic version of " Let It Down " , also taped in 1970 but with overdubs recorded in 2000 , appeared as a bonus track on the 30th anniversary edition of All Things Must Pass .

= = Background and composition = =

According to Pattie Boyd 's recollection in 2007 , her marriage to George Harrison was already " in trouble " by the time he wrote his 1969 hit song " Something " , dedicated to her . Harrison and Boyd were married in January 1966 , having met two years before on the set of the Beatles ' film A Hard Day 's Night , but by 1968 , his dedication to meditation and Eastern mysticism had begun to divide the couple . Boyd writes of an associated issue at this time : " And there were other women ... George was fascinated by the god Krishna who was always surrounded by young maidens . He came back from India [in June 1968] wanting to be some kind of Krishna figure , a spiritual being with lots of concubines . He actually said so . "

Harrison wrote " Let It Down " in late 1968 . The song features the same major @-@ seventh chord voicings that intrigued Bob Dylan during that year 's Thanksgiving holidays , when the two musicians collaborated on " I 'd Have You Anytime " in upstate New York . In the absence of any discussion of the track by Harrison in his 1980 autobiography , commentators have identified " Let It Down " as a sensual love song .

Harrison 's musical biographer , Simon Leng , describes the lyrics as being among its composer 's " most tactile " , full of " sexual passion " and " images of sight and touch " . The verses , he suggests , " [revel] in the kind of sensory luxury any Krishna devotee is required to reject " . Leng also notes the " clear climactic overtones " evident in the choruses , where Harrison urges his lover to " Let your hair hang all around me ... / Let your love flow and astound me . " Musically , the composition features contrasting moods between the ethereal , ballad @-@ like verses and the more strident choruses .

Author Ian Inglis terms " Let It Down " an " unashamedly erotic " song that most likely describes " an act , or acts , of infidelity " . " Two lovers hide behind a veil of nonchalance , but both are equally aware of the other 's intentions , " Inglis suggests , with specific reference to the third verse :

While you look so sweetly and divine

I can feel you here

See your eyes are busy kissing mine ...

The message behind the verses ' recurring lines " I do , I do " and " Should someone be looking at

me " has invited conflicting interpretations . Leng suggests that in the first of these lines , Harrison might be restating his marriage vow , and that the second line is an early example of the singer viewing his life " as a battle with an unseen enemy waiting to pounce " . To Inglis , the characters in " Let It Down " are engaged in an adulterous affair , with the " constant threat " of being discovered ? hence the conclusion to verse one : " Hiding it all behind anything I see / Should someone be looking at me . "

Harrison biographer Gary Tillery observes of this period when the song was written : " Despite his spiritual hunger , [for Harrison] the temptations of a rock star were still too much to resist . He had affairs with other women , and he became less guarded about them with Pattie . " One such affair took place shortly after the couple 's return from New York , in December 1968 , and involved Charlotte Martin , a French model who had just ended a relationship with Harrison 's friend and occasional collaborator Eric Clapton . Harrison invited Martin to stay at Kinfauns , the home he shared with Boyd in Esher , south of London , whereupon , according to Boyd : " She didn 't seem remotely upset about Eric ... "

= = The Beatles ' Get Back sessions = =

Harrison and Boyd returned to England just before Christmas 1968 , ready for the start of the Beatles ' ill @-@ fated Get Back film project , released as Let It Be in May 1970 , a month after their break @-@ up . On 1 January 1969 , author Peter Doggett writes , Harrison arrived at Apple 's central London headquarters in an " exuberant " mood , inspired by his recent music @-@ making with Dylan and fellow Woodstock residents the Band , and " enjoying the frisson of sharing his home with two beautiful women " .

Harrison put forward " Let It Down " , along with as many as nine other compositions , during the Get Back sessions . On 2 January , before the arrival of bandmates Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr for the first day of filming , he debuted the song to John Lennon at Twickenham Film Studios , in south @-@ west London . Tapes from this session reveal Lennon struggling with the song 's chord changes , during a run @-@ through that authors Doug Sulpy and Ray Schweighardt describe as an " excellent performance by George ... seriously marred by John 's distracting accompaniment on guitar " . Once the film project was under way , a combination of Lennon 's barbed criticism of Harrison 's songwriting and McCartney 's attempts to " dominate " him musically , as Starr later put it , resulted in Harrison walking out on 10 January , apparently having quit the band for good . Doggett observes that , for Harrison , there had been " no relief from the tension " that week , since an upset Boyd had recently left Kinfauns to stay with friends in London .

Following Harrison 's return to the Beatles , and the film project 's relocation to their familiar Apple Studio , the band rehearsed " Let It Down " briefly on 25 and 29 January . Author Bruce Spizer writes of the song being embellished with " gospel @-@ style organ runs " , played by future Apple Records artist Billy Preston , during these late January sessions . Although the Beatles dedicated more time to it than to Harrison songs such as " Isn 't It a Pity " and " Hear Me Lord " , the track was dropped without being recorded , due to a lack of interest from Lennon and McCartney .

= = = Phil Spector 's involvement = = =

After engineer Glyn Johns had failed to compile a satisfactory album from the Get Back tapes throughout 1969 , the project passed to American producer Phil Spector , via the latter 's connection with Beatles manager Allen Klein . Like Lennon , Harrison welcomed Spector 's involvement , and he offered a glowing endorsement of the producer 's talents on the sleeve of Ike & Tina Turner 's album River Deep ? Mountain High . In January 1970 , Spector was in London discussing the possibility of producing a solo album by Harrison when the latter invited him to a recording session for Lennon 's Plastic Ono Band single " Instant Karma ! " After this session , Spector urged Harrison to record his album , which would become the triple set All Things Must Pass . In 2011 , Spector recalled of the material that Harrison had amassed , such as " Let It Down " : " He had literally hundreds of songs , and each one was better than the rest . He had all this emotion built up ... I don

't think he had played them to anybody , maybe Pattie . "

= = Production = =

= = = Initial recording = = =

With Spector as his co @-@ producer , Harrison taped the basic track for " Let It Down " in London early in the summer of 1970 . Similar to the " libidinous detour " provided by " I Dig Love " , Leng views the inclusion of " Let It Down " on All Things Must Pass as " a brief sensory interlude " from the predominant spiritual concerns found on the album . In his discussion of the song , Inglis notes that this period coincided with heightened suspicion on Boyd 's part regarding her husband 's womanising , while music journalist John Harris has written of there being an element of intrigue during the All Things Must Pass sessions , through Clapton 's growing infatuation with Boyd . This development was an open secret to the musicians with whom Clapton formed Derek and the Dominos at this time ? his fellow Delaney & Bonnie bandmates Bobby Whitlock , Jim Gordon and Carl Radle ? and to an apparently indifferent Harrison . Clapton sought refuge in heroin from his " torment " , Harris writes , while pouring his feelings for Boyd into the songs that Derek and the Dominos would soon record for their album Layla and Other Assorted Love Songs (1970) .

Having also toured with Delaney & Bonnie in December 1969 , Harrison used Gordon (on drums) , Radle (bass) and the band 's horn section , Bobby Keys and Jim Price , on the session for " Let It Down " . While Leng and Spizer both credit the Hammond organ and piano parts to Gary Wright and Gary Brooker , respectively , and list Whitlock as a backing vocalist only , Whitlock maintains that he played the organ on the recording , " with the Leslie cranked [up] " , and that Billy Preston was the pianist . In addition to Harrison and Clapton on electric guitars , Leng and Spizer list Pete Ham , Tom Evans and Joey Molland of Apple band Badfinger as acoustic rhythm guitarists on the track .

With its choruses presented in what Harrison biographer Elliot Huntley describes as " thundering , echo @-@ drenched crescendo " , " Let It Down " received a hard rock arrangement that recalls the sound of Wright 's former band Spooky Tooth . Like Huntley , authors Chip Madinger and Mark Easter recognise the song as the most obvious example of Spector 's influence on the album . In their book Eight Arms to Hold You , Madinger and Easter also credit the producer with " creating havoc " during the making of All Things Must Pass . According to Harrison 's later recollections and those of Molland , Klaus Voormann and orchestral arranger John Barham , Spector 's erratic behaviour and alcohol intake became a further burden on Harrison , alongside his marital problems and the death of his mother in July 1970 . During a session at Apple Studio , Spector fell over and broke his arm ; that and other " health issues " left Harrison to do much of the production work alone through to 12 August .

= = = Overdubbing and mixing = = =

While convalescing in Los Angeles , Spector wrote to Harrison with ideas for each of the early mixes completed in his absence , leaving his most detailed suggestions for " Let It Down " . Once Spector had returned to London , later in August , he and Harrison worked at Trident Studios , overseeing remixes as the recordings were transferred from 8- to 16 @-@ track tape ? a process that allowed for greater flexibility when overdubbing further instruments and vocal parts . Among the subsequent overdubs on " Let It Down " , Keys added " a wailing sax (old rock and roll style) " , as the producer had described it in his letter , to complement " all that madness at the end [of the song] " . Barham 's string arrangements for All Things Must Pass were also recorded at this point ; in the case of " Let It Down " , former Melody Maker editor Richard Williams has written of Barham and Spector " extract [ing] a very unusual texture " from their combination of strings and horns .

In Leng 's description , the finished recording opens with Harrison 's " heaviest @-@ ever intro " ? the " shattering concoction " of Harrison and Clapton 's " angry " guitar riffs , " sledgehammer " drums from Gordon , and Wright 's " roaring " Hammond organ ? before the music " slips into the

cool waters of a balmy , smooth sensuality " for the first verse . The horns similarly adopt contrasting musical textures , providing a soft , " Moonlight Bay " -like setting , as Spector put it , during the song 's quieter moments . From its aggressive sound over the intro and choruses , Harrison 's slide guitar reverts to a warmer tone , on a track that Leng views as Harrison developing his " unique voice " on slide guitar . Leng also highlights the " gospel passion " of Clapton and Whitlock 's vocal contributions , as the so @-@ called " George O 'Hara @-@ Smith Singers " .

= = Release and reception = =

" Let It Down " was released on All Things Must Pass in November 1970 , sequenced between the two minimalist , Band @-@ influenced tracks " Behind That Locked Door " and " Run of the Mill " . Writing in 1977 of the acclaim afforded the album on release , author Nicholas Schaffner described All Things Must Pass as the " crowning glory " of Harrison and Spector 's respective careers , and concluded : " Spector was at last working with a talent comparable with his own . The producer 's cosmic sound proved a perfect complement to the artist 's cosmic vision . " Author Robert Rodriguez groups " Let It Down " with other Beatles @-@ era compositions such as " All Things Must Pass " , " Isn 't It a Pity " and " Wah @-@ Wah " , as the " essential components " of an album that was " revelatory , helping the public understand that , with a talent this big alongside two acknowledged geniuses [in Lennon and McCartney] , no wonder the group could not remain intact " . In his album review for the NME , Alan Smith noted " Let It Down " 's " big fuzzy " introduction against its verses ' " quiet acid float " and admired the " romantic delicacy and perception " of Harrison 's lyrics . " No matter the quality of the music , " Smith added , " his words never let him down . "

In a retrospective review for Rolling Stone , James Hunter cited the " grooving " performance on " Let It Down " as an example of how All Things Must Pass represents " a rock orchestra recorded with sensitivity and teeth and faraway mikes " . Writing for Rough Guides , Chris Ingham considers that without Spector 's Wall of Sound excesses , Harrison 's triple album " wouldn 't be the magnificently overblown item that it is " . Ingham comments on " the sheer size of the sound " on tracks such as " Let It Down " , " Wah @-@ Wah " and " What Is Life " , all of which " build up a head of steam that could only be generated by multiple live takes of dozens of musicians playing their hearts out " .

Bruce Spizer has written of the " unfortunate " decision that saw " Let It Down " rejected by the Beatles in 1969 , since " it is one of George 's most exquisite and sensual love songs . " Elliot Huntley finds the same decision " perverse " and enthuses : " I simply don 't have enough hyperbole for ' Let It Down ' ... Spector really earns his corn on this track ... " Huntley writes that the song 's much @-@ admired " soft / loud approach " would be " ripped off by every indie band in the world a generation later " , a point to which John Bergstrom of PopMatters adds : " How many guitar @-@ driven , echo @-@ drenched bands have come around since [All Things Must Pass] , mixing powerful rave @-@ ups with moody , reflective down @-@ tempo numbers and a spiritual bent ? ... [One] listen to ' Let It Down ' , and you 'll understand a big part of how ' Dream Pop ' came to be . "

Also impressed with the song 's musical moods , Ian Inglis writes : " The switches between periods of pulsating rhythm and interludes of musical calm echo the ebb and flow of seduction itself . Like a painter who uses contrasting colors to create tension and movement , Harrison is ... using the tools of the songwriter to create a dynamic and passionate depiction of lust and desire . " Madinger and Easter describe the track as " an absolutely apocalyptic production " and " the best example of Spector running rampant with the ' Wall of Sound ' " . Writing in his book Phil Spector : Out of His Head , Richard Williams views " Let It Down " as " the record 's most thrilling track " , adding that it " picks the listener up and , in the best Spector tradition , never lets him down , building an electrifying tension between the subdued , reverential verses and the roaring chorus " . In September 2014 , the song appeared as Harrison 's selection on the solo Beatles EP 4 : John Paul George Ringo , exclusive to iTunes .

= = Other versions = =

== Alternative mixes ==

Madinger and Easter write of the revelatory nature of the various rough mixes of " Let It Down " , which were made at different stages of the recording process and first issued , unofficially , during the mid 1990s . Available on bootleg compilations such as the multi @-@ disc Making of All Things Must Pass and Songs for Patti ? The Mastertape Version , the mixes demonstrate the layers of instrumentation that were combined to form the commercially released recording ? ranging from a sparse backing of just guitar , bass and drums , to the larger sound following brass and slide guitar overdubs . Madinger and Easter write that " Let It Down " was " a much rougher , rockin ' track in its initial phase " , and the mixes provide a " fascinating view " of how the song could have ended up without the heavy production favoured by Spector . AllMusic critic Bruce Eder similarly admires the " raw band track " , where the mix " puts Harrison 's voice up real close where it sounds amazingly good " .

== Acoustic version ==

At London 's Abbey Road Studios on 20 May 1970 , Harrison performed " Let It Down " among a selection of songs for Spector , with a view to narrowing down the amount of material that they would be recording for All Things Must Pass . Along with compositions that have yet to see release , including " Window , Window " , " Nowhere to Go " , " Cosmic Empire " and " Mother Divine " , this solo acoustic version of " Let It Down " became available in 1994 on a bootleg titled Beware of ABKCO ! In January 2001 , Harrison included the song , along with a similar run @-@ through of " Beware of Darkness " , as one of five bonus tracks on the 30th anniversary reissue of All Things Must Pass ; in his liner notes , he states that he had been unaware that the session was ever recorded . Harrison added acoustic lead guitar to the song , as well as a string @-@ synthesizer part played by Ray Cooper , both recorded at Harrison 's home studio , FPSHOT , during 2000 .

While viewed as an " inessential " extra by Hunter in his review for Rolling Stone , this alternative version does provide " a taste of fluid , jazzy Harrison guitar " , Leng writes . Titled " Let It Down (Alternate Version) " , it also appears on the 2014 Apple Years 1968 ? 75 reissue of All Things Must Pass . On the website Something Else ! , Nick DeRiso writes of Harrison 's stated regret at Spector 's overuse of reverberation on the album , and opines that " [This] stripped @-@ down version of ' Let It Down ' best illustrates how so much of Harrison 's pent @-@ up songcraft instantly resonated , even as first drafts . "

== Cover versions ==

In 2010 , Brazilian singer Maria Gadú contributed an acoustic version of " Let It Down " to Tudo Passa , a Harrison tribute album recorded by various Brazilian musicians . Backed by the band Big Black Delta , Harrison 's son Dhani performed the song on the US television show Conan in September 2014 . This appearance was part of the show 's " George Harrison Week " , celebrating the release of the Apple Years 1968 ? 75 box set . Dhani Harrison subsequently performed the song at George Fest , a multi @-@ artist concert tribute to his father 's music , held at the Fonda Theatre , Los Angeles , on 28 September that same year .

== Personnel ==

The musicians who performed on " Let It Down " are believed to be as follows :

George Harrison ? vocals , electric guitar , slide guitar , backing vocals

Eric Clapton ? electric guitar , backing vocals

Gary Wright ? organ

Gary Brooker ? piano

Carl Radle ? bass

Jim Gordon ? drums
Bobby Keys ? saxophones
Jim Price ? trumpet , trombone , horn arrangement
John Barham ? string arrangement
Pete Ham ? acoustic guitar
Tom Evans ? acoustic guitar
Joey Molland ? acoustic guitar
uncredited ? shaker
Bobby Whitlock ? backing vocals