

= Ding Dong , Ding Dong =

" Ding Dong , Ding Dong " is a song by English musician George Harrison , written as a New Year 's Eve singalong and released in December 1974 on his album Dark Horse . It was the album 's lead single in Britain and some other European countries , and the second single , after " Dark Horse " , in North America . A large @-@ scale production , the song incorporates aspects of Phil Spector 's Wall of Sound technique , particularly his Christmas recordings from 1963 . In addition , some Harrison biographers view " Ding Dong " as an attempt to emulate the success of two glam rock anthems from the 1973 ? 74 holiday season : " Merry Xmas Everybody " by Slade , and Wizzard 's " I Wish It Could Be Christmas Everyday " . The song became only a minor hit in Britain and the United States , although it was a top @-@ twenty hit elsewhere in the world .

Harrison took the lyrics to " Ding Dong " from engravings he found at his nineteenth @-@ century home , Friar Park , in Oxfordshire ? a legacy of its eccentric founder , Sir Frank Crisp . The song 's " Ring out the old , ring in the new " refrain has invited interpretation as Harrison distancing himself from his past as a member of the Beatles , and as the singer farewelling his first marriage , to Pattie Boyd . As on much of the Dark Horse album , Harrison 's vocals on the recording were hampered by a throat condition , due partly to his having overextended himself on business projects such as his recently launched record label , Dark Horse Records . Recorded at his Friar Park studio , the track includes musical contributions from Tom Scott , Ringo Starr , Alvin Lee , Ron Wood and Jim Keltner .

On release , the song met with an unfavourable response from many music critics , while others considered its musical and lyrical simplicity to be a positive factor for a contemporary pop hit . For the first time with one of his singles , Harrison made a promotional video for " Ding Dong " , which features scenes of him miming to the track at Friar Park while dressed in a variety of Beatle @-@ themed costumes . The song still receives occasional airplay over the holiday season . The video appears on the DVD in Harrison 's eight @-@ disc Apple Years 1968 ? 75 box set , released in September 2014 .

= = Background and composition = =

George Harrison purchased the 33 @-@ acre Friar Park estate , in Henley @-@ on @-@ Thames , Oxfordshire , in January 1970 , and soon afterwards composed " Ballad of Sir Frankie Crisp (Let It Roll) " as a tribute to the property 's original owner , an eccentric Victorian lawyer and horticulturalist named Frank Crisp . Harrison included the song on his All Things Must Pass triple album , released in November 1970 , by which time he had begun incorporating into his new compositions some of the homilies and aphorisms that Crisp had inscribed around the property , 70 or more years before . A four @-@ line verse beginning " Scan not a friend with a microscopic glass " particularly resonated with Harrison , who eventually used it in his 1975 song " The Answer 's at the End " . It similarly took Harrison several years to turn two inspirational lines of verse from carvings in the house 's drawing room into song lyrics . These lines provided the repeated verse in " Ding Dong , Ding Dong " : " Ring out the old , ring in the new " ? which he took from the carving to the left of the fireplace ? and " Ring out the false , ring in the true " ? from the one to the right . In his 1980 autobiography , I , Me , Mine , Harrison credits English poet Lord Tennyson as the original source for these lines .

Authors Chip Madinger and Mark Easter describe " Ding Dong " as the " quickest song " that Harrison ever wrote , in terms of time spent on the composition . The words for the song 's middle eight ? " Yesterday , today was tomorrow / And tomorrow , today will be yesterday " ? came from another pair of inscriptions from Crisp 's time at Friar Park . Harrison found these lines in what he called " the garden building " , carved in stone around two matching windows . The only other lyrics in " Ding Dong , Ding Dong " are the song title , repeated four times to serve as its chorus . Sung in imitation of a clock chiming , the chorus lyrics , combined with the message of those of the verse , lend the composition an obvious New Year 's theme . Harrison later described the song as " very optimistic " , and suggested : " Instead of getting stuck in a rut , everybody should try ringing out the

old and ringing in the new ? [People] sing about it , but they never apply it to their lives . "

Harrison 's other singles from the early 1970s ? " My Sweet Lord " , " What Is Life " , " Bangla Desh " and " Give Me Love (Give Me Peace on Earth) " ? were similarly written very quickly . In the case of " Ding Dong " and other tracks from the Dark Horse album , however , author Simon Leng recognises this haste as an example of Harrison abandoning his careful approach to his own music over the 1973 ? 74 period , while remaining a " painstaking craftsman " on his concurrent projects with Ravi Shankar and the vocal duo Splinter . Preceding this change , elements of the British media had ridiculed Harrison 's continued association with the Hare Krishna movement , and some music critics had objected to the overtly spiritual content of his 1973 album Living in the Material World . With his marriage to Pattie Boyd all but over by the summer of 1973 , Harrison now wanted to be " one of the boys , not a spotlight @-@ grabbing philosopher " , according to Leng .

= = Production = =

= = = Initial recording = = =

Harrison recorded the rhythm track for " Ding Dong , Ding Dong " at his home studio , FPSHOT , in late November 1973 , during the first sessions for Dark Horse . Aside from himself , on acoustic guitar , the other musicians on the track were Gary Wright (piano) , Klaus Voormann (bass) , Ringo Starr and Jim Keltner (both on drums) ? all of whom had appeared on Living in the Material World earlier in the year . The recording engineer was Phil McDonald .

The sessions coincided with a period of domestic turbulence at Friar Park , with Harrison and Boyd both involved in extramarital affairs . They saw in the 1973 ? 74 New Year with a party at Starr 's Tittenhurst Park mansion ? which was an " absolute dud " of a night , according to their friend Chris O 'Dell , due to Harrison having openly declared his love for Starr 's wife , Maureen Starkey , a few days before . Boyd recalls that Harrison told her at the party : " Let 's have a divorce this year . "

= = = Overdubbing = = =

Harrison included a rough mix of " Ding Dong " on a tape he sent to Asylum Records boss David Geffen in January 1974 , shortly before travelling to India to visit Shankar and escape his unhappy domestic situation with Boyd . The purpose of the tape was to find a distributor for albums by Harrison 's future Dark Horse Records acts ? Shankar Family & Friends by Shankar , and Splinter 's The Place I Love ? both of which had started off as Harrison productions for the Beatles ' Apple record label . He added two songs of his own on the tape , with introductory comments about " Ding Dong " .

As outlined to Geffen , Harrison went on to adopt the Wall of Sound production technique of his former collaborator , American producer Phil Spector , in his subsequent work on the track . Harrison 's musical arrangement reflects the influence of the 1963 album A Christmas Gift for You , which contained Spector @-@ produced songs by the Ronettes , the Crystals and Darlene Love , while more recently Spector had co @-@ produced the Apple Records single " Happy Xmas (War Is Over) " single , by John Lennon and Yoko Ono . Some authors claim that with " Ding Dong " , Harrison set out to create a seasonal " classic " , in an attempt to match the British chart success of " Happy Xmas " and particularly of Slade 's " Merry Xmas Everybody " and Wizzard 's " I Wish It Could Be Christmas Everyday " ? two glam rock singles that were major UK hits over the winter of 1973 ? 74 . Leng cites the inclusion on the finished version of " Ding Dong " of harmonium and distorted electric guitars , similar to the Slade hit , while Harrison 's use of baritone saxophones , two drummers and tubular bells , together with a female choir , matched the arrangement on " I Wish It Could Be Christmas Everyday " , which was heavily influenced by Spector 's sound . Having incorporated aspects of Spector 's technique on Material World , Harrison 's aim with " Ding Dong , Ding Dong " , according to Leng , was an update of the Wall of Sound that reflected " the glam rock mood of the day " .

Harrison overdubbed call @-@ and @-@ response guitar riffs by Alvin Lee and Ron Wood onto the 1973 rhythm track , as well as his own slide guitars . Further overdubs included baritone and tenor saxophone parts by Tom Scott , and a second acoustic guitar , played by Mick Jones . Harrison also contributed on organ , clavinet and percussion , the last of which included tubular bells (or chimes) , sleigh bells and zither .

Harrison 's workload ensured that he was rushing to finish *Dark Horse* in October 1974 before beginning his North American tour with Shankar on 2 November . Described by Leng as " growled " , Harrison 's rough @-@ sounding singing on " Ding Dong " shows the effects of a long @-@ standing throat problem . Due to a combination of overexertion and abuse , this condition worsened , leading to him contracting laryngitis as he simultaneously completed his vocals for the album in Los Angeles and rehearsed for the tour . The female backing singers on the track remain uncredited .

= = Release = =

In the United Kingdom , " Ding Dong , Ding Dong " was released as the lead single from *Dark Horse* on 6 December 1974 (as Apple R 6002) . The B @-@ side was " I Don 't Care Anymore " , a non @-@ album track that Harrison recorded in a single take , specifically for the single .

In the United States , where " *Dark Horse* " had already been issued in advance of the album , " Ding Dong " was coupled with the instrumental " Hari 's on Tour (Express) " and released two days before Christmas (as Apple 1879) . Apple issued white label promotional discs to US radio stations , containing a 3 : 12 edit of the song . The single was available in a picture sleeve consisting of the song lyrics printed on an off @-@ white background , with stamped Om symbols and the FPSHOT logo . The record 's A @-@ side face label included a photo of Harrison 's new girlfriend , Olivia Arias , above the song information , whereas the UK single had Harrison 's face on both sides .

On the *Dark Horse* LP , the two face labels similarly alternated between a picture of Harrison and one of Arias . Combined with the positioning of " Ding Dong " as the opening track on side two , this detail gave the impression that the song represented Harrison 's ushering @-@ in of his future wife and a farewell to Boyd . In the album 's inner @-@ sleeve credits , Harrison listed one of the guitarists on the track as " Ron Would if you let him " , a reference to Wood 's brief affair with Boyd before she took up with Eric Clapton . He also acknowledged Frank Crisp for having provided " spirit " on the recording . In another farewell to the past , Harrison signed the so @-@ called " Beatles Agreement " papers in New York on 19 December , further severing the four former bandmates from the group 's legal identity .

Rather than the smash hit that Harrison had hoped for , " Ding Dong " was only moderately successful . The single peaked at number 38 in Britain and number 36 on America 's *Billboard* Hot 100 . Madinger and Easter write that the single did " remarkably well " , however , given that it was issued too late to take advantage of holiday @-@ season programming . Harrison 's single enjoyed more success internationally , climbing to number 10 in the Netherlands and number 12 in Belgium .

Despite " Ding Dong " having had what author Bruce Spizer terms a " respectable " chart run in America , Apple distributor Capitol Records omitted the song from its 1976 compilation *The Best of George Harrison* , which the company issued after Harrison had moved on to *Dark Horse Records* . Following *Dark Horse* 's CD release in 1992 , the song was unavailable in newly remastered form until the *Apple Years Harrison* reissues , released in September 2014 .

= = Critical reception = =

= = = Contemporary reviews = = =

The majority of music critics were unimpressed with " Ding Dong , Ding Dong " , and its release came in the wake of unfavourable reviews for the North American tour . In keeping with the song 's message , Harrison refused to celebrate the past in his concerts by pandering to nostalgia for the

Beatles , and many in the mainstream music press criticised the poor state of his voice and his decision to feature Ravi Shankar so heavily in the program .

In the UK , BBC DJ John Peel called " Ding Dong " " repetitive and dull " and accused Harrison of complacency , while the NME 's Bob Woffinden derided Dark Horse as " Just stuff and nonsense " , adding : " You keep looking for saving graces , for words of enthusiasm to pass on ? ' Ding Dong ' , you begin to think , for all its inane lyrics , has some spirit , but it really is very slight . " Harrison 's standing there was not helped by the presence of " I Don 't Care Anymore " on the B @-@ side , due to its casual delivery and the literal message in the song title . In a more favourable review , for Melody Maker , Chris Irwin wrote of the single : " We ? ve come to expect something with more substance than this glorified nursery rhyme from one of the most important musicians of the decade . True , it ? s catchy with a full chunky sound to bounce it along , but with an undeniable infectiousness of the sort normally associated with chicken pox or measles ... Curiously , records of such banality have a habit of selling in their zillions and this is bound to be a biggie . Hit . "

Jim Miller of Rolling Stone condemned Harrison for releasing an album with his voice blown and for his apparent disdain towards the Beatles ' legacy , and he dismissed the song as " a raspy stab at ' Auld Lang Syne ' " . Amid the scathing critique he gave Harrison 's tour and album , Jack Sheridan of Baltimore radio station WCAO cited " Ding Dong " as an example of how the former Beatle 's music had altered " so radically " . Writing in Circus Raves magazine , Michael Gross defended Harrison 's move away from the past , saying that Dark Horse matched the critically acclaimed All Things Must Pass , " surpassing it , at times , with its clarity of production and lovely songs " , and he praised " Ding Dong " , the title track and the Harrison ? Ron Wood collaboration " Far East Man " as " all , simply , good songs " . While remarking on the surprisingly late release for a holiday @-@ season single , Billboard 's reviewer deemed the track to be an " Extremely listenable performance " and added : " George has a genuine hit sound to offer here that 's just right for those early January time @-@ to @-@ change resolutions . Catchy , heavily percussive production in Harrison 's uptempo guru vein ? Get on it , jocks . "

In the 1978 edition of The Beatles : An Illustrated Record , Roy Carr and Tony Tyler dismissed the song as " meticulously @-@ played emptiness , a charmless reworking of the traditional peal o ' bells " before concluding : " A pox on it . " Writing in his 1977 book The Beatles Forever , Nicholas Schaffner rued that " the exquisite , painstaking arrangements " of Harrison 's earlier albums were absent from Dark Horse , and labelled " Ding Dong " " a string of greeting @-@ card clichés with trite music to match " .

= = = Retrospective assessment and legacy = = =

In his song review for AllMusic , Lindsay Planer writes of " Ding Dong , Ding Dong " : " While arguably simplistic , both lyrics and tune boast Harrison 's trademark optimism , especially during the affable and repeated chorus of ' Ring out the old / Ring in the new / Ring out the false / Ring in the true . ' " Harrison biographer Alan Clayson acknowledges the traditional pop merits of the song while explaining its underachievement : " With a chirpy @-@ chirpy cheapness worthy of Red Rose Speedway , ' Ding Dong , Ding Dong ' had all the credentials of a Yuletide smash but none that actually grabbed the public . " Writing for Goldmine magazine in January 2002 , Dave Thompson described it as " sweetly simplistic " and " a sterling stab at a Christmas anthem ? that deserved far better than its low Top 40 chart placings in the U.S. and Britain " .

In his 2010 book on Harrison for the Praeger Singer @-@ Songwriter series , Ian Inglis comments that the song had neither the " overt political message " of Lennon 's Christmas single nor the " unashamed commercialism " of Paul McCartney 's " Wonderful Christmastime " , and writes that " Ding Dong " ' s " somewhat halfhearted festive appeal " seems out of place on Dark Horse . Simon Leng views the song as an " intermittently amusing rocker " , but with the perilous state of Harrison 's voice on the recording , " Ding Dong " would have benefited from " hibernating another winter " . Author Robert Rodriguez opines that whereas Harrison 's " rough @-@ hewn " vocals on " Dark Horse " had enhanced that song , his " Father Time impression " did nothing for " Ding Dong " .

Among reviews of the 2014 Apple Years reissue of Dark Horse , Paste magazine 's Robert Ham

refers to the song as " a Christmas anthem ? that is as infectious as McCartney 's ' Wonderful Christmastime ' and as globally minded as Lennon 's ' Happy Xmas (War Is Over) ' " . Conversely , Paul Trynka of Classic Rock magazine singles out " Ding Dong , Ding Dong " as the one song that " embarrasses " on an album that is otherwise " packed with beautiful , small @-@ scale moments " . Trynka labels it " George 's own Frog Chorus " , with reference to McCartney 's 1984 children 's song , " We All Stand Together " , and adds : " its clunking glam evokes those horrible 70s TV shows where DJs drool over dollybirds in hotpants . "

In December 1999 , while promoting his album I Wanna Be Santa Claus , Starr hosted a Christmas @-@ themed radio show for New York 's MJI Broadcasting , during which he featured " Ding Dong " along with the singles by Lennon and McCartney , as well as seasonal recordings by Spector and by a selection of Motown artists . Japanese act Hi Limits & Kenichi Kurusawa covered the song on East West Records ' Gentle Guitar Dreams Harrison tribute album , released in May 2002 . Harrison 's original still receives some airplay over the Christmas ? New Year period . Unlike " Happy Xmas " , however , and , to a lesser extent , " Wonderful Christmastime " , " Ding Dong " never achieved the status of a perennial holiday classic .

= = Promo clip = =

Harrison compiled a 16mm colour film for " Ding Dong , Ding Dong " , the first time he made a promotional clip for one of his singles . The film was little seen at the time of release ; it was first broadcast in January 1975 , on UK television , and then on the French network TF1 's show Midi Premiere in May that year . The video was issued officially on disc eight of Harrison 's Apple Years 1968 ? 75 box set in September 2014 . Described as " a hoot " by Robert Rodriguez , it conveys what Harrison deemed the " comical " aspect of the song . Leng describes the clip as " sporadically amusing " and says of its content : " As the audiences at the Dark Horse Tour concerts were about to discover , the only ' old ' that he wanted to ' ring out ' was the Beatles . "

Harrison appears in a range of Beatles @-@ related costumes while miming to the track . His attire in these scenes represents a chronology of periods in the band 's career ? starting with the Hamburg @-@ era black leathers , followed by 1963 mop @-@ top wig and grey collarless suit , and then the iconic Sgt. Pepper uniform from 1967 . During these scenes , he plays a mix of guitars , including his famous Rickenbacker 12 @-@ string , as used in the Beatles ' 1964 film A Hard Day 's Night , and the Gibson Les Paul (christened " Lucy ") that Clapton had used on the recording of " While My Guitar Gently Weeps " in September 1968 . The Sgt. Pepper portion shows Harrison playing a tuba while , behind him , an Indian man plays a sitar . Harrison also re @-@ creates Lennon and Ono 's Two Virgins album cover , by appearing naked save for an acoustic guitar and a pair of furry boots . Another change of costume and instrument , to denims and dobro , supports his stated rejection during the tour of early- ' 70s era , " Bangla Desh George " .

Harrison is also seen walking around the grounds of Friar Park . In these scenes , he wears scruffy , present @-@ day attire that represents " his own , new identity " , according to Leng , who likens Harrison 's appearance to the character on the cover of Jethro Tull 's Aqualung album . Harrison mimes the final choruses inside the house , filmed in close @-@ up and surrounded by a cast of " dwarfs , gnomes and other Pythonesque characters " . At the end of the clip , he is seen at the flagpole on the roof of the house , replacing a pirate standard with his yellow @-@ and @-@ red Om flag ? a gesture that was the opposite of Boyd 's when she learned of Harrison 's affair with Maureen Starkey . The video was directed by Harrison and filmed by Nick Knowland .

= = Personnel = =

Adapted from Harrison 's original handwritten credits , as reproduced in the 2014 Dark Horse CD booklet :

George Harrison ? vocals , 12 @-@ string acoustic guitar , slide guitars , organ , clavinet , percussion , backing vocals

Tom Scott ? saxophones , horn arrangement

Gary Wright ? piano
Klaus Voormann ? bass
Jim Keltner ? drums
Ringo Starr ? drums
Ron Wood ? electric guitar
Alvin Lee ? electric guitar
Mick Jones ? acoustic guitar
uncredited ? female choir

= = Chart positions = =