

= Paranoid Android =

" Paranoid Android " is a song by the English alternative rock band Radiohead from on their third album OK Computer ( 1997 ) . The darkly humourous lyrics were written primarily by singer Thom Yorke following an unpleasant experience in a Los Angeles bar . The song is more than six minutes long and contains four distinct sections . " Paranoid Android " takes its name from Marvin the Paranoid Android of Douglas Adams ' The Hitchhiker 's Guide to the Galaxy series .

Released as the lead single from OK Computer , " Paranoid Android " charted at number three on the UK Singles Chart . It was well received by music critics . It track has appeared regularly on lists of the best songs of all time , including Rolling Stone 's 500 Greatest Songs of All Time . Its animated music video , directed by Magnus Carlsson , was placed on heavy rotation on MTV , although the network censored portions containing nudity in the US . At the 1998 Brit Awards , the song was nominated for Best British Single . Since its release , the track has been covered by numerous artists working in a variety of musical genres . The song was included in the 2008 Radiohead : The Best Of collection .

= = Background and recording = =

Radiohead fused together parts from three different songs , each written by a different member of the band . The idea to combine the pieces into a single track was inspired in part by the structure of The Beatles ' " Happiness Is a Warm Gun " .

" Basically an excuse to weld loads of half @-@ finished songs together , Abbey Road @-@ style . It 's Radiohead , pissed and having a party . I wasn 't there when it was all stuck together ? I 'd been sent to sleep it off . What 's it all about ? The fall of the Roman Empire . " ? Thom Yorke

Colin Greenwood admitted that the band , in attempting it to make the disparate elements work together , " felt like irresponsible schoolboys who were doing this ... naughty thing , ' cause nobody does a six @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half @-@ minute song with all these changes . It 's ridiculous " . The song was at first intended to be humorous , and took its title from Marvin the Paranoid Android in Douglas Adams ' The Hitchhiker 's Guide to the Galaxy series of books . Yorke said the title " was chosen as a joke . It was like , ' Oh , I 'm so depressed . ' And I just thought , that 's great . That 's how people would like me to be . And that was the end of writing about anything personal in the song . The rest of the song is not personal at all . " In an early interview , Colin Greenwood described it " just a joke , a laugh , getting wasted together over a couple of evenings and putting some different pieces together " . The band used Queen 's " Bohemian Rhapsody " and the work of the Pixies as reference points while writing ; yet Ed O 'Brien denies they wrote " a ' Bohemian Rhapsody ' for the nineties " , and Jonny Greenwood considers it too tense and simple to rival Queen 's song .

" Paranoid Android " was recorded in actress Jane Seymour 's 15th century mansion near the village of St Catherine , near Bath , Somerset . The first edit was over 14 minutes long and included a long organ interlude performed by Jonny Greenwood . Radiohead played this extended version during a tour with Alanis Morissette in September 1996 . " When we started playing it live , it was completely hilarious , " recalled O 'Brien . " There was a rave down section and a Hammond organ outro , and we 'd be pissing ourselves while we played . We 'd bring out the glockenspiel and it would be really , really funny . " Before the song 's first live performance , Yorke told audiences that " [ i ] f you can have sex to this one , you 're fucking weird . " He also sarcastically referred to the version of the song played during the tour as " a Pink Floyd cover " .

Inspired by the editing of The Beatles ' Magical Mystery Tour ( described by Colin Greenwood as " brutal " ) , Radiohead shortened the song to a final six and a half minutes , a process that led to Jonny Greenwood 's organ section being replaced by a substantially shorter guitar fade out . However , it took the band a year and a half to learn how to play the final version in live performance .

= = Composition and lyrics = =

" Paranoid Android " is a song described as alternative rock , art rock and progressive rock . It has four distinct sections , each played in standard tuning , and a 4 / 4 time signature , although several three @-@ bar segments in the second section are played in 7 / 8 timing . The opening segment is played in the key of C minor with a tempo of 84 beats per minute ( BPM ) , and begins with a mid @-@ tempo acoustic guitar backed by shaken percussion before layered with electric guitar and Yorke 's vocals . The melody of the opening vocal lines span an octave and a third . The second section is written in the key of A minor and begins about two minutes into the song . Although the second section retains the tempo of the first , it differs rhythmically . Ending the second section is a distorted guitar solo played by Jonny Greenwood , which lasts from 2 : 43 to 3 : 33 . The third section was written by Jonny Greenwood , and reduces the tempo to 63 BPM . The harmonies form a looped chord progression resembling a Baroque passacaglia , with the tonality split between C minor and D minor . This section uses multi @-@ tracked , choral vocal arrangement and according to Dai Griffiths , a " chord sequence [ that ordinarily ] would sound seedy , rather like something by the band Portishead " .

The fourth and final section , which begins at 5 : 35 , is a brief instrumental reprise of the second movement that serves as a coda . After a second solo , a brief guitar riff is introduced , which Jonny Greenwood says " was something I had floating around for a while and the song needed a certain burn . It happened to be the right key and the right speed and it fit right in . " The song ends , as does the second section , with a short chromatically descending guitar motif .

" Paranoid Android " is categorised by three distinct moods written in what Yorke referred to as three different states of mind . The song 's lyrics tie in with a number of themes common in OK Computer , including insanity , violence , slogans , and political objection to capitalism . Yorke 's lyrics were based on an unpleasant experience at a Los Angeles bar during which he was surrounded by strangers high on cocaine . In particular , Yorke was frightened by a woman who became violent after someone spilled a drink on her . Yorke characterised the woman as " inhuman " , and said " There was a look in this woman 's eyes that I 'd never seen before anywhere . ... Couldn 't sleep that night because of it . " The woman inspired the line " kicking squealing Gucci little piggy " in the song 's second section . Yorke , referring to the line " With your opinions , which are of no consequence at all " , said that " Again , that 's just a joke . It 's actually the other way around ? it 's actually my opinion that is of no consequence at all . "

= = Release and reception = =

While Colin Greenwood said the song was " hardly the radio @-@ friendly , breakthrough , buzz bin unit shifter [ radio stations ] have been expecting , " Capitol supported the band 's choice for the song as a lead single . Radiohead premiered " Paranoid Android " on the BBC Radio 1 programme The Evening Session in April 1997 , nearly a month before its release as a single . Melody Maker revealed that a Radio 1 producer had to " have a bit of a lie down " after first hearing the song . It was released as a single on 26 May 1997 , chosen by the band to prepare listeners for the musical direction of its parent album . Despite an initial lack of radio play , " Paranoid Android " charted at number three on the UK Singles Chart , giving Radiohead their highest singles chart position . As the song 's popularity grew , Radio 1 played it up to 12 times a day . Yorke described the song 's appearance on Radio 1 as one of his proudest moments of the OK Computer era . The track also spent two weeks on Australia 's ARIA Singles Chart , where it charted at number 29 .

" Paranoid Android " was favourably reviewed by critics . NME chose it as its " Single of the Week " , and journalist Simon Williams described how the song " [ s ] prawns out like a plump man on a small sofa , featuring all manner of crypto @-@ flamenco shufflings , medieval wailings , furiously wrenched guitars and ravishingly over @-@ ambitious ideas . Possesses one of the most unorthodox ' axe ' solos known to mankind . " The style of the song was compared to that of Queen by Rolling Stone 's Mark Kemp , while other critics , including David Browne of Entertainment Weekly , Jon Lusk of the BBC and Simon Williams of NME wrote about its similarity to Queen 's " Bohemian Rhapsody " . Williams described the song as being " not unlike ' Bohemian Rhapsody "

being played backwards by a bunch of Vietnam vets high on Kings Cross @-@ quality crack " . Kemp praised the song 's mix of acoustic and electronic instrumentation , which he believed were melded to produce " complex tempo changes , touches of dissonance , ancient choral music and a King Crimson @-@ like melodic structure " . Meanwhile Browne wrote of " celestial call @-@ and @-@ response vocal passages , dynamically varied sections , and Thom Yorke 's high @-@ voiced bleat " . The A.V. Club called the song unforgettable and an " amazing epic single " .

Several reviewers noted the record 's ambition . Slant Magazine described the song 's lyrics as a " multipart anti @-@ yuppie anthem whose ambition is anything but ugly " , and Andy Gill wrote in The Independent that " Paranoid Android " could be the most ambitious single since Richard Harris ' " MacArthur Park " . Craig McLean of The Sydney Morning Herald described " Paranoid Android " as " a titanic guitar opera in three movements and 6 [ and a half ] minutes " . PopMatters ' Evan Sawdey called the song OK Computer 's " sweeping , multi @-@ tiered centerpiece " , Peter and Jonathan Buckley wrote in The Rough Guide to Rock that it was the album 's " breathtaking high point " . Allmusic 's Stephen Thomas Erlewine called " Paranoid Android " " complex , multi @-@ segmented ... tight , melodic , and muscular " , and said it displayed Radiohead at their most adventurous . Browne admitted that , partially because of " Paranoid Android " , OK Computer was significantly more expansive than The Bends . Rolling Stone placed the song at number 256 on its 500 Greatest Songs of All Time list , and Pitchfork Media included the song at number 4 on their Top 200 Tracks of the 90s .

= = Music video = =

Remarking on the band 's goals for the " Paranoid Android " music video , Yorke said that , " When it came time to make the video for that song , we had lots of people saying , ' Yeah , great , we can have another video like " Street Spirit " , all moody and black and dark . Well , no . We had really good fun doing this song , so the video should make you laugh . I mean , it should be sick , too . " Magnus Carlsson , Swedish creator of the animated series Robin , was commissioned by the band to make the video . Radiohead were fans of the show , and connected with the Robin character ; Jonny Greenwood described him as " affectionate " and " vulnerable " , while Yorke admitted that he found Robin " quite the vulnerable character , but he 's also violently cynical and quite tough and would always get up again . " At first Carlsson sought to work on a video for " No Surprises " and was uncertain as to how to approach " Paranoid Android " . Eventually he devised a scenario to the band 's liking after he locked himself in his office for over 12 hours to stare out of the window , while listening to the song on repeat while jotting down visual ideas . As Carlsson did not have access to the lyrics at the time , the concept for the video was based entirely on the song 's sound . According to Yorke , the band " deliberately didn 't send Magnus the lyrics " because they " didn 't want [ the video ] to be too literal . "

Like Robin , the " Paranoid Android " video is drawn in a simplistic style that emphasises bold colours and clear , strong lines . It features Robin and his friend Benjamin venturing into the world , running into miserable EU representatives , bullying pub patrons , a prostitute , two kissing leathermen , a drug addict , deranged businessmen , mermaids and an angel who plays table tennis with Robin . The band appears in cameo at a bar , where they are shown drinking while watching a man with a head coming out of his belly dancing on their table . However , in this cameo only the versions of Yorke and Jonny Greenwood resemble themselves ; O 'Brien said " If you freeze @-@ frame it on the video , the guy with the five strands of hair slicked back , that 's Colin . It looks nothing like him . " Colin Greenwood said " there was no way that we could appear in it to perform in it because that would be so Spinal Tap " and that having animations that did not resemble the band members allowed the video to be " twisted and colorful which is how the song is anyway " . Yorke was ultimately pleased with the video , saying that it " is really about the violence around [ Robin ] , which is exactly like the song . Not the same specific violence as in the lyrics , but everything going on around him is deeply troubling and violent , but he 's just drinking himself into oblivion . He 's there , but he 's not there . That 's why it works . And that 's why it does my head in every time I see it . "

While the single did not receive significant radio play in the US , MTV placed its video on high rotation . The version most often shown was edited to remove the mermaids ' bare breasts . Greenwood said , " we would 've understood if they had a problem with some guy chopping his arms and legs off , but I mean , a woman 's breasts ! And mermaids as well ! It 's fucked up . " MTV Europe played the video uncut for two weeks because the channel 's official censor was ill and unable to work ; after that time the channel ran the cut version of the video . A later US version of the video saw the mermaids wear bathing suits , while the uncut version was later compiled along with other Radiohead videos on the DVD and home video release 7 Television Commercials and The Best Of DVD .

Evan Sawdey of PopMatters described the video as " bizarre @-@ yet @-@ fitting " , and Melody Maker said it represented a stunning " psycho @-@ cartoon " . Adrian Glover of Circus called the animation incredible and the video " really cool " . MTV vice president of music Lewis Largent told Spin " You can watch ' Paranoid Android ' a hundred times and not figure it all out . "

= = Packaging = =

Stanley Donwood worked with Yorke to design the artwork for most of the " Paranoid Android " releases , although both the images and design were ultimately credited to " dumb computers " . The cover illustration accompanying the single depicts a hand @-@ drawn dome contains the phrase " God loves his children , yeah ! " , the last line of the song , written above on the uppermost plane . Images from the OK Computer artwork reappear , including a pig and two human figures shaking hands . Writer Tim Footman suggested that these images are borrowed from Pink Floyd , respectively corresponding to the Pink Floyd pigs and Wish You Were Here cover . The cover of the CD2 single is tinted differently from the CD1 single . The UK vinyl release did not include the dome artwork found on the CD singles , but feature images taken from the OK Computer release across the top banner area .

The two versions of the single have different messages on the reverse . Both the CD1 and Japanese releases state :

To kill a demon made of wet sawdust . This sort of demon is almost impossible to kill the only way to do it is to cover its face with wet bread and karate chop its head off otherwise you are in trouble and so is the neighbourhood . Wet sawdust demons like to terrorise . N.B. pressing its face into wet bread that is on the ground works best though you can get a result just by throwing the bread at its face .

Written on the back of the CD2 single is :

A cathedral of white in a suburban shanty town two up two down houses with just the asbestos and the skeletons left .

Each release of " Paranoid Android " included one or more B @-@ sides . " Polyethylene ( Parts 1 & 2 ) " , included on the CD1 , 7 @-@ inch vinyl , and Japanese releases of the single , were a multi @-@ section piece formatted much like " Paranoid Android " itself . The first part of the song consists of Yorke 's vocals over acoustic guitar ; the second part contains distorted guitar and organ and uses complex time signature changes . " Pearly \* " , featured on the CD1 and Japanese releases of the single , was described by Yorke as a " dirty song for people who use sex for dirty things " . " A Reminder " , which appears on the CD2 release , features fuzzed guitar , thumping drums , and electric piano . According to Yorke , this song was inspired by " this idea of someone writing a song , sending it to someone , and saying : ' If I ever lose it , you just pick up the phone and play this song back to remind me . ' " " Melatonin " , also on the CD2 release , is a synthesiser @-@ based song with lyrics similar to that of a lullaby , but with an undercurrent of menace in lines like " Death to all who stand in your way " . The OK Computer track " Let Down " is also included on the Japanese single .

= = Cover versions = =

YouTube cover artist Mike Massé recorded a live acoustic version of " Paranoid Android " with Jeff

Hall on 9 / 8 / 08 at the Pie Pizzeria in Salt Lake City , Utah .

Jazz pianist Brad Mehldau recorded a nine @-@ minute cover of " Paranoid Android " on his album Largo ( 2002 ) , featuring percussionists Jim Keltner and Matt Chamberlain , as well as a horn section . Additionally , Mehldau performed a 19 @-@ minute version of the song on Live in Tokyo ( 2004 ) .

The University of Massachusetts Amherst Minuteman Marching Band covered the song live in a version featuring xylophones , chimes , snare drums , cymbals , bass drum and timpani .

Numerous Radiohead tribute albums include a version of " Paranoid Android " , including Rockabye Baby ! Lullaby Renditions of Radiohead and Plastic Mutations : The Electronic Tribute to Radiohead .

The reggae group Easy Star All @-@ Stars covered OK Computer in its entirety for Radiodread ( 2006 ) . Producer Michael G noted that " Paranoid Android " was particularly difficult to arrange for reggae , saying " There are songs like ' Paranoid Android ' , which flips between 4 / 4 time and 7 / 8 time about 13 times , and I also had to think about other ways to reinterpret those parts with horns , melodica , organ ... it was a great challenge . "

Sia Furler covered the song for the neo soul tribute Exit Music : Songs with Radio Heads ( 2006 ) , and this version later appeared on The O.C. episode " The Chrismukkk @-@ huh ? " .

" Paranoid Android " has also been covered by classical musicians . Christopher O 'Riley arranged " Paranoid Android " for a single piano and performed the song on Hold Me to This ( 2005 ) .

Los Angeles string quartet The Section recorded the song for Strung Out on OK Computer : The String Quartet Tribute to Radiohead ( 2001 ) ; half of this quartet went on to form the Section Quartet , who performed " Paranoid Android " and the rest of OK Computer during two concerts in October 2006 .

Weezer covered " Paranoid Android " in both a live studio version released as a YouTube video and in concerts during their 2011 summer tour . Pitchfork 's Tom Breihan called the Weezer cover " a fucking weird experience " , and Jenny Eliscu of Rolling Stone criticised the song as " mainly boring " for not venturing far enough from Weezer 's traditional sound .

= = Track listings = =

All songs written by Thom Yorke , Jonny Greenwood , Ed O 'Brien , Colin Greenwood , and Phil Selway .

= = Personnel = =

Thom Yorke - vocals , acoustic guitar , laptop

Jonny Greenwood - electric guitar , electric piano , synthesizers , mellotron

Ed O 'Brien - electric guitar , effects , cabasa , backing vocals

Colin Greenwood - bass guitar , claves

Phil Selway - drums and percussion

= = Charts = =