

= Long , Long , Long =

" Long , Long , Long " is a song by the English rock band the Beatles from their 1968 album The Beatles ( also known as " the White Album " ) . It was written by George Harrison following the group 's attendance at Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 's Transcendental Meditation course in India in early 1968 . Although Harrison later stated that he was addressing God in the lyrics , it is the first of his compositions that invites interpretation as both a standard love song and a paean to his deity .

Harrison wrote " Long , Long , Long " during a period that marked his emergence as a prolific songwriter , coinciding with his return to the guitar after two years of studying the Indian sitar . His musical inspiration for the song was " Sad Eyed Lady of the Lowlands " by Bob Dylan , while the understated arrangement reflects the influence of the Band 's 1968 album Music from Big Pink . The Beatles recorded the song in London towards the end of the troubled sessions for the White Album . Sequenced to follow the heavy rock @-@ styled " Helter Skelter " , the otherwise gentle and meditative track ends with a partly improvised segment , which was inspired by the eerie sound of a wine bottle vibrating on a speaker in the recording studio .

" Long , Long , Long " has received praise from many music critics for its lilting , expressive qualities . Ian MacDonald described it as Harrison 's " touching token of exhausted , relieved reconciliation with God " and considered it to be his " finest moment on The Beatles " . Elliott Smith and Jim James are among the other artists who have recorded or performed the song .

= = Background and inspiration = =

George Harrison wrote " Long , Long , Long " in August 1968 , while the Beatles were part @-@ way through the recording of their eponymous double album , also known as " the White Album " . It was one of many songs that marked Harrison 's return to the guitar as his principal musical instrument , after he had dedicated himself to mastering the Indian sitar in 1966 . This period coincided with a new , prolific period in his songwriting , which musicologist Walter Everett likens to the arrival of John Lennon and Paul McCartney as composers in 1963 .

According to author and critic Kenneth Womack , the " origins " of " Long , Long , Long " date from the Beatles ' stay in Rishikesh , India , between February and April 1968 . Led by Harrison 's commitment , the four band members studied Transcendental Meditation there under Maharishi Mahesh Yogi . They departed for England separately , however , between 1 March and 12 April , and their mixed experiences on the course contributed to the divisiveness that pervaded the group upon their return . Alone among the Beatles , Harrison continued to espouse the Maharishi 's teachings , a position that left him isolated within the band . Author Simon Leng describes " Long , Long , Long " as the first song in which Harrison " share [ d ] the spiritual refuge he 'd found " through meditation , as well as " a confluence of the Indian , folk , and spiritual influences " that had preoccupied him since 1966 .

In his autobiography , I , Me , Mine , Harrison states that " the ' you ' in ' Long Long Long ' is God . " He also says that his musical inspiration for the composition was Bob Dylan 's " Sad Eyed Lady of the Lowlands " ? specifically , " D to E minor , A and D ? those three chords and the way they moved " . As a further influence in " Long , Long , Long " , Leng cites the release of the Band 's debut album , Music from Big Pink , which " signaled the rebirth of ' the song ' " as an alternative to the excesses of 1967 @-@ era psychedelia .

= = Composition = =

According to musicologist Alan Pollack , " Long , Long , Long " is " an off @-@ beat mixture " of contemporary musical styles ; he identifies it as " a three @-@ way cross between jazz waltz , folk song , and late sixties psychedelia " . The song is in the key of F , played with a capo on the guitar 's third fret , so allowing for the chord shapes that Harrison admired in " Sad Eyed Lady of the Lowlands " . The melody appears to fluctuate from the home key , however , due to its avoidance of perfect cadences , as the dominant , C7 chord resists anchoring on the tonic I chord of F major . In

addition , all plagal changes ( in this case , B ? to F major ) are fleeting . The composition also makes use of jazz @-@ style ninth chords .

Lyricaly , the song takes the form of a reconciliation with a loved one after a long period of estrangement . Theologian Dale Allison considers that , given the " cryptic " nature of the lyrics , it is only through Harrison 's subsequent comments that the listener knows that he is addressing God rather than a woman . Allison likens the song 's message to that of later Harrison compositions such as " Try Some , Buy Some " and " Heading for the Light " , through its conveying of a " conversion experience " .

The lyrics ' reference to an extreme length of time is accentuated by the stretching out of an already slow 6 / 8 metre into 9 / 8 , and , during the verses , by the appending of a measure @-@ long instrumental tag after each two bars of vocal melody . Partly as a result of the absence of resolution in the home key , the descending bassline in the verses ? a 4 @-@ 3 @-@ 2 @-@ 1 sequence of notes mirroring the IV @-@ iii @-@ ii @-@ I chord pattern ? establishes an almost subliminal tonic .

The mood of the song is gentle and meditative , with the more strident middle eight providing a brief departure from the calmness . In this section , Harrison sings of " So many tears I was searching / So many tears I was wasting " , a statement that , according to author Ian Inglis , reflects the singer 's " rejoicing in his discovery of a deity to guide him through the vicissitudes of life " . Everett remarks on the close similarity between " Long , Long , Long " and " Sad Eyed Lady of the Lowlands " , as well as an understated musical mood akin to the Band 's early work . The song 's ending , which would come about through happenstance while the Beatles were working in the recording studio , is marked by Harrison playing a final , G minor 7th chord , which author Ian MacDonald considers " one of the most resonant [ chords ] in The Beatles ' discography " .

= = Recording = =

Under the working title " It 's Been a Long , Long , Long Time " , recording for the song began at EMI 's Abbey Road Studios in London on 7 October 1968 , during the final week of sessions for the White Album . Since the start of the project , in late May , the album sessions had been fraught with disharmony , partly as a result of the constant presence of Yoko Ono , Lennon 's new partner , and disagreements within the band over their new business venture , Apple Corps . While noting the context of the song 's recording , MacDonald describes " Long , Long , Long " as Harrison 's " touching token of exhausted , relieved reconciliation with God " .

The session for " Long , Long , Long " was a relaxed occasion , with the burning of Indian incense helping to create the requisite atmosphere in the studio . The Beatles recorded 67 takes of the rhythm track , with Harrison on vocals and acoustic guitar , McCartney playing Hammond organ , and Ringo Starr on drums .

In his book on the history of ambient music , Mark Prendergast cites " Long , Long , Long " as a ballad " noteworthy for its Ambient production " . The idea for the end of the song was inspired by the sound created by a wine bottle sitting on a Leslie speaker , through which the organ was connected . Whenever McCartney played a certain note on the keyboard , the bottle began to vibrate , producing an eerie clattering sound that the Beatles decided to incorporate in their subsequent performances of the track . To compound the effect on the selected take , Starr played a fast snare drum roll and Harrison vocalised a prolonged , high @-@ pitched wail . While noting the " palpable spiritual longing " conveyed in the song , Chris Gerard of PopMatters describes this coda as a " weird spectral ending , with Harrison wailing like a wounded ghost while the band members rattle their instruments ominously " .

Nine hours after this all @-@ night session , the band returned to Abbey Road to carry out overdubs . Harrison added a second vocal and another acoustic guitar part , the latter consisting of riffs that recall the sound of a sitar , due to the strings buzzing against the frets . During the same session , McCartney overdubbed bass guitar onto the track . The recording was finished on 9 October , with the addition of a brief harmony vocal from McCartney and piano , over the middle eight , played by Chris Thomas .

Mixing on " Long , Long , Long " was completed on 14 October , with Starr 's drum fills given prominence in the mix . Relative to the stereo version , the contrast between the song 's quiet and louder moments is less pronounced in the mono mix , where Harrison 's second vocal part also arrives earlier on the opening line .

= = Release and reception = =

Apple Records released The Beatles on 22 November 1968 , with " Long , Long , Long " appearing as the final track on side three of the double LP . The sequencing ensured that the song provided what author Mark Hertsgaard terms " a calm landing pad " after McCartney 's heavy rock @-@ styled " Helter Skelter " . Shortly after the album 's release , Harrison spent time with Dylan and the Band in Woodstock , in upstate New York . In addition to co @-@ writing " I 'd Have You Anytime " with Dylan , Harrison further established his independence from the Beatles during this visit , which music critic John Harris views as the foundation for his 1970 triple album All Things Must Pass .

Among contemporary reviews of The Beatles , Alan Walsh of Melody Maker admired the song as " a gentle , lilting track " while , less impressed , Record Mirror considered it " not a strong tune " , with drums " monopolising the sound " . In his review for The Times , William Mann described " Long , Long , Long " as " a melting love song in slow waltz tempo " and rated it the equal of the nine best , " superbly inventive " compositions credited to Lennon ? McCartney .

Recalling the release in his 1977 book The Beatles Forever , Nicholas Schaffner said that in departing from the overtly Indian style of his previous compositions for the Beatles , Harrison had provided " a quartet of more conventionally accessible pop songs that many felt were among the finest on the [ White Album ] " . While acknowledging Harrison 's limitations as a singer compared with Lennon and McCartney , Schaffner added : " but when he tones his voice down to an ethereal near @-@ whisper , as in ' Long Long Long , ' he can evoke as well as anyone the magic and the mystery of what [ music journalist ] Jonathan Cott has called ' the music of deep silence . ' "

= = Retrospective assessment and legacy = =

AllMusic editor Stephen Thomas Erlewine views " Long , Long , Long " as " haunting " and , along with its composer 's three other White Album tracks ? " While My Guitar Gently Weeps " , " Savoy Truffle " and " Piggies " ? evidence that Harrison 's songwriting " deserved wider exposure " than his typical quota of two songs on each Beatles LP . Less impressed with Harrison 's other contributions to the album , Ian MacDonald welcomes " Long , Long , Long " with the words : " at last ? the real George . " MacDonald considers it to be " Harrison 's finest moment on The Beatles : simple , direct , and , in its sighing , self @-@ annihilating coda , devastatingly expressive " . Conversely , although he acknowledges its effectiveness in following " Helter Skelter " , Tim Riley identifies " Long , Long , Long " as the weakest of the four Harrison songs , which are otherwise all " essentials " and " regain [ ed ] the promise " shown by his three compositions on the Beatles ' Revolver album . Author Jonathan Gould praises the track as a " dark beautiful ballad " and a " breakthrough " for Harrison as a vocalist and composer , since it represents " the first time he ever allowed himself to sound humbled by his emotions in a song " . Music critic Chris Ingham , writing for Rough Guides , similarly includes it among " a new phase " of Harrison compositions , along with " Something " and " Here Comes the Sun " , in which " warmth and sweetness " replaced the dissonant qualities of his Indian @-@ inspired melodies .

In a 1998 review , the NME described " Long , Long , Long " as " redemptive " and " one of many hidden delights " on The Beatles , in addition to citing it as an example of how , even when relations within the band were at their most disharmonious , " the Beatles ' riches were manifold " . Writing for Rolling Stone in 2002 , Greg Kot deemed the song to be " quintessential Harrison , summarizing the impending exhaustion of the Beatles and the era they defined , while pointing the way toward the spiritual heights achieved by his solo debut masterpiece , All Things Must Pass " . In his obituary of the former Beatle , for Rock 's Backpages , Mat Snow included " Long , Long , Long " among his favourite Harrison compositions , saying : " for my money the music of George Harrison is most

compelling when dwelling in those strange shadows of elusive regret and longing , even fear ... " David Quantick of Uncut admires the track as " a yearning , beautiful song ... an oasis of calm and faith " .

" Long , Long , Long " was ranked 80th in Mojo magazine 's 2006 list " The 101 Greatest Beatles Songs " , where musician Colin Newman described it as " achingly beautiful " and " like the album in microcosm ... A lament for a long @-@ lost love which ends with a ghostly freakout . " In a similar list , in 2011 , Rolling Stone ranked the song at number 98 . Conversely , in 2012 , readers of The Daily Telegraph voted " Long , Long , Long " as the fifth worst Beatles track . The following year , Mojo listed it at number 9 in a poll to determine " the ultimate list of connoisseurs ' Beatles ' songs " , as defined by any track not included on the band 's greatest @-@ hits compilations 1962 ? 1966 and 1967 ? 1970 .

= = Cover versions = =

In 1987 , Daniel Amos vocalist Terry Scott Taylor recorded what Trouser Press admired as a " first @-@ rate cover " of " Long , Long , Long " for his album A Briefing for the Ascent . Conversely , Sean Carruthers of AllMusic considers singer Tom Hooper 's 2002 cover to be a version that " manages to drain the life " out of the composition . Elliott Smith included " Long , Long , Long " in his live performances . His biographer Benjamin Nugent writes that the song appealed to Smith amid his struggles with depression and drug addiction , as " a ballad about trying to get rid of self @-@ imposed suffering and returning to a place where you can relate to other people " .

A recording by Tanya Donelly appeared on her 2006 album This Hungry Life and later on a CD accompanying Uncut 's feature article on Harrison 's career , in the August 2008 issue of the magazine . My Morning Jacket lead singer Jim James opened his 2009 EP of Harrison compositions , Tribute To , with the song ? a cover that Drowned in Sound praised as " not only the standout moment , but also one of the most beautiful and arresting songs of the year " . Having recorded the EP within days of Harrison 's death in November 2001 , James said he decided to release it eight years later partly as a result of attending the David Lynch Foundation 's Transcendental Meditation awareness concert , " Change Begins Within " , where " [ Harrison ] ' s name came up a lot ... his spirit was very big at that event . "

= = Personnel = =

According to Ian MacDonald :

George Harrison ? double @-@ tracked lead vocal , acoustic guitars

Paul McCartney ? harmony vocal , Hammond organ , bass guitar

Ringo Starr ? drums

Chris Thomas ? piano