

= Far East Man =

" Far East Man " is a song written by English musicians George Harrison and Ronnie Wood , each of whom released a recording of the song in 1974 . Wood 's version appeared on I 've Got My Own Album to Do , his debut solo album , and Harrison 's on Dark Horse . Their only official songwriting collaboration , " Far East Man " is an affirmation of friendship in the face of life 's obstacles and musically reflects the two guitarists ' adoption of the soul genre . Written mostly by Harrison , the composition has been interpreted as a restatement of the humanitarian message expressed in his 1971 single " Bangla Desh " , and a tribute to Indian musician Ravi Shankar .

The song originated during a period of romantic intrigue surrounding Harrison 's marriage to Pattie Boyd and Wood 's to his wife Krissie , which culminated in Boyd leaving Harrison for his and Wood 's mutual friend Eric Clapton . Wood recorded " Far East Man " in July 1974 at The Wick , his Surrey home that had also become an established meeting place for many leading rock musicians . Harrison sang and played slide guitar on this version , while other contributors included Wood 's Faces bandmate Ian MacLagan , Mick Taylor of the Rolling Stones , and drummer Andy Newmark . The Harrison recording took place at his Friar Park studio and features backing from Billy Preston , Tom Scott , Willie Weeks and Newmark , all of whom then played on his 1974 North American tour with Shankar . Opening with a spoken dedication to Frank Sinatra , the Dark Horse recording was marred by Harrison 's damaged singing voice ? a result of his rushing to complete the album 's vocal parts in Los Angeles , while simultaneously rehearsing for the tour .

Several commentators have singled out " Far East Man " as a highlight of Harrison 's 1974 album . While noting the two composers ' troubled private lives during the song 's creation , author Simon Leng describes it as " a wistful shrug of the shoulders set to music " . In 2002 , Wood released a concert DVD titled Far East Man , which included a live version of the track . Recorded in December 2001 , two weeks after Harrison 's death from cancer , this performance features special guests Andrea Corr and Slash .

= = Background = =

Author Robert Rodriguez has written of " an informal musical round robin " existing in England during the early 1970s among rock music 's " elite " . From 1972 onwards , guitarist Ronnie Wood 's home in Richmond , Surrey ? The Wick ? was the preferred location for these get @-@ together , at which the participants included ex @-@ Beatle George Harrison , Wood 's Faces bandmates , and members of the Rolling Stones . Situated over a bend on the River Thames , and formerly the home of actor John Mills and novelist Mary Hayley Bell , The Wick was also where rehearsals took place for Eric Clapton 's comeback concerts at the Rainbow Theatre in January 1973 . These concerts featured Wood in the role of second guitarist and were organised by Pete Townshend of the Who , in an effort to pull Clapton out of his heroin @-@ induced seclusion . Harrison and his wife Pattie Boyd attended the Rainbow shows , on 13 January , and became friends with Wood and his wife , Krissie .

Musically during this period , Harrison and Wood participated in Alvin Lee 's recording of " So Sad " , a Harrison composition reflecting the failure of his marriage to Boyd . In October 1973 , the Woods stayed at Friar Park , Harrison 's estate in Oxfordshire , where he and Wood recorded together . They also began writing the song " Far East Man " , about which Harrison says in his 1980 autobiography , I , Me , Mine : " We stumbled on it and other things ... "

Beatles biographer Peter Doggett describes Friar Park as having become " a haven of adventurous intrigue " at this point , with Harrison conducting an affair with Maureen Starkey , the wife of his former bandmate Ringo Starr , and Clapton urging Boyd to leave her husband for him . During their stay at Friar Park , Wood began an affair with Boyd and the couple flew to the Bahamas , while Harrison and Krissie Wood holidayed together in Portugal . These details were kept from the press , but in late November 1973 , Wood issued a statement from The Wick confirming : " My romance with Patti Boyd is definitely on . " Given these developments , Rodriguez notes the irony in " Far East Man " being " a rumination on letting a friend down " .

= = Composition = =

The song began as an instrumental collaboration , which Harrison then finished alone . In I , Me , Mine , Harrison says that he and Wood came up with the melody to the verses together , but that , at Wood 's request , he later turned it into a song by writing the words and adding a middle eight . Harrison biographer Simon Leng describes the chord sequence as " a grin @-@ making exploration of major and minor sevenths that oozes smoochy soul " .

In the first verse , Harrison states :

While the world wages war

It gets harder to see

Who your friends really are ...

Author Ian Inglis interprets " Far East Man " as being about Indian sitar maestro Ravi Shankar , for whom Harrison had staged the Concert for Bangladesh in August 1971 . Three years later , with the new nation of Bangladesh still beset by problems , and conflict clouding the issue of friendship generally for Harrison , Inglis suggests that " this is one friendship [Harrison] is determined to preserve " . The choruses therefore promise : " I won 't let him down ... I won 't let him drown ... " Harrison later credited Shankar with being " probably the person who has influenced my life the most " , since " Indian music was like a stepping @-@ stone to the spiritual path " . Inglis views the song as reflecting Harrison 's commitment to " all the things that India has given him " .

Leng identifies " Far East Man " as a " hopeful song " , where , despite his confusion , Harrison 's " answer is to follow his instinct , his heart " . Leng sums up the conclusion that Harrison provides in the middle eight 's final line , " Can only do what it tells me " : " He surveys the problems of love , social strife , and disconnection from spiritual values , but decides that taking his own advice is a good enough start . "

While echoing this interpretation , theologian Dale Allison also highlights Harrison 's " humanitarian impulse , his regrets about the world 's current state , [and] his faint utopian hope for something better " as being evident in the lyrics to " Far East Man " . Allison likens the song to Harrison 's 1971 compositions " Bangla Desh " and " The Day the World Gets ' Round " , and suggests that in the choruses to " Far East Man " , Harrison is stating " his determination to help impoverished and oppressed peoples half a world away " .

As reproduced in his autobiography , Harrison 's original lyrics for the final verse included lines that he would change before recording his version of the song . The rewritten verse allows for an outlook that Allison describes as " a melioristic hope ... that people might be able to make the world a truly better place " :

Looks like right here on earth

God , it 's hellish at times

But I feel that a heaven 's in sight ...

According to his recollection in I , Me , Mine , Harrison wrote much of the lyrics to " Far East Man " while driving to The Wick to record the song . The title came about because the Faces had just returned from a tour of the Far East and Wood was wearing a T @-@ shirt that carried the slogan Far East Man , a play on the phrase " far out , man " .

= = Ronnie Wood 's version = =

= = = Recording = = =

In Ronnie , his 2007 autobiography , Wood writes that The Wick was " a hive of recording activity as well as a thriving debauchery camp " during the year @-@ long creation of his first solo release , I 've Got My Own Album to Do (1974) . The album title originated from contributors such as Harrison and Mick Jagger " nagging me to let them go home " and work on their own projects . Wood assisted Jagger in writing and recording the Rolling Stones ' 1974 single " It 's Only Rock ' n Roll "

during this period , and he similarly reciprocated Harrison , by playing on the former Beatle 's Christmas single , " Ding Dong , Ding Dong " .

The session for " Far East Man " took place at Wood 's home studio in June 1974 , during the same month that Boyd left Harrison and joined Clapton on tour in America . Harrison biographers note the significance of this session , since it introduced him to the rhythm section he subsequently used on his North American tour with Shankar ? bassist Willie Weeks and drummer Andy Newmark . According to the musician credits , Weeks did not play on this particular song , however .

The recording was produced by Wood and Gary Kellgren , the co @-@ owner of New York 's Record Plant studios , and whose work in taping the Concert for Bangladesh shows at Madison Square Garden had impressed Harrison . Rodriguez describes the musical arrangement on the song as " a slow soul groove " and views Wood 's version as " more Harrisonian " than Harrison 's later reading . The other musicians on the track were Rolling Stones lead guitarist Mick Taylor , playing bass ; Newmark ; Wood 's fellow Face Ian MacLagan , on electric piano ; and Jean Roussel , Cat Stevens ' regular keyboard player , on organ .

Harrison 's slide guitar and harmony vocals are prominent in the mix , yet he received a credit only for his songwriting contribution on early editions of the album . While discussing the track in 2012 on Sky Arts HD 's The Ronnie Wood Show , Wood recalled Harrison teaching him the vocal parts for " eighteen hours " , but Harrison 's own singing contribution had to be kept to a minimum in order to satisfy the requirements of " his publishers " .

= = = Release = = =

Warner Bros. Records released I 've Got My Own Album to Do in September 1974 , with " Far East Man " appearing as the second track , following Wood 's collaboration with Jagger , " I Can Feel the Fire " . With additional contributions from Keith Richards and Faces vocalist Rod Stewart , the album was well received critically .

Like Harrison , Wood continued to incorporate soul music in his solo recordings , working with former Valentino Bobby Womack on his follow @-@ up album , Now Look (1975) . By the time of that album 's release , Wood had replaced Taylor in the Rolling Stones , leading to Stewart announcing the break @-@ up of the Faces in December 1975 . Although Wood and Harrison never officially co @-@ wrote another song after " Far East Man " , their friendship continued , with Wood announcing in 1996 that he and Harrison were recording together .

The song appears on Wood 's career @-@ spanning compilation Anthology : The Essential Crossexion , released in 2006 . In their respective reviews for the websites AllMusic and musicOMH , Thom Jurek and Barnaby Smith each identify " Far East Man " as a highlight of the two @-@ disc set .

= = George Harrison 's version = =

= = = Recording = = =

Harrison taped the basic track for his version of " Far East Man " at Friar Park over August and September 1974 , during sessions for his album Dark Horse . Having " brushed up the lyrics a bit " , as he puts it in I , Me , Mine , Harrison retained Newmark and Weeks from the sessions with Wood , and brought in keyboard player Billy Preston and saxophonist and arranger Tom Scott , both of whom would also be part of his all @-@ American tour band . Leng describes " Far East Man " as " the first Harisong to tap into 1970s soul " and notes the " supreme soul credentials " of Newmark , as the former drummer with Sly and the Family Stone , and Weeks , who had supplied the highly regarded basslines on Donny Hathaway Live (1972) . Newmark later recalled of his and Weeks ' first sessions for Harrison : " We were completely thrilled to be asked to play on his record ? It was the most exciting thing to happen to me . I had to keep pinching myself to remember it was real . "

At the start of the song , Harrison delivers a spoken dedication to Frank Sinatra , adding : " we love

you , Frank , and we hope you include this one at Caesars Palace on your next live album . " This message referred to Sinatra 's adoption of the Harrison composition " Something " , which he lauded as " the greatest love song of the past fifty years " . On " Far East Man " , Inglis finds Scott 's multiple horn parts " reminiscent of the soul stylings " of King Curtis , Junior Walker and the Funk Brothers . Unlike on the Wood recording , Harrison 's slide guitar appears only midway through the Dark Horse version (overdubbed onto his rhythm guitar part) , in a solo that author Elliot Huntley describes as " wonderfully complement [ed] " by Scott 's " bachelor @-@ pad saxophones " .

Harrison 's commitment to his other projects ? such as starting up a new record label , Dark Horse Records , and organising Shankar 's European revue , the Music Festival from India ? affected progress on the album . According to authors Chip Madinger and Mark Easter , Harrison had to overdub much of his vocals while in Los Angeles for tour rehearsals , in October . Combined with his having to sing during the rehearsals , the overexertion damaged Harrison 's voice , compromising his performance on songs such as " Far East Man " . His throat condition worsened during the subsequent tour , earning Harrison highly unfavourable concert reviews from a number of critics , who objected also to the substantial stage @-@ time afforded Shankar 's ensemble .

= = = Release = = =

Dark Horse was released on Apple Records on 9 December 1974 in the United States , towards the end of the Harrison ? Shankar tour . Harrison sequenced " Far East Man " as the penultimate track , between " Dark Horse " , the album 's lead single in the US , and the pop @-@ bhajan " It Is ' He ' (Jai Sri Krishna) " .

Given Harrison 's marital problems , and the generally unfavourable reception given to his tour and album , author Gary Tillery describes his new relationship with Olivia Arias as " [t] he one bright spot in the problematic year " . Having met Arias in Los Angeles in October , Harrison used a photo of her on the face label for side two of the Dark Horse LP . Writing in 1981 , NME critic Bob Woffinden viewed the inclusion of this image , combined with the more upbeat message of side @-@ two songs such as " Ding Dong " and " Far East Man " , as Harrison ushering in Arias , his future wife , and farewelling Boyd .

= = = Reception = = =

Along with Jim Miller 's opinions in Rolling Stone magazine , Woffinden 's 1974 album review for the NME was one of the most scathing critiques . Woffinden bemoaned how on Dark Horse , " the radiant light of George 's spirituality is planted firmly under a bushel and darkness is not confined to equine matters " . He then wrote of the song : " [' Far East Man '] seems to have most chance of independent survival , especially as the song turned up in quite pleasant shape on Wood 's I 've Got My Own Album To Do , but here again the production effectively smothers it , and Harrison 's drab vocals complete the assassination . " By contrast , Michael Gross of Circus Raves magazine viewed the album as the equal of Harrison 's acclaimed All Things Must Pass (1970) and praised the song and its arrangement , writing : " Scott again excels on ' Far East Man ' , with a horn solo that would vindicate any context in which it was put . " In a similarly positive assessment for Melody Maker , Brian Harrigan opined that Dark Horse " should certainly do a tremendous amount to salvage George 's battered reputation " but found the extended payout to " Far East Man " overlong ? an example , he said , where " you can have just too much of a good thing " .

Among more recent commentators , Simon Leng considers " Far East Man " to be among Harrison 's best compositions and " one of its writer 's most beguiling pieces " , while AllMusic 's Richard Ginell describes it as " exquisite " . Leng praises the " especially attractive " middle eight and views the track as " a musical acceptance of life as an unfathomable riddle ? a wistful shrug of the shoulders set to music " . Ian Inglis identifies " a lovely melodic passage " in the first line of the choruses , which he regrets " is never fully developed elsewhere " , and compares the song favourably with Marvin Gaye 's 1971 album What 's Going On . In an April 2004 article in Blender magazine , Paul Du Noyer deemed " Far East Man " to be the " standout track " on an album that

displayed an " uncharacteristic spell of rock star excess " on Harrison 's part .

Reviewing the 2014 reissue of Harrison 's Apple catalogue , for Mojo , Tom Doyle describes the song as " the excellently smooth Steely Dan @-@ ish Far East Man " . Joe Marchese of The Second Disc writes of the " impeccable " musicianship found throughout Dark Horse and adds : " There are many stellar moments , such as ' Far East Man , ' with Scott contributing his trademark jazz @-@ rock saxophone on a deliciously fab slice of ' yacht rock . ' " Blogcritics ' Chaz Lipp similarly finds " a lot of rewarding listening " on Dark Horse , and highlights the track as " a smooth soul collaboration with Ron Wood that , once heard , lodges itself in the brain " . In his review of the 2014 reissues , for Record Collector , Oregano Rathbone cites " Far East Man " as an example of how each of Harrison 's Apple albums post @-@ All Things Must Pass " contains shivery moments of release " .

= = Other versions = =

Before leaving for Los Angeles in October 1974 , Harrison performed a portion of " Far East Man " during an interview with BBC Radio 's Alan Freeman . Harrison began playing the song , on acoustic guitar , in reply to Freeman asking whether he had felt let down by friends in the past . The interview was broadcast in the UK on Rockspeak , in December , but delayed until September 1975 in America , where it formed part of Freeman 's syndicated show Rock Around the World . Along with Harrison 's performances of " Dark Horse " , " Awaiting on You All " and " I Don 't Care Anymore " , this recording is available only on bootleg compilations .

Following his troubled tour with Shankar , Harrison 's only other tour as a solo artist took place in December 1991 , when he and Clapton performed a series of well @-@ received concerts in Japan . In 2002 , various Japanese musicians recorded the Harrison tribute album Gentle Guitar Dreams , for which Hiroshi Takano contributed a cover version of " Far East Man " .

= = = Far East Man live DVD = = =

Beginning on 8 December 2001 , less than two weeks after Harrison succumbed to cancer at the age of 58 , Wood played the song during his shows in Dublin and London , in support of his sixth solo album , Not for Beginners . A live version filmed on 11 December at the Shepherd's Bush Empire , west London , appeared on the concert DVD Far East Man (2002) . Among Wood 's band were his son Jessie (on guitar) and daughter Leah (vocals) , the latter being Wood 's eldest child by his second wife , Jo Karlake .

The performance of " Far East Man " includes guest appearances from Andrea Corr and Slash . Wood introduces the song as " brilliant ! " , before saying of Harrison : " And we shall miss that man ... "

= = Personnel = =