

= Sour Milk Sea =

" Sour Milk Sea " is a song by the English rock singer Jackie Lomax that was released as his debut single on the Beatles ' Apple record label in August 1968 . It was written by George Harrison during the Beatles ' stay in Rishikesh , India , and given to Lomax to help launch Apple Records . The song 's recording was the first of many extracurricular musical projects undertaken by Harrison , who produced the track , and a rarity among non @-@ Beatles songs since it features contributions from three members of the band . Along with Harrison , Ringo Starr and Paul McCartney , the musicians on the track were Eric Clapton and session pianist Nicky Hopkins .

Harrison wrote " Sour Milk Sea " to promote Transcendental Meditation , which the Beatles had been studying in Rishikesh with Maharishi Mahesh Yogi . The group recorded a demo of the song while considering material for their 1968 double album , The Beatles . On release , Lomax 's single was overshadowed in Apple 's " Our First Four " promotional campaign by the Beatles ' " Hey Jude " and Mary Hopkin 's " Those Were the Days " ; it enjoyed only minor success internationally , becoming a top 30 hit in Canada . Together with its B @-@ side , the Lomax @-@ written " The Eagle Laughs at You " , the song was included on the singer 's only Apple album , Is This What You Want ? , released in March 1969 .

" Sour Milk Sea " has received praise from many music critics . Writing for Mojo shortly after Lomax 's death in 2013 , Danny Eccleston described it as " a brilliantly excitable recording " , although he attributed the single 's lack of commercial success to an " accusatory tone " in Harrison 's lyrics . The track also appears on the 2010 multi @-@ artist compilation Come and Get It : The Best of Apple Records .

= = Background and inspiration = =

" Sour Milk Sea " was one of several songs that George Harrison wrote while staying at Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 's ashram in Rishikesh , India , from February to April 1968 . Having first visited India in September 1966 , following the Beatles ' final concert tour , Harrison became enamoured with the teachings of the Maharishi and led his Beatles bandmates to Rishikesh to study Transcendental Meditation two years later . With Life magazine labelling 1968 " the Year of the Guru " , the Beatles ' visit generated wide interest in Transcendental Meditation , and Eastern spirituality generally , among Western youth . Author Simon Leng writes that with " Sour Milk Sea " , Harrison adopted " the role of advertising executive " to further promote meditation . Leng views it as a follow @-@ up to " Within You Without You " , in which Harrison had first channelled the teachings of the Hindu Vedas into a song .

In his autobiography , I , Me , Mine , Harrison says that " Sour Milk Sea " espouses meditation as a means to improve the quality of one 's life , as well as advocating a proactive approach when faced with difficulty . He says he named the composition after a picture titled Kalladadi Samudra , which reflects the theme of Vishvasara Tantra in sacred Hindu texts , particularly regarding " the geological theory of the evolution of organic life on earth " . Singer Jackie Lomax , whose debut solo album Harrison had agreed to produce before the Beatles departed for India , said that the Sour Milk Sea symbolises " a fallow period " during each of the Earth 's 26 @,@ 000 @-@ year evolutionary cycles , before the planet begins its process of regeneration .

= = Composition = =

As with the other songs he wrote in Rishikesh , " Sour Milk Sea " marked the start of Harrison 's return to the guitar as his main instrument , coinciding with a gradual relinquishing of his attempts to master the Indian sitar . Referring to the compositional draft for " Sour Milk Sea " , musicologist Walter Everett states that together the various chords suggest " a pentatonic minor scale on A , allowing B ? as a tritone @-@ related ornament to E7 " . The song makes limited use of the expected A major chord , however , instead centring on E over the verses and D in the choruses , with the latter representing what Everett terms " the Mixolydian ? VII area " . Described by author

and critic Richie Unterberger as a melody filled with " tense chord ascensions " , the composition shares its melodic characteristics with " Savoy Truffle " , another Harrison song from 1968 .

In the lyrics to the verses , Harrison focuses on the benefits of Transcendental Meditation rather than detailing the way to achieve these results . While Leng likens Harrison 's approach to that of an advertiser selling anti @-@ dandruff shampoo , author Joshua Greene describes the lyrical thrust of the song as : " Is life getting you down ? Not getting the breaks you want ? Try illumination . " Harrison proffers greater awareness and a release from earthly limitations as the other benefits brought about by the meditation experience .

According to theologian Dale Allison , through its promise of a quick solution , the song pre @-@ empts the concept espoused by John Lennon two years later in " Instant Karma ! " Harrison urges the listener to follow a " very simple process " and to " do it soon " , in order to leave the Sour Milk Sea state of mind and " Get back to where you should be " . Author Ian Inglis views the chorus lyrics as particularly forthright ; he paraphrases the message as " admit your shortcomings , pull yourself together , look for a solution " .

Although it originated as an acoustic guitar song , the official recording of " Sour Milk Sea " is in the heavy rock style typical of the late 1960s . Greene comments on the appropriateness of this " hard @-@ driving , blues guitar medium " as a way for Harrison to directly convey " a simple rule of thumb " regarding the human condition .

= = The Beatles ' demo = =

The Beatles recorded a demo of " Sour Milk Sea " at Harrison 's Esher home , Kinfauns , in May 1968 , while preparing material for their self @-@ titled double album , also known as " the White Album " . The demo was taped on Harrison 's Ampex four @-@ track recorder . The performance features Harrison singing falsetto throughout , and a musical backing that includes guitars and percussion . Although the subsequent album sessions were marked by disharmony and a lack of cooperation among the band members , author and critic Kenneth Womack notes that the Kinfauns demos " witness the Beatles working in unison and exalting in the pure joy of their music " . Leng similarly describes the group 's performance of " Sour Milk Sea " as an " exciting " version " [p] layed with real enthusiasm " . The recording has appeared on bootleg albums , including Acoustic Masterpieces (The Esher Demos) .

As with several of the songs previewed at Kinfauns , the Beatles did not revisit " Sour Milk Sea " during the White Album sessions . Harrison decided to give the song to former Undertakers singer Jackie Lomax ? a fellow Liverpudlian and one of the first artists signed to the Beatles ' record label , Apple Records , in early 1968 . In a 2004 interview , Lomax said that he was fortunate to have Harrison 's help , adding : " even on a big project like The White Album he only had four songs . I think he was feeling held back [in the Beatles] . "

= = Recording = =

With Harrison as his producer , Lomax recorded " Sour Milk Sea " for release as a single . The sessions for the song began at EMI 's Abbey Road Studios in London on 24 June 1968 , before moving to Trident Studios , to use that facility 's superior , eight @-@ track recording equipment . Speaking to Melody Maker in September that year , Harrison described the recording as a " glorified jam session " . The line @-@ up consisted of Lomax on vocals , Harrison and Eric Clapton on guitars , Nicky Hopkins on piano , Paul McCartney on bass , and Ringo Starr on drums . McCartney was absent from the initial session , however , only returning on 25 June from an Apple @-@ related business trip to California . While Apple projects typically featured one member of the Beatles , " Sour Milk Sea " is the only track where more than two members of the band appeared on another artist 's recording .

Clapton 's electric guitar playing gave the song a riff @-@ based quality that was absent from the Beatles ' version . Lomax later said that he thought the track " worked as an instrumental " , and he recalled his nervousness when it came to overdubbing the vocal part , with " three Beatles in the

control room watching me " . In addition to supplying acoustic rhythm guitar on the song , Harrison played an electric guitar solo , which appears shortly after the two @-@ minute mark on the recording , following Clapton 's lead guitar break . Hammond organ was also added over this instrumental passage , although the part is uncredited . Recording was completed on 26 June . Like Clapton and Hopkins , Lomax went on to contribute to the sessions for The Beatles , singing backing vocals on " Dear Prudence " .

Leng identifies " Sour Milk Sea " as marking three important " firsts " in Harrison 's career . It was the first song Harrison " gave away " to another artist , a sign that his output as a songwriter had outgrown the quota of tracks typically allocated to him on Beatles releases . The Lomax album project also marked the first time that Harrison served as producer for another artist , after he had produced sessions in London and Bombay for his own debut solo album , Wonderwall Music . In addition , although Clapton had contributed to Wonderwall Music earlier in the year , " Sour Milk Sea " is the first example of him and Harrison sharing the lead guitarist 's role on a recording . Later in 1968 , the pair co @-@ wrote Cream 's final hit single , " Badge " , while their guitar combination would be a feature through much of Harrison 's solo career , as well as on Derek and the Dominos ' first single , " Tell the Truth " .

= = = " The Eagle Laughs at You " = = =

For the single 's B @-@ side , Lomax recorded his composition " The Eagle Laughs at You " . Produced by Harrison , the song was also recorded between 24 and 26 June . According to Apple Records historian Andy Davis , the musicians on the track comprised an " ad hoc power trio " of Lomax on bass and rhythm guitar , Harrison on lead guitar and " a couple of overdubs " , and drummer Tony Newman from Sounds Incorporated . Lomax recalled that he and Harrison overdubbed a cornet part (played by a studio cleaner) and then manipulated the recording to make it sound like the call of an elephant .

= = Release = =

The " Sour Milk Sea " single was issued on 26 August 1968 in America (as Apple 1802) and 6 September in Britain (as Apple 3) . Along with " Hey Jude " by the Beatles , Mary Hopkin 's " Those Were the Days " and the Black Dyke Mills Band 's " Thingummybob " , it was one of Apple 's " Our First Four " singles , marking the official launch of the label . The four releases took place on the same day in the United States but were spread out over two weeks in the UK . Apple staged a lavish promotional campaign for the launch , led by Derek Taylor , whom Harrison had invited to help run the Beatles ' new enterprise . In advance of the release date , the company declared 11 ? 18 August to be " National Apple Week " and sent gift @-@ wrapped boxes of the four records to Queen Elizabeth II and other members of the royal family , and to the British prime minister .

Although Lomax 's single received considerable promotion , it was a surprising commercial failure . " Sour Milk Sea " did not chart in Britain . In America , the song reached number 117 during a two @-@ week run on the Bubbling Under listings of Billboard 's Hot 100 chart , and " The Eagle Laughs at You " placed at number 125 . " Sour Milk Sea " was a hit in Canada , however , peaking at number 29 on the RPM 100 in November 1968 . In a 1974 feature on his career in ZigZag magazine , Lomax said that the song 's release in tandem with " obvious " hits like " Hey Jude " and " Those Were the Days " jinxed its commercial performance , since radio stations were reluctant to risk alienating other record labels by featuring all four Apple singles too heavily on their playlists . Lomax added : " So they kind of lost me in the shuffle . "

Both sides of the single were included on Lomax 's only album for Apple , Is This What You Want ? , released in March 1969 . The album similarly failed to achieve commercial success , a result that perplexed the Beatles , who continued to believe in Lomax 's talents . Due to the song 's strong association with the Beatles and Eric Clapton , " Sour Milk Sea " retained a degree of renown among rock music fans ; Danny Eccleston of Mojo magazine later described it as a " cult rendering " . In 1970 , Sour Milk Sea , one of singer Freddie Mercury 's pre @-@ Queen bands , was named

after the track . In June the following year , Apple re @-@ released " Sour Milk Sea " with " Fall Inside Your Eyes " on the B @-@ side , but this single also failed to chart .

In 2010 , Apple reissued Is This What You Want ? as both an individual release and as part of the seventeen @-@ disc box set titled The Apple Box . " Sour Milk Sea " also appeared on the accompanying two @-@ CD compilation , Come and Get It : The Best of Apple Records . In conjunction with these releases , a mono mix of the song was made available for digital download .

= = Critical reception and legacy = =

On release in 1968 , the single received favourable reviews from music critics . Writing for Rolling Stone in 1971 , Ben Edmonds described " Sour Milk Sea " as " excellent " but suggested that Lomax " seemed to get lost among the superstars " accompanying him . Three years later , Andy Childs of ZigZag admired it as " a classic single ? a really dynamic rock song with Lomax in great voice " .

Among Beatles biographers , Bruce Spizer attributes the commercial failure of Lomax 's " great rock single " to the simultaneous release of " Hey Jude " and " Those Were the Days " , while John Winn describes it as an " excellent debut " and " an inexplicable flop " . Simon Leng opines that the song " just wasn 't catchy enough " in Lomax 's reading and views the Beatles ' " garage rendition " as superior . Although he finds the musical arrangement and Lomax 's singing slightly incongruous beside Harrison 's philosophical lyrics , Ian Inglis recognises the track as " an early prototype of heavy metal , particularly in the interplay between drums and lead guitar and its relentless sequence of musical climaxes " .

Writing in Goldmine magazine in 2002 , Dave Thompson included " Sour Milk Sea " and " Badge " in his list of the Harrison @-@ written songs that " rank among the finest Beatles compositions of the group 's final years " , and he concluded : " the only regret is that neither of the latter two ever made it into a Beatles recording session . " In his book on the making of the White Album , Uncut critic David Quantick describes the song as " excellent " and rues how , together with Harrison 's " Not Guilty " , it was passed over in favour of " old toot such as ' Rocky Raccoon ' and ' Bungalow Bill ' " . Less impressed with the track , Richie Unterberger finds the lyrics " a blend of encouragement and mild scolding " , while rating it " a serviceable hard @-@ rock number with a bluesy boogie feel " next to the " considerably superior " " Savoy Truffle " . In his online article for Mojo published shortly after Lomax 's death in September 2013 , Danny Eccleston described " Sour Milk Sea " as " a brilliantly excitable recording " , although he attributed the song 's lack of success to an " accusatory tone " in Harrison 's lyrics .

In his preview of Apple 's 2010 reissues , for Rolling Stone , David Fricke listed Is This What You Want ? third among the label 's top five non @-@ Beatle album releases and praised " Sour Milk Sea " as , variously , a " get @-@ off @-@ your @-@ ass rocker " and " dynamite " . Chicago Tribune critic Greg Kot considered it to be " a knockout version " . Among reviews of the Come and Get It compilation , Douglas Wolk of Pitchfork Media opined that " Sour Milk Sea " " would 've been one of the best songs on [the White Album] if George had kept it for himself " , while Uncut 's David Cavanagh described the track as " sensational " . AllMusic editor Stephen Thomas Erlewine calls the song " a dense , brilliant , and soulful psychedelic rocker " . In his liner notes to the compilation , Andy Davis , formerly the editor of Record Collector magazine , highlights " Sour Milk Sea " as " the greatest record The Beatles never made " .

= = Personnel = =

According to John Winn :

Jackie Lomax ? vocals

George Harrison ? acoustic guitar , lead guitar (solo)

Eric Clapton ? lead guitar

Nicky Hopkins ? piano

Paul McCartney ? bass

Ringo Starr ? drums

uncredited ? Hammond organ