

= World of Stone =

" World of Stone " is a song by English musician George Harrison , released in 1975 on Extra Texture (Read All About It) , his final album for Apple Records . It was also the B @-@ side of the album 's lead single , " You " . Harrison wrote the song in 1973 but recorded it two years later , following the negative reception afforded his 1974 North American tour and the Dark Horse album . Due to its context on release , commentators view " World of Stone " as a plea from Harrison for tolerance from his critics . According to some of his biographers , the lyrics reflect Harrison 's doubts regarding his devotion to a spiritual path ? an apparent crisis of faith that followed his often @-@ unwelcome spiritual pronouncements during the tour , and which permeated his work throughout 1975 .

Harrison recorded " World of Stone " in Los Angeles with backing from musicians including David Foster , Gary Wright and Klaus Voormann . The downbeat mood of the recording is typical of the Extra Texture album while also demonstrating the influence of soul music on Harrison 's career during this period . Music critics have tended to view the track in an unfavourable light ; author Dale Allison describes the song as an " expression of alienation from the world " .

= = Background = =

Although George Harrison 's 1974 album Dark Horse attracted highly favourable reviews from publications such as Melody Maker and Billboard , much of the critical reaction to the album was scathing and focused on his near @-@ completed North American tour with co @-@ headliner Ravi Shankar , which took place in November and December that year . Harrison had planned these concerts during a pilgrimage to India in February 1974 , midway through a period that was otherwise blighted by rock @-@ star excess and the failure of his marriage to Pattie Boyd . Author Gary Tillery suggests that Harrison envisaged the tour as a development of his acclaimed 1971 Concert for Bangladesh shows , where Shankar 's Indian music set and Harrison 's spiritually themed rock songs had been warmly received . " Why not carry the idea further and proselytize ? " Tillery writes of Harrison 's motivation . " One tour might open tens of thousands of minds to the wisdom found in Eastern mysticism . "

Harrison 's workload throughout 1974 , particularly his dedication to setting up Dark Horse Records , as a boutique label to replace the Beatles ' fast disintegrating Apple Records , left him rushing to prepare for the tour by October while also completing Dark Horse . Another issue that compromised Harrison 's enthusiasm for the venture was the attention afforded it as the first US tour by a former Beatle , resulting in a clash between the artist 's self @-@ image and the expectations of many critics and concertgoers . Among the criticism levelled at him during the tour , Harrison 's declarations of his Hindu @-@ aligned religious beliefs came across as harangues rather than uplifting messages to his fans , and were symbolic of what NME critic Bob Woffinden later described as a " didactic , sermonising mood " on the singer 's part . For the shows ' encore , Harrison turned his biggest solo hit , " My Sweet Lord " , into an " exhortation to chant God 's name " , author Alan Clayson writes , be it Krishna , Buddha , Christ or Allah ; at times during Shankar 's set , he chastised the audience for their lack of respect for Indian music and a God @-@ conscious path . In a rare interview early in the tour , Harrison also used religiosity to defend his decision to feature few Beatles @-@ era songs in the setlist , telling Ben Fong @-@ Torres of Rolling Stone magazine : " Gandhi says create and preserve the image of your choice . The image of my choice is not Beatle George ... My life belongs to the Lord Krishna ... I 'm the servant of the servant of the servant of the servant of Krishna . "

Simon Leng , Harrison 's musical biographer , describes the period immediately following the tour as " open season on Harrison " . Whereas Rolling Stone had declared in 1973 that Harrison had " inherited the most precious Beatle legacy ? the spiritual aura that the group accumulated " , now the magazine 's album reviewer attacked him for his " insufferable " spiritual preoccupations . Writing in the NME , Woffinden similarly dismissed Dark Horse as " the product of a complete egotist ... someone whose universe is confined to himself . And his guru . " Privately , Harrison descended into

a " spiritual funk " , Tillery writes ; another biographer , Joshua Greene , concludes of Harrison 's post @-@ tour mindset : " He grappled with the depressing realization that most people simply didn 't care to hear about Krishna or maya or getting liberated from birth and death ... A man whose natural instinct was to share his life @-@ transforming discoveries with others had been rejected ... "

= = Composition = =

Author Robert Rodriguez suggests that one of the reasons for Harrison 's follow @-@ up album , Extra Texture (Read All About It) , being rushed into production in April 1975 was to " redeem the artist from negative fallout " created by Dark Horse over the winter of 1974 ? 75 . Having come up with little new material in the previous six months , Harrison revisited songs he had written or begun writing in 1973 , one of which was titled " World of Stone " . In his 1980 autobiography , I , Me , Mine , Harrison explains the message of the song as being " Don 't follow me " , as outlined in its opening verse :

Wise men you won 't be
To follow the like of me
In this world made of stone
Such a long way to go .

Because of its context when he recorded the song , Harrison 's biographers view these lyrics as an abdication by Harrison of his previous role as an avatar for Eastern mysticism . Leng notes the precedent set in the late 1960s , when the Beatles were " recast " as " the bearers of fundamental spiritual truths " , yet here Harrison was observing that " rock stars have no cure for the world 's spiritual malaise " . Ian Inglis interprets this verse as either a " rebuke " to listeners looking to the Beatles for philosophical answers , or a " frank confession " from Harrison that " his own quasi @-@ religious search for enlightenment has brought him little contentment " .

The song 's second verse serves as Harrison 's plea for tolerance from his critics , Leng writes , as on other Extra Texture songs such as " The Answer 's at the End " :

You may disagree
We all have the right to be
In this world made of stone ...

The eponymous " world of stone " is " the material world under another guise " , Leng observes .

Before the first of the song 's two instrumental breaks , Harrison states that this world is " Such a long way from home " ? home being " spiritual understanding " , according to Inglis . This repeated line is viewed as significant by Tillery and by Christian theologian Dale Allison , on the basis of whether Harrison intended the final word to be " home " or the sacred Sanskrit term " Om " . Tillery writes : " Where does he find himself ? ' Such a long way from home , ' he says , but in his autobiography , he renders it , ' Such a long way from OM ' ? confessing his inner turmoil at having strayed from his faith . " Allison identifies Extra Texture as being unique among Harrison 's post @-@ Beatles solo albums due to its complete avoidance of " positive theological statements " , mirroring the " emptiness " of Harrison 's apparently faithless existence in 1975 , and he interprets this particular lyric as the singer " expressing his remoteness from both God and his ideals " . While noting that the ancient Hindu text Bhagavad Gita " identifies the sound ' OM ' with Brahman and promises that chanting it with attention on one 's deathbed will lead one to ' the highest goal ' " , Allison writes of its possible inclusion in the context of " World of Stone " : " All pontifical pronouncements have ceased . George has come to doubt what matters to him most . "

Allison opines that in the lyrics to " World of Stone " , Harrison " abandons his earlier religious content for ambiguity " , a quality that Leng identifies especially in two lines in the song 's final verse : " The wiser you may be / The harder it can be to see " . Leng presents three possible interpretations for this couplet : " another play on the blind seer idea " ; Harrison 's rejection of the concept espoused in his 1968 Beatles composition " The Inner Light " , " that knowledge is the key to enlightenment " ; or , like his 1975 rebuttal to detractors such as Rolling Stone , " This Guitar (Can 't Keep from Crying) " , a " dig at smartass rock journalists " .

In September 1975 , during his track @-@ by @-@ track discussion of Extra Texture with BBC Radio 1 's Paul Gambaccini , Harrison commented on " World of Stone " : " There 's not much of a story to it ... it 's really just down to saying that everybody has their own opinion and right to be ... It 's a nice melody . " Author Peter Lavazzoli writes that , after Dark Horse and the ill @-@ fated 1974 tour , Harrison " continued to infuse his work with an implicit spirituality that rarely manifested on the surface " . Harrison 's 1976 album Thirty Three & 1 / 3 , his first on Dark Horse Records , contains the spiritually themed " Learning How to Love You " and " Dear One " , the last of which , Allison writes , " reflects a religious renewal following the melancholy of Extra Texture " .

= = Recording = =

The sessions for Extra Texture took place at A & M Studios in Hollywood , starting in the third week of April 1975 . Harrison taped the basic track for " World of Stone " on 2 May , with backing musicians David Foster (piano) , Gary Wright (organ) , Jesse Ed Davis (electric guitar) , Klaus Voormann (bass) and Jim Keltner (drums) . A friend of Harrison 's since the Beatles ' years in Hamburg , Voormann was dismayed at the prevalence of drugs at the sessions ; recognising that Harrison was " bottoming out from events of the past couple of years " , according to Rodriguez , Voormann 's participation on " World of Stone " marked a relatively rare appearance by the German bass player at the Extra Texture sessions . With regard to this song and the similarly downbeat " Grey Cloudy Lies " , Harrison 's girlfriend at the time (and later , his wife) , Olivia Arias , recalls that Harrison " was being very hard on himself " during this period .

" World of Stone " is typical of its parent album 's keyboard @-@ based sound , which " tended toward moody , piano @-@ driven soul @-@ jazz " , in Leng 's estimation . The recording opens with Foster 's piano , which also provides the main instrumentation over the first two verses , before what author Elliot Huntley describes as the song 's " sped up second section " , featuring the full band . Leng suggests that this structure partly mirrors that of Harrison 's 1971 charity single " Bangla Desh " : " a slow explanatory introduction followed by a stomping rocker ? except that ' World of Stone ' is more softshoe shuffle than stomp " . Unlike " Bangla Desh " , the song returns briefly to this sparse , piano @-@ led setting , over which Harrison sings falsetto , similar to the two " smoochy codas " in " The Answer 's at the End " . Gary Wright 's gospel @-@ inflected Hammond organ becomes prominent during the two more @-@ uptempo , instrumental sections , which feature extended guitar soloing from Harrison and a shouted , crowd @-@ like backing chorus . Authors Chip Madinger and Mark Easter write that overdubbing on the basic track took place on 2 June and that the song was " revisited " on 27 June ; although the album 's musicians credits provide no personnel for the chorus singing , Madinger and Easter list Harrison , Davis , Foster and Attitudes singer Paul Stallworth as participating in the 2 June session .

= = Release = =

With the 1971 @-@ recorded " Motown pastiche " " You " the most obvious choice for an A @-@ side , " World of Stone " was selected for the reverse side of the album 's lead single , released on 12 September 1975 in Britain and three days later in the United States . Author Bruce Spizer describes the pairing as an " up @-@ beat love song " backed by a " philosophical ballad " . Rodriguez notes the " joyous " quality of the single 's A @-@ side compared with the " slower or darker groove " of songs such as " World of Stone " , the latter being " every bit as downbeat as the [title] suggested " . For the first time as a solo artist , Harrison undertook promotion for the album ; while limiting any discussion of spiritual issues , he conceding to feeling like a " heathen " and stated that he was in " a real down place " when writing many of the songs .

Apple issued Extra Texture (Read All About It) later in September 1975 , with " World of Stone " closing side one of the original LP format . Despite the lack of religiosity in the album 's lyrical content , the Roy Kohara @-@ designed artwork (based on sketches provided by Harrison) included a blue Om symbol displayed prominently on the vivid orange cover , as did the face labels for both the single and the album .

= = Reception = =

Leng describes the critical reception for Extra Texture as " only slightly less vituperative than the one Dark Horse had received " . Dave Marsh of Rolling Stone dismissed most of the album 's first side as " padded subterfuges " and concluded of the collection as a whole : " Finally , we are faced with the fact that Harrison 's records are nothing so much as boring . They drone , and while chants and mantras may be paths to glory in other realms , in pop music they are only routes to tedium . " Writing in 1981 , Bob Woffinden commented in response to " World of Stone " and other songs that " again plead plaintively with critics not to judge too severely " : " In this different context [a year on from Dark Horse] , such pleas are more sympathetic . Very well , then , we will not . " In a 2001 review , Record Collector editor Peter Doggett was similarly more impressed , writing that " In retrospect , side one of the album was most commendable , from the upbeat ' You ' ? to the portentous ' World Of Stone ' . "

The track is held in low esteem by Harrison 's biographers . Dale Allison describes it as an " expression of alienation from the world " and notes : " The disparity between this confused melancholy and the confident religious advocacy on All Things Must Pass and Living in the Material World is remarkable . " Gary Tillery includes the song along with Extra Texture tracks " Grey Cloudy Lies " and " Tired of Midnight Blue " as examples of Harrison having reached " rock bottom " in 1975 . Elliot Huntley views " World of Stone " as overlong , the uptempo sections ' backing vocals " annoying " , with Harrison 's guitar sound " a bit thin and weedy " , and bemoans that " the melody doesn 't really deviate from its beginnings " . Like Leng , Ian Inglis gives over much of his discussion of the song to possible interpretations of its lyrics , but he otherwise writes : " Harrison returns to his view of the world as a place of obstacles and trials in which there is little hope ... The variations in his vocal range fail to add variety or interest to what is , by now , a predictable and cheerless message , set to a leaden and monotonous score . "

Reviewing the 2014 reissue of Harrison 's Apple catalogue , Paul Trynka of Classic Rock considers that Extra Texture 's " confessional songs " such as " World of Stone " have " worn well " . Trynka writes that the track exemplifies its composer 's " knack for taking a sweet melody in an unpredictable direction " , and concludes : " Today , when pop stars swig Cristal and flash their pecs on Instagram , we can appreciate the irony of Harrison being attacked for preaching enlightenment . "

= = Personnel = =

George Harrison ? vocals , electric guitar , backing vocals

David Foster ? piano , ARP synthesizer

Gary Wright ? organ

Jesse Ed Davis ? electric guitar

Klaus Voormann ? bass

Jim Keltner ? drums

uncredited ? backing vocals