

= Piggies =

" Piggies " is a song by the English rock group the Beatles from their 1968 album The Beatles (also known as " the White Album ") . Written by George Harrison as a social commentary , the song serves as an Orwellian satire on greed and consumerism . Among several elements it incorporates from classical music , the track features harpsichord and orchestral strings in the baroque pop style , which are contrasted by Harrison 's acerbic lyrics and the sound of grunting pigs . Although credited to George Martin , the recording was largely produced by Chris Thomas , who also contributed the harpsichord part .

In the context of the turbulent political climate of 1968 , " Piggies " was adopted by the counterculture as an anti @-@ establishment theme song . It was also among the tracks on The Beatles that cult leader Charles Manson used as the foundation for his Helter Skelter theory of an American race @-@ related countercultural revolution . Inspired especially by the line " What they need 's a damn good whacking " , Manson 's followers left clues relating to the lyrics at the scenes of the Tate ? LaBianca murders in August 1969 .

Since its release in November 1968 , " Piggies " has received mixed responses from music critics . While some reviewers admire its musical qualities and recognise sardonic humour in the lyrics , others consider the song to be mean @-@ spirited and lacking in subtlety . Harrison 's demo of the song , recorded at his home in Surrey , was included on the Beatles ' 1996 compilation Anthology 3 . A live version by Harrison , reinstating a verse that was omitted from the studio recording , appears on his 1992 album Live in Japan .

= = Background and inspiration = =

George Harrison began writing " Piggies " in early 1966 , around the time that the Beatles were recording their album Revolver . He returned to the song two years later , after discovering his manuscript in the attic of his parents ' house in Liverpool . The same visit led to Harrison starting a new composition , " While My Guitar Gently Weeps " , which he would similarly complete for its inclusion on the Beatles ' eponymous double album (also known as " the White Album ") .

As an anti @-@ establishment song , " Piggies " recalls Harrison 's Revolver composition " Taxman " . In his 1980 autobiography , I , Me , Mine , Harrison describes " Piggies " as a social commentary . He intended it as a light @-@ hearted satire on consumerism and class distinction . Through its theme of social strata within a community of farm animals (in this case , one consisting entirely of pigs) , the song references George Orwell 's novel Animal Farm (1945) . According to Harrison 's 1968 draft of " Piggies " , the lyrics contained a final verse , subsequently cut for the Beatles ' recording , that ends with the animals " Paying piggy thanks ? to thee Pig Brother ! " Musicologist Walter Everett cites these words as evidence that Harrison 's main inspiration for the song was Orwell 's work , particularly " his fable of autocracy masquerading as democracy , Animal Farm " . While also identifying Orwell 's book as an influence on the composition , author Ian Inglis views " Piggies " as one of several White Album songs in which the Beatles drew inspiration from their childhood in the 1940s .

During Harrison 's Liverpool visit in early 1968 , his mother , Louise , responded to his request for assistance with the lyrics by providing the line " What they need 's a damn good whacking " . Harrison then taped a demo of the song at his house in Esher , Surrey , in late May that year . Following this recording , John Lennon supplied the final phrase in the line " Clutching forks and knives to eat their bacon " , replacing the words " to cut their pork chops " , which Harrison had sung on the demo version . When performing " Piggies " in concert during the early 1990s , Harrison reinstated the omitted final verse .

= = Composition = =

= = = Music = = =

" Piggies " features baroque musical elements in its melody and texture . Music journalist Steve Smith groups the song with the Paul McCartney @-@ written " For No One " and " She 's Leaving Home " as examples of the Beatles ' forays into baroque pop . Harrison biographer Simon Leng recognises the composition as essentially a folk song , however , that was then given a " satirical , drawing @-@ room [musical] arrangement " on the official recording through the prominence of harpsichord and orchestral strings .

The song 's musical key is A ? . Its structure comprises two verses , a middle eight (or bridge) section , an instrumental passage (over the verse melody) , followed by a final verse that leads into a coda (or outro) and a formal ending . In his commentary on " Piggies " , musicologist Alan Pollack remarks on its abundance of classical music traits . These include the use of " arpeggio fragments " in Harrison 's opening guitar motif and the repetition of this four @-@ bar passage before each verse and the bridge ? a device typical of Schubert 's various lieder and the works of other nineteenth @-@ century composers . During the song , the expected cycle of fifth notes in the major scale is interrupted through the inclusion of a III7 (C7) chord , which first appears at the end of the passage leading into the middle eight , before the melody drops down a tone to the minor ii (B ? m) chord . The same section 's first line ends with the surprise inclusion of a blues @-@ based riff , soon after which the C7 chord is used again in the ascent to the IV (subdominant) chord , helping to accentuate the phrase " damn good whacking " .

As a further example of the melody 's baroque characteristics , the bridge contains an implied but unfulfilled tonicisation of VI . In addition , over the coda , the recurring four @-@ bar instrumental passage is partly shifted to a parallel minor , through the use of the more classically orientated A ? m chord , rather than its major equivalent as before . Following the instrumental coda , the song ends with the strings playing a tonically ambiguous cadence , which Everett describes as an unexpected " diminished fourth away from tonic " .

= = = Lyrics = = =

Inglis writes that while the nursery rhyme form was Harrison 's musical source for " Piggies " , his lyrics adopt a political perspective , creating " a savage attack on the corporate greed of contemporary capitalism " . Conversely , author Andrew Hickey refutes the presence of any " profound moralistic statement " in the song . Instead , he identifies the message as similar in mood to the satirical style of Ray Davies of the Kinks , and the Bonzo Dog Doo @-@ Dah Band .

In the first verse , Harrison sings of " the little piggies " , for whom " life is getting worse " . In verse two , " the bigger piggies " are described as " stirring up " the dirt that those smaller animals " crawl " in , while they themselves are dressed in " starched white shirts " . According to music journalist Kit O 'Toole , whereas the song 's harpsichord @-@ led introduction " suggests a salon featuring royalty in their finery " , the lyrics immediately nullify this image in their depiction of pigs toiling in mud , thereby heightening the overall satirical effect . Everett comments that the same contrast between refined instrumentation and uncompromising subject matter was later adopted by Stevie Wonder for his track " Village Ghetto Land " , issued on Songs in the Key of Life (1976) .

During the middle eight , Harrison refers to the privileged pigs in their sties who " don 't care what goes on around " ; they appear devoid of empathy , and therefore deserve " a damn good whacking " . In the third verse , Harrison declares that piggies are " everywhere " , leading " piggy lives " . He presents a final image of couples dining , holding their cutlery before devouring bacon .

= = Production = =

= = = Recording = = =

The Beatles recorded the basic track for " Piggies " at EMI 's Abbey Road Studios in London on 19 September 1968 . After Harrison had performed the song alone on the Esher demo ? playing

acoustic guitar and whistling over the solo ? the use of harpsichord on the official recording came about through happenstance . Acting as a producer in George Martin 's absence on some of the White Album sessions , Chris Thomas noticed the instrument set up in preparation for a later session , for a classical recording , in Abbey Road 's Studio 1 . With Harrison agreeing that a harpsichord part would suit the song , the Beatles ' session was moved there from Studio 2 .

The group taped eleven takes of " Piggies " before achieving the requisite performance . The line @-@ up on the track was Harrison on acoustic guitar , Thomas on harpsichord , McCartney on bass and Ringo Starr on tambourine . With only 4 @-@ track recording facilities available in Studio 1 , Lennon was present at the session but did not play on the basic track . Having attended London 's Royal Academy of Music as a child , Thomas performed the harpsichord solo in an authentic classical style , according to Pollack , who highlights how " the melody played by the last three fingers [of the right hand] alternates with a repeated note played by the thumb " .

= = = Overdubbing = = =

On 20 September , the recording was copied over to 8 @-@ track tape in Studio 2 , to allow for overdubbing . Harrison then added his lead vocal , together with harmony vocals on the last verse , creating a mock operatic chorus over the latter section . Through the combination of studio effects and overdubs , his vocal performance on the song consists of three contrasting segments ; in Inglis ' description , these comprise a " naturalistic " approach at the start of the track , " a distorted middle " and chorus singing at the end . To produce the sharp nasal sound over the middle eight , Harrison sang through a filter that limited the signal to a narrow , 3 @. @ 5 @-@ kilohertz band . Described by Everett as " remarkable " , the pitch of Harrison 's vocals in the final verse ranges from a low E ? bass note in one of the harmony parts , to a descant falsetto B ? 4 in the high harmony part . Lennon created a tape loop of pre @-@ recorded pig noises , sourced from EMI 's library , as well as supplying his own grunting sounds . Drum beats were also added , marking the transition from the solo into the third verse .

Final overdubs on the song were carried out at Abbey Road on 10 October , during the last week of recording for The Beatles . Having returned from his extended holiday , Martin wrote a string arrangement for four violins , two violas and two cellos . These parts were recorded during the same orchestral overdubbing session as for Lennon 's track " Glass Onion " . Towards the end of " Piggies " , Harrison added the spoken words " One more time " , before the orchestra played the last two chords . In his overview of the recording , author and critic Tim Riley interprets the " thick scouse " delivery of this introduction to the " final grand cadence " as Harrison " smearing social elitists with their own symbols of ' high ' culture " . Everett refers to the contrast between the various classical elements and the combination of pig sounds and " rude " final cadence as representing an " Orwellian comparison of pigs to socially horrid , though outwardly refined , tyrants " .

Mixing on " Piggies " was completed on 11 October . The mono mix has the animal sounds appearing at different points in the song , relative to the stereo version . In addition , Harrison 's guitar is more prominent in the mono mix .

= = Release and reception = =

Apple Records , the Beatles ' EMI @-@ distributed record label , released The Beatles on 22 November 1968 , with " Piggies " sequenced as the fourth track on side two of the double LP . It appeared between two other songs with animal names in their titles ? " Blackbird " and " Rocky Raccoon " . The animal @-@ themed sequencing was a deliberate decision on the part of Lennon and McCartney , who prepared the running order of the album 's 30 tracks , with Martin , after Harrison had left for Los Angeles to work with Apple signing Jackie Lomax .

According to author Mark Hertsgaard , " Piggies " " [kept] the Beatles ' countercultural flame alive " , as the song was embraced as an anti @-@ authoritarian anthem by the counterculture , following a year of protests and civil unrest in many Western countries . Among many such events in the United States , police officers clashed violently with anti @-@ Vietnam War demonstrators at the

Democratic National Convention in Chicago in August 1968 . Along with McCartney 's " Rocky Raccoon " , however , the song was also criticised by the radical New Left as an example of the Beatles resorting to whimsical parody instead of directly addressing contemporary issues .

Writing in the International Times , Barry Miles found " Piggies " " unsubtle " and likely to appeal to " those involved with Chicago 's pig @-@ police " . William Mann of The Times noted the recurring nature theme throughout the album , from brief mentions of monkeys , lizards , elephants and tigers , to song titles such as " Blackbird " and " Piggies " , and asked of Harrison 's characters : " are they Chicago police or just company directors ? " Melody Maker 's Alan Walsh admired the instrumentation on the recording and deemed " Piggies " to be " The Beatles ' satire track ? a kick at upper @-@ class reactionaries or journalists (or both) " . In his unfavourable review of the White Album , in The New York Times , Mike Jahn considered that many of the tracks were " either so corny or sung in such a way that it is hard to tell whether [the Beatles] are being serious " , among which the words of Harrison 's song served as " an act of lyrical overstatement " .

Record Mirror remarked that the birdsong effects of " Blackbird " were replaced by " snorts and grunts " on " Piggies " , which the reviewer described as " a society beef (or pork if you like) " in the style of folk singer Roy Harper . Writing in Rolling Stone , Jann Wenner considered the song to be " an amazing choice to follow ' Blackbird ' " , given the contrast between the two pieces ? " ' Blackbird ' so encouraging , ' Piggies ' so smug (though accurate : ' what they need 's a damn good whacking ') . Ha ! " Wenner paired it with Starr 's " Don 't Pass Me By " , as lesser songs beside the " superb numbers " found elsewhere on the album , but added that " on their own , they 're totally groovy . "

= = Charles Manson interpretation = =

Musician and cult leader Charles Manson interpreted several songs on The Beatles as an inducement for his followers , known as the Manson Family , to carry out a series of murders in Los Angeles in August 1969 . Inspired by the line " What they need 's a damn good whacking " , Manson adopted " Piggies " as one of the tracks to justify such attacks on the White bourgeoisie . Believing that the Beatles were instructing him through their music , Manson envisioned these attacks as the prelude to an apocalyptic racial war between the establishment and the Black community that would leave him and his followers to rule America on counterculture principles . At the scenes of the murders of Sharon Tate , Leno and Rosemary LaBianca , Gary Hinman and others , the words " Political Piggy " , " Pig " and " Death to Pigs " were written on the walls with the victims ' blood . In the case of the LaBianca murders , items of cutlery were inserted into the bodies in reference to the lyric " Clutching forks and knives to eat their bacon " .

Speaking to Rolling Stone co @-@ founder David Dalton before his trial , Manson also drew parallels between the pig noises that close the track and a similar sound , followed by machine @-@ gun fire , that appears in Lennon 's White Album sound collage " Revolution 9 " . Like its rival counterculture publications Los Angeles Free Press and Tuesday 's Child , Rolling Stone initially supported Manson , Dalton contending that it was a case of the conservative @-@ minded authorities framing " some poor hippie guru " . According to author Steve Turner , " Piggies " " became notorious " as a result of the Manson Family 's 1971 murder trial , which was successfully prosecuted by Californian attorney Vincent Bugliosi .

Harrison was appalled at Manson 's interpretation of the song . He also found it disturbing that Manson came to define the long @-@ haired hippie type in the public 's eyes , after the prosecution 's case had resulted in widespread condemnation of rock music and the idealism associated with the late 1960s hippie movement . In his 1974 book Helter Skelter , Bugliosi says he was denied permission to quote from the lyrics of " Piggies " in the book , yet not so for the lyrics to certain songs by Lennon and McCartney .

= = Retrospective assessment and legacy = =

Writing in 1977 , Nicholas Schaffner said that , despite the " merciless stereotypes " presented in its lyrics , " Piggies " and Harrison 's three other White Album compositions " firmly established him as

a contender " beside the Beatles ' principal songwriters , Lennon and McCartney . Four years later , Philip Norman described the song as " mordantly humorous " . Among more recent Beatles biographers , Ian MacDonald views " Piggies " as a " bludgeoning satire on straight society " , dismissing it as " dreadful " and " an embarrassing blot on [Harrison 's] discography " .

In his book *Revolution : The Making of the Beatles ' White Album* , Uncut critic David Quantick recognises the song 's musical qualities ? describing it as " a powerful song , full of angry climaxes " with " a fine [vocal] performance ? [and] a charming baroque feel " ? yet he bemoans its " arrogant " and misanthropic message . Quantick concludes : " Although the Beatles preached peace and love and meant it , large parts of the White Album indicate that they could be a bit selective about it . " While acknowledging the sinister connotations that the song gained through its association with Manson , Ian Inglis considers that the intentions behind Harrison 's send @-@ up of capitalist consumerism were reasonable , but the track fails due to its lack of " subtlety or charm " .

In Andrew Hickey 's opinion , the " bad press " attached to " Piggies " is unjustified , given that Harrison 's " attitude of ' look at those squares with their boring lives ' " was commonplace among rock musicians in the 1960s . Hickey adds that the track contains one of its composer 's best vocal performances and deems the song to be " quite a fun little grotesquerie ? a caricature , yes , but nowhere near as mean @-@ spirited as its detractors would claim " . Reviewing Harrison 's career in a 2002 issue of *Goldmine* magazine , Dave Thompson termed " Piggies " " whimsically foreboding " and grouped it with late @-@ period Beatles songs such as " Something " and " Long , Long , Long " that anticipated Harrison 's successes as a solo artist after the group 's break @-@ up in 1970 . Tim Riley describes the song 's narrative as " smug anti @-@ elitism outdone only by the dourness of John 's ' Glass Onion ' and ' Sexy Sadie ' " . With regard to George Martin 's contention that The Beatles should have been edited down to a single disc , however , he views " Piggies " as one of the White Album " essentials " contributed by Harrison , along with " While My Guitar Gently Weeps " and " Savoy Truffle " .

Among reviewers of the 2009 remastered album , Sean Highkin of *Beats Per Minute* cites the track as evidence that , despite the disharmonious atmosphere within the group during 1968 , " All four Beatles were working at their highest levels " , with Harrison " at his most acerbic on ' Piggies ' " . Mark Richardson of *Pitchfork Media* highlights the song as one of The Beatles ' " iffy jokes " that nevertheless succeed , due to the high standard of the band 's songwriting and the effective sequencing of the double album .

= = Other versions = =

Theo Bikel , an actor , folk singer and activist who was a delegate at the 1968 Democratic convention in Chicago , covered " Piggies " on his 1969 album *A New Day* . Reviewing the opening night of Bikel 's residency at the Troubadour in Los Angeles , in June 1970 , *Billboard* magazine described the song as one of " the more meaningful titles " that the singer had adopted from the work of popular acts such as the Beatles , the Rolling Stones and Donovan . The 1976 television adaptation of Vincent Bugliosi 's book , also titled *Helter Skelter* , features several Beatles songs , including " Piggies " and Harrison 's White Album track " Long , Long , Long " , both performed by the group *Silverspoon* . The song was also covered by Danbert Nobacon , leader singer of the anarcho @-@ punk band *Chumbawamba* . Titled " Piggies in Revolution 9 " , Nobacon 's version appeared on the 1989 album *Fuck EMI* , a multi @-@ artist compilation protesting EMI 's business practices , particularly the company 's involvement in cruise missile production .

Having become available on bootleg albums from 1991 onwards , Harrison 's 1968 demo was released on the Beatles ' *Anthology 3* compilation in October 1996 . Recorded on an Ampex four @-@ track recorder , the demo features Harrison playing two acoustic guitar parts , and a double @-@ tracked lead vocal . Harrison performed " Piggies " throughout his 1991 Japanese tour with Eric Clapton and at his Natural Law Party concert in London in April 1992 . With synthesizers replicating the classical arrangement , a version recorded at the Tokyo Dome on 15 December 1991 appears on Harrison 's *Live in Japan* double album .

Phish included " Piggies " in their performance of The Beatles on Halloween 1994 , which was

released in 2002 as Live Phish Volume 13 . The harpsichord from the original Beatles recording was mashed with Jay @-@ Z 's " Change Clothes " for a track on Danger Mouse 's The Grey Album in 2004 . For the Beatles ' 2006 remix album Love , compiled by Martin and his son Giles , the harpsichord and cello parts were mixed into the ending of " Strawberry Fields Forever " .

The song was covered by Pumajaw for The White Album Recovered , a CD distributed with the September 2008 issue of Mojo magazine . That same year , former Cars keyboardist Greg Hawkes issued a ukulele rendition on his album The Beatles Uke .

= = Personnel = =

According to Ian MacDonald :

The Beatles

George Harrison ? lead and harmony vocals , acoustic guitar , backing vocals

John Lennon ? tape effects , vocalised grunting , backing vocals

Paul McCartney ? bass , backing vocals

Ringo Starr ? tambourine

Additional musicians

Chris Thomas ? harpsichord

Henry Datyner ? violin

Eric Bowie ? violin

Norman Lederman ? violin

Ronald Thomas ? violin

John Underwood ? viola

Keith Cummings ? viola

Eldon Fox ? cello

Reginald Kilbey ? cello

George Martin ? string arrangement