

= It 's All Too Much =

" It 's All Too Much " is a song by the English rock group the Beatles from their 1969 album Yellow Submarine . Written by George Harrison in 1967 , it reflects the ideological themes of that year 's Summer of Love . The Beatles recorded the track in May 1967 , shortly after completing their album Sgt. Pepper 's Lonely Hearts Club Band . It was one of four new songs they then supplied for the 1968 animated film Yellow Submarine , to meet their contractual obligations to United Artists .

Harrison wrote " It 's All Too Much " as a celebration of his experiences with the hallucinogenic drug LSD , although he subsequently found the same realisations in Transcendental Meditation and denounced LSD after visiting Haight @-@ Ashbury in August 1967 . The song features Hammond organ , which provides the track with a drone @-@ like quality typical of Indian music , electric guitar feedback , and an overdubbed brass section . Largely self @-@ produced by the band , the recording displays an informal approach that contrasts with the discipline of the Beatles ' previous work , particularly Sgt. Pepper . The song 's sequence in the Yellow Submarine film has been recognised for its adventurousness in conveying a hallucinogenic experience .

Although several Beatles biographers dismiss the track as aimless , " It 's All Too Much " has received praise from many other commentators . Peter Doggett considers it to be " one of the pinnacles of British acid @-@ rock " , while Rob Sheffield of Rolling Stone rates it among " the top five all @-@ time psychedelic freakouts in rock history " . Former Gong guitarist Steve Hillage adopted the song during his early years as a solo artist in the late 1970s . Journey , the House of Love , the Grateful Dead and the Church are among the other artists who have recorded or performed the track .

= = Background and inspiration = =

" It 's All Too Much " reflects George Harrison 's experimentation with the hallucinogenic drug Lysergic acid diethylamide , commonly known as LSD or " acid " . Author Robert Rodriguez describes the track as " gloriously celebratory " , with a lyric that conveys " his acid revelations in a childlike way " . Rather than the song being purely drug @-@ related , Harrison states in his 1980 autobiography that the " realisations " brought about by his LSD experiences were also applicable to meditation .

Together with his Beatles bandmate John Lennon and their wives , Harrison first took acid in March 1965 . He likened the heightened awareness induced by the drug to " a light @-@ bulb [ going ] on in my head " and " gaining hundreds of years of experience within twelve hours " . In addition , he credited LSD with being the catalyst for his interest in Indian classical music , particularly the work of Ravi Shankar , and Eastern spirituality . By the time Harrison wrote " It 's All Too Much " , in 1967 , the Indian sitar had temporarily replaced the guitar as his main musical instrument , as he received tuition from Shankar and one of the latter 's protégés , Shambu Das . As with his other songs from this period , however , such as " Within You Without You " and " Blue Jay Way " , Harrison composed the melody on a keyboard instrument . In the case of " It 's All Too Much " , his use of Hammond organ allowed him to replicate the drone @-@ like sound of the harmonium commonly heard in Indian vocal pieces .

Coinciding with the counterculture 's preoccupation with enlightenment , 1967 marked the period when LSD use had become widespread among rock musicians and their audience . In a 1999 interview with Billboard magazine , Harrison said his aim had been " to write a rock 'n'roll song about the whole psychedelic thing of the time " .

= = Composition and musical structure = =

The song is in the key of G major and the time signature throughout is 4 / 4 . The melody is restricted within a G pedal point , with a simple melodic emphasis on scale notes 2 ( A ) and 7 ( F # ) . As a defining characteristic of Indian classical music , such minimal harmonic movement features in many of Harrison 's other Indian @-@ style compositions , including " Within You Without You " .

and " Blue Jay Way " .

Aside from the song 's intro and extended ending ( or coda ) , the composition is structured into three patterns of verse and chorus , with the second and third patterns separated by an instrumental section . The song originally contained a fourth verse ? chorus combination , but this would be omitted from the officially released recording . Among musicologists discussing " It 's All Too Much " , Walter Everett describes it as a two @-@ chord composition , whereas Alan Pollack contends that the song 's sole chord is G major , although he concedes that transcribers may well list fleeting changes to C major over the choruses . In Pollack 's opinion , these sections appear to employ IV ( C major ) and ii minor ( A minor ) chords yet , rather than formal changes , " it all boils down to neighbor tone motion in the inner voices superimposed on to the pedal tone of G in the bass . "

AllMusic contributor Tom Maginnis writes that the lyrics " reflect the idealist optimism of the soon @-@ to @-@ be @-@ labeled ' summer of love ' and the kind of chemically enhanced mind @-@ expanding euphoria that pervaded the new ' hippie ' youth culture " . Author Ian Inglis views Harrison 's mention of " the love that 's shining all around here " and " Floating down the stream of time " as especially reflective of the philosophy behind the Summer of Love , while theologian Dale Allison identifies the singer 's " emerging religious worldview " in the first of those phrases .

The song quotes a line ( " With your long blonde hair and your eyes of blue " ) from the Merseys ' " Sorrow " , and at one point on the recording , the trumpets play part of Jeremiah Clarke 's " Prince of Denmark 's March " . The Beatles ' use of quotations here pre @-@ dates " All You Need Is Love " , which was written by Lennon and recorded in June 1967 for the group 's appearance on the Our World television broadcast . While noting the similar ideological theme behind the two compositions , Inglis writes of Harrison and Lennon " presenting alternative accounts of the same subject " in the manner of French Impressionists such as Monet , Renoir and Manet , each of whom painted their own interpretations of sites in Paris and Argenteuil .

= = Production = =

= = = Recording = = =

The Beatles began recording " It 's All Too Much " on 25 May 1967 at De Lane Lea Studios , located on Kingsway in central London . With producer George Martin not in attendance that day , nor for the subsequent session , on the 26th , the band produced the recording themselves . The song had the working title of " Too Much " , a phrase that journalist Robert Fontenot terms " beatnik vernacular for an experience that was exceptionally mindblowing " . The group taped four takes of the basic track , the final version of which extended to over eight minutes , with Harrison playing Hammond organ , Lennon on lead guitar , Paul McCartney on bass , and Ringo Starr on drums . The following day , they added overdubs , comprising vocals , percussion and handclaps . In addition , according to authors Ian MacDonald and Kenneth Womack , Harrison also played lead guitar on the track .

MacDonald characterises the 25 ? 26 May sessions as " chaotic " and typical of the group 's drug @-@ inspired efforts after completing their album Sgt. Pepper 's Lonely Hearts Club Band late the previous month . On the Sunday following the sessions for " It 's All Too Much " , the four Beatles attended a party at their manager Brian Epstein 's house in Sussex , where Lennon and Harrison introduced music @-@ industry publicist Derek Taylor to LSD . The band returned to De Lane Lea on 2 June , with Martin now participating . That day , the trumpets and bass clarinet parts , played by four session musicians and conducted by Martin , were added to the track .

Maginnis describes the opening of the song as " a burst of howling guitar feedback and jubilant , church @-@ like organ " , adding : " The atmosphere hints at Harrison 's fascination with Indian music and Hindu philosophy at the time , having a distinct , Eastern @-@ flavored , droning undercurrent . " Following the intro to " I Feel Fine " in 1964 , " It 's All Too Much " is a rare example of the Beatles ' use of feedback on a recording and suggests the influence of Jimi Hendrix . Womack credits this guitar part to Harrison , who played his Epiphone Casino using " the instrument 's Bigsby

[ tremolo ] bar in searing , full vibrato force " . Harrison later rued the prominence of the brass accompaniment , saying : " To this day I am still annoyed that I let them mess it up with those damn trumpets . Basically , the song 's quite good but , you know , messed up with those trumpets . "

= = = Mixing = = =

The Beatles carried out final mixing on " It 's All Too Much " , again at De Lane Lea , on 12 October 1967 , while completing work on their Magical Mystery Tour EP . In the months since recording the song , Harrison had sworn off acid after visiting the Haight @-@ Ashbury district of San Francisco in August , with Pattie Boyd , Taylor and others . He said he found himself disillusioned at how , rather than an enlightened micro @-@ society , Haight @-@ Ashbury seemed to be a haven for dropouts and drug addicts . On 29 September , Harrison and Lennon appeared on David Frost 's weekly television show , during which they publicly disavowed LSD , and espoused the benefits of Transcendental Meditation .

The Beatles considered the song for inclusion in their 1967 TV film Magical Mystery Tour . Instead , they selected it later that year for the soundtrack to the Yellow Submarine animated film ( 1968 ) , to meet their contractual obligations to supply United Artists with four new songs for the project . The version used in the film was a heavily edited version of the track , shortened to 2 : 22 through the inclusion of just two of the original song 's four verses and only the start of the long coda .

" It 's All Too Much " was remixed for inclusion on the Yellow Submarine album on 16 October 1968 . The vocals and handclaps were processed using automatic double tracking , so allowing these parts to be split across the stereo image . For this version , the song was edited down from the original eight minutes to a running time of 6 : 28 , making it the longest officially released Beatles track written by Harrison . The edit was achieved by cutting a 35 @-@ second portion from around the three @-@ minute mark , thereby removing the third chorus and the fourth verse ( the last of which had appeared in the film ) , and by fading out before the final minute of the coda .

= = Appearance in the Yellow Submarine film = =

Discussing the various underground influences in Yellow Submarine , author Stephen Glynn identifies the segment featuring " It 's All Too Much " as being among the film 's " most daring sequences " . Led by art director Heinz Edelmann , the animation for the song reflects the influence of psychedelic artists such as Hapshash and the Coloured Coat , who in turn were inspired by the work of the nineteenth @-@ century illustrator Aubrey Beardsley . Referring to London 's UFO Club , for which the Hapshash team designed promotional posters , Glynn considers the scene to be a cinematic version of Unlimited Freak Out ? " a ' happening ' that sought to create a totalising mind @-@ expanding environment involving music , light and people " .

The song appears during the climax of the film , following Lennon 's defeat of the Chief Blue Meanie 's enforcer , the Flying Glove , through the power of the word " Love " . In Womack 's description , in the sequence for " It 's All Too Much " , the Beatles " vanquish the evil Blue Meanies and celebrate as the colorful beauty of friendship and music have been restored to Pepperland " . Author George Case describes the same victory scene as " a psychotropic cartoon dreamscape " and an example of the Beatles ' more overt allusions to the hallucinogenic experience . Speaking in 1999 , Starr said of " It 's All Too Much " : " that 's the [ track ] that really sets the mood of the movie ... that 's where the music and the movie really gel . "

The film represented the final episode in the Beatles ' psychedelic period , although the band had already returned to making more roots @-@ based music at the start of 1968 . Referring to the drug @-@ inspired imagery that led Rank to pull Yellow Submarine from its UK cinema run , Glynn writes : " Indeed , the imagery accompanying [ Harrison 's ] ' Only a Northern Song ' and ' It 's All Too Much ' only ' makes sense ' when read as attempting an audio @-@ visual recreation of the hallucinogenic state ... "

= = Release and reception = =

An EP containing "It's All Too Much" and the three other new soundtrack songs had been scheduled for September 1968, but a full album was created instead. With the addition of the previously issued "Yellow Submarine" and "All You Need Is Love" to fill out side one of the LP, George Martin's orchestral pieces from the film made up the second side. Viewed as a secondary release beside the band's recently issued double LP, *The Beatles*, the *Yellow Submarine* album appeared in January 1969, six months after the film's London premiere. In January 1996, "It's All Too Much" (backed by "Only a Northern Song") was issued on a jukebox @-@ only single, pressed on blue vinyl, as part of a series of Beatles releases by Capitol Records' CEMA Special Markets division.

Recalling the release of *Yellow Submarine* in his book *The Beatles Forever* (1977), Nicholas Schaffner described "It's All Too Much" as the only one of the new songs that appeared "to have taken more than a few hours to write". He added: "[its] highlights include some searing Velvet Underground feedback and an unusually witty epigram that just about sums up the Spirit of '67: 'Show me that I'm everywhere, and get me home for tea.'" Rodriguez recognises the timing of the song's release on its public perception. While he notes that the recording was "positively anarchic" in mid @-@ 1967, by 1969, when it received widespread release, the song was "slightly less groundbreaking and a little more reactionary to the psychedelic movement that the band itself had helped popularize".

Among the contemporary reviews of the album, *Beat Instrumental* described "It's All Too Much" and "Only a Northern Song" as "superb pieces" that "redeem" side one. In his lengthy assessment of the track, Barry Miles of *International Times* wrote: "Endless, mantric, a round, interwoven, trellised, tessellated, filigreed, gidouiled, spiralling is It's All Too Much [?] George's Indian @-@ timed, with drums fading @-@ in @-@ and @-@ out, spurts of life to a decaying note, multi @-@ level, handclapping number ... High treble notes flicker like moths around the top register. Happy singalong music." In his 1998 book *The Beatles Diary*, Miles praised it further as "the most striking piece of psychedelia The Beatles ever recorded" and concluded: "Discordant, off @-@ beat and effortlessly brilliant, the song was (alongside 'Taxman') Harrison's finest piece of Western rock music to date."

= = Retrospective assessment and legacy = =

Although *Yellow Submarine* has attained the status of a classic children's animated film, many Beatles biographers consider the band's post @-@ Sgt. Pepper 1967 recordings to be substandard work. Among these authors, Mark Hertsgaard cites Martin's view that the soundtrack album was made up of "bottom of the barrel" material and dismisses "It's All Too Much" as "little more than formless shrieking". Ian MacDonald also holds the track in low regard, describing it as a "protracted exercise in drug @-@ mesmerised G @-@ pedal monotony". Discussing the lyrics, particularly the line "Show me that I'm everywhere, and get me home for tea", MacDonald considers the song to be "the locus classicus of English psychedelia" and he comments that in Britain, unlike in America, "tradition, nature, and the child's @-@ eye @-@ view were the things which sprang most readily to the LSD @-@ heightened Anglo @-@ Saxon mind." Author and journalist Graham Reid highlights the same line as being the British equivalent of "Tune in, turn on, drop out", the phrase coined by Timothy Leary that came to define the American psychedelic experience.

Writing for *Rolling Stone* in 2002, Greg Kot admired the song, saying: "once again, a raga @-@ flavored groove brings out Harrison's best in the walloping 'It's All Too Much.'" That same year, Nigel Williamson of *Uncut* described it as "a psychedelic classic" that, had it been recorded earlier in 1967, "would have made Sgt Pepper an even better album". In the fourth edition of *The Rolling Stone Album Guide* (2004), Rob Sheffield wrote: "Yellow Submarine was a flat soundtrack rather than a real album, but here's a question: Why is George's 'It's All Too Much' not heralded as one of the top five all @-@ time psychedelic freakouts in rock history?" Bruce Eder of *AllMusic* similarly considers the album to be "inessential" and describes the track as "the jewel of the new

songs ... resplendent in swirling [ organ ] , larger @-@ than @-@ life percussion , and tidal waves of feedback guitar " and " a virtuoso excursion into otherwise hazy psychedelia " .

In Mojo 's The Beatles ' Final Years Special Edition ( 2003 ) , Peter Doggett acknowledged the comparative rarity of " It 's All Too Much " within the Beatles canon and added : " Yet it 's one of the pinnacles of British acid @-@ rock , its sleepwalking rhythm retaining a bizarrely contemporary feel today . " Having included the track in his 2011 list of Harrison 's " 10 Greatest Beatles Songs " , Joe Bosso of MusicRadar commented : " At times the song seems to drift away with Harrison 's dreamy verses , but just as quickly it 's chopping down trees with explosive percussion and thunderous handclaps . Wild guitar breaks by both Harrison and John Lennon help to make It 's All Too Much a dizzying treat . "

The song featured in Mojo 's 1997 list " Psychedelia : The 100 Greatest Classics " , where Jon Savage described it as an " aural pleasure " that included " mad brass and handclaps so luscious that they sound like the chewing of a thousand cows " . In July 2001 , Uncut placed the song at number 43 on its list of " The 50 Greatest Beatles Tracks " . Five year later , Mojo ranked it 85th on the magazine 's list of " The 101 Greatest Beatles Songs " ( between " You Won 't See Me " and " Lovely Rita " ) . The editors credited " It 's All Too Much " with inspiring the Krautrock genre , while Primal Scream singer Bobby Gillespie described it as " a great piece of music " that , in departing from the Beatles ' more regimented approach , evokes " the same feeling you get in ' Be @-@ Bop @-@ A @-@ Lula ' or a Muddy Waters or John Lee Hooker tune " . Writing for the website Ultimate Classic Rock , Dave Swanson considers " It 's All Too Much " to be " one of the band 's most captivating works from the psychedelic era , and one of the Beatles ' great lost songs " .

= = Cover versions = =

= = = Steve Hillage = = =

Former Gong guitarist Steve Hillage recorded " It 's All Too Much " for his 1976 solo album , L ? a version that Eder highlights as " a dazzling cover " and Williamson terms " stunning " . Produced by Todd Rundgren , the recording was also issued as a single .

In October 1976 , Phil Sutcliffe of Sounds magazine described Hillage 's adoption of both " It 's All Too Much " and Donovan 's " Hurdy Gurdy Man " as the " policy statements " for his solo career . Speaking to Trouser Press that same month , Hillage said he was drawn to the Beatles song because of its positive message , but especially its success in conveying joy without resorting to escapism .

Hillage included " It 's All Too Much " in his concert performances ; live versions from the late 1970s appear on his albums Live Herald ( 1979 ) , BBC Radio 1 Live ( 1992 ) and Rainbow 1977 ( 2014 ) . Reviewing BBC Radio 1 Live for AllMusic , Chris Nickson writes that Hillage 's reading " not only heightens the Eastern @-@ flavored psychedelia , but lets [ the guitarist ] unleash some of his most scorching axe work yet , tearing into the song like a starving man given a five @-@ course meal " .

= = = Other artists = = =

Journey also issued a recording of the song in 1976 , on their album Look into the Future . Besides the late 1970s renditions , according to Miles , the Beatles ' " It 's All Too Much " " won fresh acclaim from a later wave of acid @-@ rock adventurers " during the early 1990s . The House of Love released a cover of the song as the B @-@ side to " Feel " , the first single from their 1992 album Babe Rainbow . The previous year , Loves Young Nightmare recorded it ( as " All Too Much " ) for Revolution No. 9 : A Tribute to The Beatles in Aid of Cambodia , a multi @-@ artist compilation supplied with Revolver magazine ; the album was reissued in the United States in 1997 , following the popularity there of Britpop bands such as Oasis . The Church included the track on their 1999 covers album A Box of Birds .

" It 's All Too Much " has been performed live by the Grateful Dead , by the latter 's associated acts

Ratdog and Phil Lesh and Friends , and by Yonder Mountain String Band . Other artists who have recorded the song include All About Eve , Paul Gilbert , the Violet Burning , Yukihiro Takahashi and Rich Robinson . A version by former MC5 guitarist Wayne Kramer appeared on the Harrison tribute album Songs from the Material World ( 2003 ) .

Experimental musician Greg Davis and jazz singer @-@ songwriter Chris Weisman recorded the track for their 2010 album Northern Songs , a project that The Village Voice described as blending " Beatlefolk " with " gongs , field recordings , and generally orchestrated nirvana " . The Flaming Lips performed " It 's All Too Much " at the George Fest tribute concert in September 2014 , providing " the most sonically pleasing song of the night " , according to Consequence of Sound 's reviewer .

= = Personnel = =

According to Ian MacDonald and Kenneth Womack :

George Harrison ? lead vocal , Hammond organ , lead guitar , backing vocal , handclaps

John Lennon ? harmony vocal , lead guitar , handclaps

Paul McCartney ? harmony vocal , bass , cowbell , handclaps

Ringo Starr ? drums , tambourine

David Mason and three uncredited musicians ? trumpets

Paul Harvey ? bass clarinet