

= This Guitar (Can 't Keep from Crying) =

" This Guitar (Can 't Keep from Crying) " is a song by English musician George Harrison , released on his 1975 studio album Extra Texture (Read All About It) . Harrison wrote the song as a sequel to his popular Beatles composition " While My Guitar Gently Weeps " , in response to the personal criticism he had received during and after his 1974 North American tour with Ravi Shankar , particularly from Rolling Stone magazine . " This Guitar " was issued as a single in December 1975 ? the final release for Apple Records in its original incarnation ? but it failed to chart in either the United States or Britain .

The song follows in a tradition established by singers such as Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger , of attributing emotions and actions to a musical instrument . The lyrics also serve as an example of a dialogue that was commonplace during the 1970s between songwriters and music critics . Contributing to Harrison 's sense of injustice in " This Guitar " , he and his tour musicians believed that detractors had ignored the successful aspects of the 1974 shows ? which blended rock , jazz , funk and Indian classical music ? and had focused instead on his failure to pay due respect to the legacy of the Beatles . Rolling Stone 's scathing assessment of Harrison 's tour and accompanying album , Dark Horse , represented an about @-@ face by the publication , previously one of his most vocal supporters , and led to Harrison 's continued resentment towards the magazine over subsequent decades .

Harrison recorded " This Guitar (Can 't Keep from Crying) " in Los Angeles during April and May 1975 , a period marked by his post @-@ tour despondency . The recording features guitar solos played by Harrison and American musician Jesse Ed Davis . The song serves as a rare guitar @-@ oriented selection on the keyboard @-@ heavy Extra Texture album , although David Foster , Gary Wright and Harrison all contributed keyboard parts to the track . " This Guitar " has traditionally received a mixed reception from reviewers , partly due to the inevitable comparisons with " While My Guitar Gently Weeps " . Harrison re @-@ recorded the song in 1992 with former Eurythmic Dave Stewart , who used it to promote his Platinum Weird project in 2006 . This version appears as a bonus track on the 2014 Apple Years 1968 ? 75 reissue of Extra Texture .

= = Background = =

George Harrison 's stated aim for his North American tour with Indian musician Ravi Shankar , which took place from 2 November to 20 December 1974 , was to offer concert @-@ goers " another kind of experience " from the typical mid @-@ 1970s rock show . With its blending of Western rock , funk and jazz genres with Indian classical music , author Robert Rodriguez describes the result as a musical form " [that] one day would be called ' world music ' " . Of the critical reception given to the Harrison ? Shankar venture , tour @-@ wide , Rodriguez writes of the " genuine highlights that went mostly unreported " , since : " Smaller press outlets without axes to grind tended to review the shows the best , whereas rock establishment coverage , such as Rolling Stone 's , tended to spin the tour as something close to an unmitigated disaster ... "

Along with Harrison and band leader Tom Scott , tour musicians Jim Horn , Jim Keltner and Andy Newmark have each challenged the reliability of these negative reports , Horn declaring the Harrison ? Shankar tour " one of the best I 've been on " . Concert @-@ goers likewise questioned their accuracy ; according to author Nicholas Schaffner , Beatles fanzine Strawberry Fields Forever had been " deluged with letters protesting the nasty reviews " .

Harrison biographer Simon Leng describes this phenomenon as " one of the stranger episodes in rock music " and writes : " While the majority of reviews were positive , in some cases ecstatic , the ' given ' view of the tour comes from the Rolling Stone articles . " Chief among these was a feature by Ben Fong @-@ Torres , titled " Lumbering in the Material World " , covering the opening , West Coast portion of the tour . Fong @-@ Torres condemned Harrison for refusing to pander to critics ' and the public 's nostalgia for the Beatles , and for the perilous state of his singing voice , after Harrison had contracted laryngitis while rushing to complete his new album during the tour rehearsals . In addition to Scott airing his objections to Fong @-@ Torres ' article for focusing

excessively on the uneven opening concert at Vancouver 's Pacific Coliseum , Harrison complained that Rolling Stone had deliberately " edited everything positive out " about the shows , which Fong @-@ Torres later told him had been the case .

Leng writes that " Testimony " on the Harrison ? Shankar tour , and a " savagely personal " attack on Harrison , came with the magazine 's review for his delayed Dark Horse album . Under the heading " Transcendental mediocrity " , Rolling Stone critic Jim Miller wrote of the " disastrous album " appearing " in the wake of his disastrous tour " ? completing what Harrison biographer Elliot Huntley describes as the magazine 's " volte @-@ face " on an artist it had traditionally supported .

Harrison never completely forgave Rolling Stone for its treatment of the so @-@ called " Dark Horse Tour " . While members of his 1974 tour group , including future wife Olivia Arias , have spoken of Harrison 's defiant attitude towards the negative reviews , Leng suggests that he " reacted to them as personal attacks " . During a holiday in Hawaii with Arias over Christmas that year , Harrison wrote " This Guitar (Can 't Keep from Crying) " , a song that , he told Musician magazine in 1987 , " came about because the press and critics tried to nail me on the 1974 ? 5 tour , [and] got really nasty " .

= = Composition = =

The song title is a play on that of his 1968 composition " While My Guitar Gently Weeps " , released on the Beatles ' White Album and performed by Harrison throughout the 1974 tour . While concert reviewers had focused on his altering of the lyric to " While my guitar gently smiles " and " ... tries to smile " , Harrison told BBC Radio 1 's Paul Gambaccini in September 1975 that it was a track that was consistently well received by audiences during the tour . Harrison described the new composition as " Son of ' Guitar Gently Weeps ' " .

Like the Beatles track , " This Guitar " is structured around short , minor @-@ key verses (in this case , in the key of G minor) that conclude with the song title , rather than distinct choruses . Author Ian Inglis also notes the " evident similarity " between the melody of the two compositions . As with Harrison 's lyrics for " While My Guitar Gently Weeps " , Inglis writes , " This Guitar " follows in a tradition established by Woody Guthrie , Pete Seeger and Bo Diddley , of attributing emotions and actions to a musical instrument .

The song lyrics begin , " Found myself out on a limb / But I 'm happier than I 've ever been " , the second line of which echoes Harrison 's statements to Fong @-@ Torres and other interviewers during the tour , that he had never been as happy as he was now ? in a band with Scott , Billy Preston and Willie Weeks , and as a servant of the Hindu god Krishna instead of living out the public 's perception of him as " Beatle George " . Referring to the released recording of the song , Inglis opines that , rather than happiness , " the bitterness in his vocal performance tells a different story . "

In his brief discussion of " This Guitar " in his autobiography , Harrison introduces the lyrics to verse two with a mention of the need to " struggle " through adversity , in an effort " to become better human beings " :

Learned to get up when I fall
Can even climb Rolling Stone walls
This guitar can 't keep from crying .

Noting that Harrison was " bound to fight back against what he saw as unfair , malicious criticism " , Leng views these and other lines in the song as typical of a dialogue then common in rock music , between artists and critics . Leng cites Joni Mitchell , Neil Young and John Lennon as other singer @-@ songwriters who encouraged this dialogue and in some instances suffered for doing so .

Theologian Dale Allison writes of Harrison 's " deep hurt " being reflected in the lyrics to " This Guitar " . The two bridge sections document the " unwarranted abuse that comes his way " , Inglis writes , while typifying the theme that " [Harrison] is the guitar " :

This here guitar can be quite sad
Can be high strung , sometimes gets mad
Can 't understand or deal with hate

Responds much better to love .

After Harrison has named Rolling Stone as the main perpetrator of his anguish , Leng suggests that he is unable to sustain the previous " artifice " , whereby the lyrics ' shift in perspective from first @-@ person to third @-@ person represented the apparently " happy " private man versus the " wounded " musician , as " personified by his guitar " . Instead , Harrison " flays his detractors " in the song 's subsequent verses . These final verses contain the rhyming couplets " Thought by now you knew the score / You missed the point just like before " and " While you attack , create offence / I 'll put it down to your ignorance " . Lindsay Planer of AllMusic describes the lines as " suggesting that there is more to Harrison 's music than is being taken into consideration by narrow @-@ minded journalists " .

= = Recording = =

Harrison started recording his follow @-@ up to Dark Horse , Extra Texture (Read All About It) , in April 1975 , while in Los Angeles working on business associated with his Dark Horse record label . Leng remarks on Harrison 's " almost unseemly " haste in returning to a studio and suggests that his " bitterness and dismay " post @-@ Dark Horse was evident on much of the recording . Early on in the sessions , during his radio interview with WNEW @-@ FM 's Dave Herman , Harrison bemoaned the abandoning of 1960s idealism within the music industry and related this to the critical backlash he had recently received , from people who were " just dropping apart at the seams with hate " , adding : " I 'm talking about Rolling Stone actually ? talking about [founding editor] Jann Wenner . "

Harrison recorded the basic track for " This Guitar (Can 't Keep from Crying) " at A & M Studios in Hollywood between 21 April and 7 May . Harrison played 12 @-@ string acoustic guitar , with support from David Foster on piano , and sparse , floor tom @-@ heavy drumming from Jim Keltner . Klaus Voormann , Harrison 's regular bass player and a friend since the Beatles ' Hamburg years , chose to not participate in many of the sessions for Extra Texture , later citing the abundance of cocaine and Harrison 's " frame of mind when he was doing this album " . Harrison overdubbed the song 's bass part using an ARP synthesizer , while Gary Wright provided the ARP strings atmospherics , a sound that characterised his hit album The Dream Weaver around this time .

When discussing " This Guitar " with Paul Gambaccini in London , in September , Harrison described the song as " a cheap excuse to play some guitar " . Harrison played the slide guitar parts throughout the track , including the closing solo . Leng identifies both " Pete Drake stylings " and the influence of " raga microtones " in Harrison 's performance . The wah @-@ effected guitar solo midway through the song was performed by Jesse Ed Davis , who , having first supported Harrison at the Concert for Bangladesh in August 1971 , had since mirrored the ex @-@ Beatle 's guitar style on John Lennon 's recent hit song " # 9 Dream " . Davis overdubbed his contribution to " This Guitar " on 5 June , the day before the Foster @-@ arranged orchestrated strings were recorded .

= = Release = =

Extra Texture was issued on Apple Records in September 1975 , with " This Guitar (Can 't Keep from Crying) " sequenced as the third track , in between " The Answer 's at the End " and Harrison 's Smokey Robinson tribute " Ooh Baby (You Know That I Love You) " . Aside from the well @-@ received lead single , " You " , the album offered little in the way of " hook @-@ laden potential hit [s] " , author Bruce Spizer writes . On 8 December , Apple released " This Guitar " as the follow @-@ up single in America , with Apple catalogue number 1885 . The single version of the song was edited down to a running time of 3 : 49 , by fading out early during Harrison 's closing solo . Underlining the paucity of radio @-@ friendly selections on Extra Texture , the B @-@ side was " M?ya Love " , taken from the Dark Horse album . The single 's UK release (as Apple R 6012) was delayed until 6 February 1976 .

In America and Britain , " This Guitar " was available only in a plain sleeve . The German picture sleeve , featuring black text on a white background , contained a large black @-@ on @-@ red Om

symbol , reflecting an aspect of Roy Kohara 's design for Extra Texture , where the symbol appeared in blue on a vivid orange background . The Japanese sleeve incorporated Kohara 's colour scheme from the parent album , surrounding an image of Harrison on stage during the 1974 tour . The picture was taken by tour photographer Henry Grossman , who worked extensively with the Beatles in the 1960s . Harrison did no promotion for the single , but his guest appearance on friend Eric Idle 's Rutland Weekend Television 1975 Christmas special , singing the purpose @-@ written " The Pirate Song " , heralded a return to form for him in 1976 .

" This Guitar (Can 't Keep from Crying) " failed to place on either the US Billboard Hot 100 or the UK 's official singles chart , then just a top 50 . " This Guitar " ' s failure to chart in America was a surprise , since all of Harrison 's previous singles had made the top 40 there . Robert Rodriguez attributes its lack of success to the fact that Apple was " [r] unning on fumes " by this point and the company 's promotion for the single was therefore nonexistent . By the time the single appeared in Britain , close to five months after the song 's initial release , Harrison 's involvement with Apple was officially over , following his signing with A & M @-@ distributed Dark Horse Records in January 1976 .

Despite its commercial failure , " This Guitar (Can 't Keep from Crying) " is notable as the final release on the original Apple record label . While observing that the song became the first single by a former Beatle not to place on any of the three main US charts , Spizer adds : " It was a sad end and [a] far cry from the success of Apple 's first release , ' Hey Jude ' . "

= = Reception = =

In his discussion of Extra Texture in The Beatles Forever (1977) , Nicholas Schaffner wrote of Harrison 's " worldly critics " responding " like bulls to a red flag " to " This Guitar " and other " treatises on how reviewers always ' miss the point " . Aside from their objections to the song 's subject matter , Robert Rodriguez observes , " Critics by nature tended to regard the Beatles ' catalog as sacrosanct " and therefore " dissed [Harrison] for producing a sequel to ' While My Guitar Gently Weeps ' " . The consensus of critical opinion was that " This Guitar " paled beside the Beatle original , with NME writers Roy Carr and Tony Tyler adding : " The lack of a tune doesn 't help . " Dave Marsh of Rolling Stone dismissed much of the album 's first side as " padded subterfuge " while opining that " there just isn 't compensation here for the failed promise of ' This Guitar (Can 't Keep from Crying) ' " .

More recently , AllMusic 's Richard Ginell views the song as an " attractive " sequel to " While My Guitar Gently Weeps " and includes it among Harrison 's best solo compositions . Elliot Huntley has written of reviewers ' derision of the track as a " lame " follow @-@ up : " Harrison made a fatal mistake in making it sound like a sequel . ' This Guitar (Can 't Keep From Crying) ' is a good song in its own right , with excellent lead guitar work from the master ... " Author Andrew Grant Jackson features the track in his book Still the Greatest : The Essential Solo Beatles Songs , and admires " the group 's synergy " on the recording , as well as Forster 's " fine string arrangement " . Jackson adds : " Probably no one bitched more about their critics than the solo Beatles until Public Enemy and Eminem came along ? [' This Guitar '] could have been one of the most depressing ex @-@ Beatles tunes ever , but its strange groove compels repeated listening . "

Writing in Mojo magazine , John Harris describes " This Guitar " as " a serviceable sequel ? in which GH 1) does a neat Dylan impression , and 2) plays yet another lovely slide solo " . Reviewing the 2014 Apple Years reissues of Harrison 's catalogue , New Zealand Herald journalist Graham Reid considers the track to be " a much better song than it seemed at the time " , while Oregano Rathbone of Record Collector cites it as an example of how each of Harrison 's Apple albums after the acclaimed All Things Must Pass " contains shivery moments of release " . Writing for the website Vintage Rock , Shawn Perry views the track as one of its composer 's " most overshadowed songs " and a highlight of " a creative and introspective album that 's aged well " .

Among Harrison biographers , Alan Clayson sees " This Guitar " as the " soundest choice " for a second single off an album that represents Harrison 's " lowest ebb " . Simon Leng describes it as a " harrowing song " , with a " passionate and powerful " Harrison vocal , and draws parallels between

" This Guitar " and Neil Young 's similarly anti @-@ journalistic " Ambulance Blues " . Ian Inglis writes of the " gulf " separating Harrison 's 1968 composition from the 1975 song : " While the first was a poignant and satisfying commentary that drew attention to his newfound maturity as a songwriter , this is a petulant and rather arrogant statement in which he appears to want to put himself above criticism ... Both words and music depict a sour and troubled performer , whose resentment is all too clear . " Dale Allison describes " This Guitar " as a " beautiful song " with " ardent lyrics " , and groups it with Harrison compositions such as " Isn 't It a Pity " , " The Light That Has Lighted the World " , " Blow Away " and " Sat Singing " ? all songs that " remain close to the hearts of those familiar with them " .

= = Other versions = =

Harrison 's experiences as a headline performer in 1974 led to him not touring again for seventeen years , when he undertook a short tour of Japan with Eric Clapton 's band in December 1991 . In November that year , during rehearsals at Bray Studios in Berkshire , " This Guitar (Can 't Keep from Crying) " was one of 35 songs that Harrison considered for the concert setlist , but he did not perform it at any of the shows .

Former Eurythmic Dave Stewart recalls recording a version of " This Guitar " with Harrison in London . The recording was made in 1992 , ten years after which Ringo Starr , Dhani Harrison and Kara DioGuardi overdubbed contributions , on drums , acoustic guitar and backing vocals , respectively . The song was then published over the internet to promote Stewart 's Platinum Weird project , in March 2006 ? over four years after Harrison 's death from cancer at the age of 58 . Although it did not appear on Platinum Weird 's album , Make Believe , this version of " This Guitar " was included as a bonus track on the 2014 reissue of Extra Texture . Writing for Blogcritics , Seattle @-@ based critic Chaz Lipp views it as a " tighter rock @-@ oriented remake " , while Graham Reid describes the bonus track as " a fascinating undated update " .

= = Personnel = =

The following musicians played on the original version of " This Guitar (Can 't Keep from Crying) " :

George Harrison ? vocals , 12 @-@ string acoustic guitar , ARP bass , slide guitars
Jesse Ed Davis ? electric guitar
David Foster ? piano , string arrangement
Gary Wright ? ARP strings
Jim Keltner ? drums