

= Wah @-@ Wah (song) =

" Wah @-@ Wah " is a song by English musician George Harrison , released on his 1970 triple album All Things Must Pass . Harrison wrote the song following his temporary departure from the Beatles in January 1969 , during the troubled Get Back sessions that resulted in their Let It Be album and film . The lyrics reflect his frustration with the atmosphere in the group at that time ? namely , Paul McCartney 's over @-@ assertiveness and criticism of his guitar playing , John Lennon 's lack of engagement with the project and dismissal of Harrison as a songwriter , and Yoko Ono 's constant involvement in the band 's activities . Music critics and biographers recognise the song as Harrison 's statement of personal and artistic freedom from the Beatles . Its creation contrasted sharply with his rewarding collaborations outside the group in the months before the Get Back project , particularly with Bob Dylan and the Band in upstate New York .

Recorded shortly after the Beatles ' break @-@ up in 1970 , " Wah @-@ Wah " was the first track taped for All Things Must Pass . The recording features a dense production treatment from Phil Spector and backing from a large cast of musicians including Eric Clapton , Ringo Starr , Billy Preston , Bobby Keys and the band Badfinger . On release , Rolling Stone magazine described it as " a grand cacophony of sound in which horns sound like guitars and vice versa " . While several reviewers find the heavy production appropriate for the song , Harrison considered the recording overproduced and the sound too cluttered .

" Wah @-@ Wah " was the first song Harrison played live as a solo artist when he performed it as his opener for the Western @-@ music portion of the Concert for Bangladesh , in August 1971 . Viewed by some commentators as superior to the studio recording , this version re @-@ created Spector 's Wall of Sound treatment in a live setting , using many of the participants from the 1970 album sessions . At the Concert for George in November 2002 , a year after Harrison 's death , " Wah @-@ Wah " was performed by an all @-@ star band that included Clapton , Jeff Lynne , Starr and McCartney . Ocean Colour Scene , Buffalo Tom , Beck and the Tedeschi Trucks Band are among the other artists who have covered the song .

= = Background = =

= = = October ? December 1968 US visit = = =

When discussing the song " Wah @-@ Wah " and George Harrison 's temporary departure from the Beatles in January 1969 , several commentators note the importance of his recent two @-@ month visit to America , which followed the completion of the band 's 1968 double album The Beatles , commonly known as the White Album . In Los Angeles , where he was producing a Jackie Lomax solo album for the Beatles ' Apple record label , Harrison directed top session players such as Hal Blaine and Larry Knechtel , and met two American musicians with whom he would soon collaborate in London , Delaney Bramlett and Leon Russell . Later in the US trip , Harrison stayed in upstate New York , where he established a musical bond with Bob Dylan and thrived among what author Simon Leng calls the " group ethic and camaraderie " of the Band . Throughout this period , Harrison continued to bloom as a songwriter , having contributed four songs to The Beatles that , in the words of author Nicholas Schaffner , " firmly established him as a contender " beside bandmates John Lennon and Paul McCartney . In addition , he had recently co @-@ written Cream 's single " Badge " with Eric Clapton , as well as collaborating with Dylan in Bearsville .

= = = January 1969 at Twickenham Film Studios = = =

Harrison later recalled his two months in the United States as having been " such a good time " , yet " the moment I got back with the Beatles [for their Get Back film project] , it was just too difficult " . These difficulties included having to endure McCartney 's habit of dictating how the others should play their instruments and Lennon 's increasing withdrawal from the band and emotional

dependence on his ever @-@ present partner , Yoko Ono . The couple had recently descended into heroin addiction , leaving Lennon , in author Peter Doggett 's words , " emotionally removed and artistically bankrupt " . In their study of the Get Back project , Doug Sulpy and Ray Schweighardt write that , as another frustration for Harrison , Lennon and McCartney regularly overlooked his compositions , even when they were " far better than their own " .

On 6 January 1969 , the band 's third day at Twickenham Film Studios , in south @-@ west London , an argument was captured on film where McCartney criticised Harrison 's guitar playing on the song " Two of Us " . A resigned Harrison told him : " I 'll play what you want me to play , or I won 't play at all if you don 't want me to play . " With the sessions being recorded by film director Michael Lindsay @-@ Hogg , tapes reveal Beatles associates Neil Aspinall and George Martin sympathising with Harrison 's position , recognising that McCartney and Lennon " don 't offer him enough freedom within their compositions " . Ringo Starr , who had quit the band briefly during the White Album sessions , partly as a result of McCartney 's hectoring of his drumming , recalled of Harrison 's refusal to be " dominated " by McCartney any longer : " Paul [typically] wanted to point out the solo to George , who would say , ' Look , I 'm a guitarist . I 'll play the solo . ' And he always did , he always played fine solos . "

Over the first three days at Twickenham , Harrison had presented new compositions such as " All Things Must Pass " , " Let It Down " and " Hear Me Lord " for consideration ; these and other " numerous beautiful songs " , music journalist Martin O 'Gorman writes , " received derision and disinterest from Lennon or heavy @-@ handed interference from McCartney " . On 8 January , Harrison debuted " I Me Mine " , a song inspired by the bickering and negativity within the band . It was met with ridicule by Lennon and an argument ensued between the two musicians , during which Lennon dismissed Harrison 's abilities as a songwriter . According to Sulpy and Schweighardt , Lennon 's resentment was most likely a reaction to Harrison 's productivity throughout the sessions , since he himself was " unable to write a decent new song " . In addition , Harrison had been alone in voicing his objections to Ono 's presence , telling the couple how , in Lennon 's later recollection , " Dylan and a few people said she 's got a lousy name in New York " .

On Friday , 10 January , a more severe argument took place in which Harrison berated Lennon for contributing nothing positive to the rehearsals . During the lunch break , Harrison walked out of the Beatles , saying that the others should advertise in the NME for his replacement . He then drove to his home , Kinfauns , in Surrey , and wrote " Wah @-@ Wah " that same afternoon . Despite the animosity between himself and Lennon on the day he quit the group , Harrison later confirmed a suggestion made by music journalist Timothy White that , just like Lennon 's " How Do You Sleep ? " and " Crippled Inside " , the song was a " swipe " at McCartney .

= = = Harrison 's return to the Beatles = = =

Harrison 's diary records that Lennon and Ono " diverted " him at home over breakfast the following morning , but even after a subsequent band meeting at Starr 's house , author Barry Miles writes , their " feud " remained " intractable " . At the meeting , much to Harrison 's annoyance , Lennon once more chose to have Ono speak on his behalf . Harrison then went to his parents ' home in Warrington for a few days before imposing terms for his return to the band ? namely , that McCartney 's plans for a live concert be abandoned and the project be relocated to the Beatles ' own Apple Studio , at London 's Savile Row . Commentators have remarked on a change in Harrison 's standing within the band as a result of his walkout , and later in 1969 , Lennon and McCartney would be speaking admiringly of Harrison 's growth as a songwriter . In an article for Mojo magazine 's July 2001 " Solo Beatles Special " , John Harris wrote that although Harrison " nominally " remained a Beatle , he was " serving out his notice " after 10 January 1969 .

= = Composition = =

In his autobiography , I , Me , Mine , Harrison explains that the song title was a reference to " a ' headache ' as well as a footpedal " , the wah @-@ wah pedal being a guitar effect that he favoured

for much of the early Get Back sessions . The message of the song , according to Harrison , was : " you 're giving me a bloody headache . " Leng identifies " Wah @-@ Wah " as being directed at the " artifice " and " pretense " surrounding the Beatles .

The song is based around an electric guitar riff that Leng describes as " snarling " . Written in the key of E , the tune incorporates chord changes that musicologist Wilfrid Mellers once admired as " audacious " ; musically , Harrison biographer Elliot Huntley suggests , the composition mirrors the " intense atmosphere " at Twickenham in January 1969 . Referring to the released recording , author Ian Inglis views " Wah @-@ Wah " as a hard rock song where the " forceful rhythm " conveys " the momentum of [Harrison 's] anger " .

Like " Run of the Mill " , which Harrison also wrote in early 1969 , the lyrics touch on the failure of friendships within the band , which in the case of Harrison , McCartney and Lennon dated back to school years . Harrison later spoke of their familiarity with one another resulting in McCartney , especially , failing to recognise his artistic growth ; in I , Me , Mine , he refers to " Wah @-@ Wah " as reflecting " that concept of how everybody sees and treats everybody else , allowing no consideration for the fact that we are changing all the time " .

The second verse reflects Harrison 's frustration at being viewed by Lennon and McCartney as subservient to their ambitions , just as his 1968 composition " Not Guilty " had found Harrison defending himself for supposedly leading his fellow Beatles " astray " to the Maharishi 's meditation retreat in India . In " Wah @-@ Wah " , he states sarcastically :

You 've made me such a big star
Being there at the right time
Cheaper than a dime ...

Over the song 's two middle eights , Harrison laments that his bandmates never take the time to notice his sorrow or " hear me sighing " .

Religious academic Joshua Greene has written of Harrison being " too sure of his life 's higher purpose " by January 1969 , through his dedication to Hindu spirituality , to continue devoting time to the group 's " petty squabbles " . In the song 's final verse , Harrison provides what AllMusic critic Bill Janovitz terms a " simple , spiritual sentiment " , which serves as a statement of his independence from the Beatles :

Now I don 't need no wah @-@ wah
And I know how sweet life can be
If I keep myself free ?

" Wah @-@ Wah " was never offered to the Beatles once Harrison joined the proceedings at Apple Studio . The choice of Harrison songs that would end up on the Let It Be album in May 1970 ? " I Me Mine " and " For You Blue " ? has led some authors to speculate that he deliberately withdrew his higher @-@ quality compositions rather than risk having them played without the attention they deserved . Leng lists " Wah @-@ Wah " among a number of solo Beatles songs that are " self @-@ referential " in their lyrical theme and serve as episodes in what he calls " the Beatles soap opera " . Harrison 's bitterness at the restrictions imposed on him during the Beatles years resurfaced explicitly in " Who Can See It " , a song written in 1972 .

= = Recording = =

McCartney 's refusal to have the release of his eponymous first solo album delayed until after Let It Be led to him announcing his departure from the band on 9 April 1970 , and to Harrison finally deciding to make an album of his many unused songs from the Beatles ' later years . He subsequently described the process of recording his songs with outside musicians as " a breath of fresh air " . Shortly before starting work on the album , Harrison gave a radio interview to Village Voice reporter Howard Smith , and explained that , although he had some ideological differences with Lennon , his objection to any possible Beatles reunion was based solely on his musical differences with McCartney .

In the same 1970 radio interview , Harrison announced that he would be co @-@ producing the album with Phil Spector , whose work on the Let It Be album had recently enraged McCartney . "

Wah @-@ Wah " was the first song taped for All Things Must Pass , recording for which began at Abbey Road Studios in late May that year . In keeping with Spector 's signature production style , a large group of musicians took part in the sessions . According to Leng and author Bruce Spizer , the musicians on the track were : Harrison and Eric Clapton on electric guitars , three members of Badfinger on acoustic rhythm guitars , Billy Preston and Gary Wright on keyboards , the former Delaney & Bonnie horn section of Jim Price and Bobby Keys , bassist Klaus Voormann , Starr on drums , and Badfinger 's Mike Gibbins playing tambourine . While Leng consulted Voormann , Badfinger 's Joey Molland and orchestral arranger John Barham for his chapter discussing the recording of All Things Must Pass , Bobby Whitlock , another former sideman with Delaney & Bonnie , has stated that he played electric piano on " Wah @-@ Wah " . Whitlock recalls that , having arrived at the session late due to traffic , and finding that the other musicians were all playing on the downbeat on the song , he was left to play alone in the obvious " open spot " ? on the upbeat .

Speaking in 2000 about this first session , Harrison said that the music sounded " really nice " in the room , " with all these nice acoustics and piano , and no echo on anything " , but he was shocked during the playback when he heard how Spector had recorded the track . In Leng 's words , Spector " [unleashed] his full armory of reverb @-@ flooded production values " on " Wah @-@ Wah " . Harrison dismissed the result as " horrible " , and recalled that when Clapton said he liked the way it sounded , he replied , " Well , you can have it on your album , then . " Although Harrison said " I grew to like it " , he subsequently reverted to his original opinion that the song , like much of All Things Must Pass , was overproduced . Overdubs on many of the album 's basic tracks were carried out at either Abbey Road or Trident Studios , without Spector 's assistance , and completed by 12 August . After receiving Harrison 's initial mixes , Spector wrote back with suggestions for each song ; in the case of " Wah @-@ Wah " , these included the addition of a saxophone solo by Keys , and backing vocals . As well as overdubbing his slide guitar solos , Harrison sang all the various vocal parts , crediting himself as " the George O 'Hara @-@ Smith Singers " on the album sleeve .

The recording begins with Harrison 's guitar riff , which is then joined by Clapton 's guitar , played through a wah @-@ wah pedal . Leng suggests that the musical arrangement was influenced by the Delaney & Bonnie song " Comin ' Home " , following Clapton and Harrison 's guest roles on the band 's European tour in December 1969 . " Wah @-@ Wah " also features prominent percussion , including uncredited maracas and congas , and , in Leng 's description , a " rollicking horn chart " from Price that helps define the middle @-@ eight sections . Adding to the musical tension , Janovitz notes , Harrison sings high in his range throughout , " almost drowned out " by Spector 's Wall of Sound , which sees keyboards , horns and the many guitar parts competing for space in the mix . The song fades out on the single @-@ chord main riff , accompanied by the sound of a car engine changing gear .

= = Release = =

Apple Records issued All Things Must Pass on 27 November 1970 with " Wah @-@ Wah " sequenced as the third track , between " My Sweet Lord " and " Isn 't It a Pity " . Despite its unusually high retail price , as one of rock music 's first studio triple LP sets , the album was a significant commercial success worldwide , and comfortably outperformed Lennon and McCartney 's respective solo releases over 1970 ? 71 . Music journalist Anthony DeCurtis later wrote of the album representing " [the] bracing air of creative liberation " for Harrison .

Like " Isn 't It a Pity " , the song " All Things Must Pass " , and Barry Feinstein 's cover photo of Harrison surrounded by four comical @-@ looking garden gnomes , " Wah @-@ Wah " was recognised as a comment by Harrison on his Beatle past . In February 1971 , he , Lennon and Starr united in the British high court to challenge McCartney 's suit to dissolve the band 's legal partnership , all three of them submitting affidavits that mentioned their difficult experiences of working with him , particularly during the Get Back sessions . In the context of this post @-@ breakup unity , " Wah @-@ Wah " was widely assumed to be directed at McCartney only , just as Harrison 's walkout two years before was thought to have been due solely to McCartney .

= = Reception and legacy = =

In his book on the Beatles' first decade as solo artists, Robert Rodriguez includes "Wah @-@ Wah" among the "essential components" of *All Things Must Pass*, and he recalls the "buzz" surrounding the release as having been "about a major talent unleashed, one who'd [previously] been hidden in plain sight" behind Lennon and McCartney. In a contemporary review for *Rolling Stone*, Ben Gerson suggested that the album was the rock @-@ music equivalent of Tolstoy's epic novel *War and Peace*, while describing "Wah @-@ Wah" as a "vintage Beatle song" and "a grand cacophony of sound in which horns sound like guitars and vice versa". By contrast, Alan Smith of the *NME* found the dense sound oppressive and regarded the song as "inconsequential? one of the weaker tracks, although it's not short on dressing".

AllMusic's Bill Janovitz sums up the track as "a glorious rocker ... [that's] as edgy as anything Harrison ever sang while in the Beatles, if not more so", and "a driving, majestic song on the edge of being out of control". John Bergstrom of *PopMatters* opines that the best moments on *All Things Must Pass* "involve Harrison addressing his former band"; of these, the "raucous, killer jam" of "Wah @-@ Wah" dismisses the Beatles' strife @-@ filled final years as "so much white noise". While the song is "cutting", Bergstrom adds, "the sense of liberation is almost palpable". Writing for *Rough Guides*, Chris Ingham considers that without Spector's Wall of Sound excesses, *All Things Must Pass* "wouldn't be the magnificently overblown item that it is", and he writes of "the sheer size of the sound? threatening to trample both song and singer" in the case of "the thunderous Wah @-@ Wah". Former *Mojo* editor Paul Du Noyer describes the album as "Harrison's handful of earth upon the Beatle coffin", but, less impressed with the composition, he cites "Wah @-@ Wah" as a rare example where "the material is probably too slight to carry the colossal weight of Spector's production".

Among Harrison biographers, Simon Leng writes that the song "trashes the roseate memory of the Beatles". He concludes his discussion of this "unusually heavy chunk of rock" with the observation: "It's a song of anger and alienation, redolent of betrayal and hostility. To that extent, it's a good @-@ time number to rival Delaney & Bonnie, with a heart of pure stone." Noting the production's "layer upon layer of sonic bombast", Elliot Huntley opines that "Spector fans must have been in seventh heaven" when they first heard "Wah @-@ Wah". Huntley refers to it as "one of the outstanding tracks" of Harrison's career, and a welcome though rare "flat @-@ out, kick @-@ ass rocker" in the singer's canon.

Still dissatisfied with Spector's "Cinemascope"-like production on "Wah @-@ Wah", when *All Things Must Pass* was reissued in January 2001, Harrison admitted that he had been tempted to remix many of the tracks rather than simply remaster the album's original mixes. In an interview with *Guitar World* magazine to promote the reissue, he also revealed that McCartney had "long since" apologised for his behaviour towards him during the Beatles years. In the 2000 book *The Beatles Anthology*, Harrison comments: "It's important to state that a lot of water has gone under the bridge ... But talking about what was happening at that time [with McCartney, Lennon and Ono], you can see it was strange."

= = Live version = =

On 1 August 1971, Harrison performed "Wah @-@ Wah" as the opening song for the rock @-@ music portion of the two Concert for Bangladesh shows, held at Madison Square Garden in New York. It was therefore the first song he ever played live as a solo artist and, given the humanitarian cause behind the event, Alan Clayson writes, the New York audience "loved him ... before he'd even plucked a string". The running order of the Concert for Bangladesh live album follows the setlist for the second show that day, about which Joshua Greene remarks on the "logical chronology" in Harrison's three @-@ song opening segment: "Wah @-@ Wah" "declared his independence from the Beatles, followed by 'My Sweet Lord', which declared his internal discovery of God and spirit, and then 'Awaiting on You All', which projected his message to the world." Re @-@ creating the Wall of Sound from *All Things Must Pass*, Harrison was backed by a

large band that again included Clapton , Starr , Preston , Voormann and Badfinger , together with musicians such as Leon Russell , saxophonist Jim Horn and drummer Jim Keltner , and a group of seven backing singers .

The recording of " Wah @-@ Wah " that appears on the live album was a composite of the audio from both the afternoon and evening shows ? one of the few examples of studio manipulation on an otherwise faithful record of the concert . Due to technical problems with the film footage , the " Wah @-@ Wah " segment in Saul Swimmer 's concert documentary was created through a series of edits and cuts between visuals from the first and second shows .

Harrison 's staging of the two benefit concerts enhanced his standing as the most popular of the former Beatles ; Doggett describes him as having become " arguably music 's most influential figure " over this period . In a laudatory review of the Concert for Bangladesh album , for Rolling Stone , Jon Landau described " Wah @-@ Wah " as " a simple statement by a musician who knows who he is and what he wants to play " . Like Rodriguez , who considers that the song " truly [came] into its own " that day , Andrew Grant Jackson views this live reading as superior to the studio recording . He writes : " The live version is a notch slower , and the cleaner mix allows breathing room to hear the space between the instruments . And more importantly , there 's the euphoria of the performance itself . "

= = Cover versions = =

On 29 November 2002 , exactly a year after his death from cancer , " Wah @-@ Wah " was the last Harrison composition performed at the Concert for George , held at London 's Royal Albert Hall . Jeff Lynne , Eric Clapton and Andy Fairweather @-@ Low shared lead vocals on the song . The band also featured Harrison 's son Dhani and many other close musical friends ? Starr , Voormann , Keltner , Horn , Ray Cooper , Gary Brooker and Tom Petty among them ? as well as Paul McCartney . This performance was released on the album of the concert ; although left off the theatrical release of David Leland 's Concert for George documentary film , it was subsequently included on the DVD release .

Alternative band B.A.L.L. covered " Wah @-@ Wah " on their 1988 album Bird , as part of their parody of early 1970s rock stars such as the former Beatles . Buffalo Tom recorded " Wah @-@ Wah " live on WMBR in Cambridge , Massachusetts in January 1991 , a version that appeared on the band 's Fortune Teller EP later that year . Ocean Colour Scene covered the song on their 2005 album A Hyperactive Workout for the Flying Squad , and in 2011 former Jefferson Starship vocalist Mickey Thomas released a version on his album Marauder .

The Tedeschi Trucks Band have often included " Wah @-@ Wah " in their live performances . Beck performed the song on the US television show Conan in September 2014 , as part of a week @-@ long promotion for Harrison 's The Apple Years box set . Nick Valensi of the Strokes covered " Wah @-@ Wah " at the George Fest tribute concert that same month , with Matt Sorum , of Guns N ' Roses and Velvet Revolver .

= = Personnel = =

The following musicians are believed to have played on the studio version of " Wah @-@ Wah " :

George Harrison ? vocals , electric guitar , slide guitar , backing vocals

Eric Clapton ? electric guitar

Billy Preston ? electric piano

Gary Wright ? piano

Pete Ham ? acoustic guitar

Tom Evans ? acoustic guitar

Joey Molland ? acoustic guitar

Klaus Voormann ? bass

Ringo Starr ? drums

Bobby Keys ? saxophones

Jim Price ? trumpet , horn arrangement

Mike Gibbins ? tambourine

uncredited ? maracas , congas