

= Deep Blue (song) =

" Deep Blue " is a song by English musician George Harrison , released as the B @-@ side to his 1971 charity single " Bangla Desh " . Harrison wrote the song in 1970 , midway through the recording sessions for All Things Must Pass , and recorded it in Los Angeles the following year while organising the Concert for Bangladesh . The composition was inspired by the deteriorating condition of his mother , Louise , before she succumbed to cancer in July 1970 , and by Harrison 's feelings of helplessness as he visited her in hospital in the north of England . Given the subject matter of his lyrics , " Deep Blue " also served to convey the suffering endured by the millions of refugees from war @-@ torn Bangladesh in 1971 , as sickness and disease became widespread among their makeshift camps in northern India .

Following Harrison 's work with American guitarist David Bromberg , " Deep Blue " features sparse instrumentation in the folk @-@ blues style . It includes one of Harrison 's first uses of dobro on a recording . The song proved popular on US radio and was listed with the A @-@ side when " Bangla Desh " peaked at number 23 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart .

Well regarded by music critics and commentators , " Deep Blue " was unavailable officially for 35 years after this non @-@ album single , during which it gained a reputation as an overlooked B @-@ side . The re @-@ release came in September 2006 , when EMI included the song as a bonus track on the reissue of Harrison 's Living in the Material World album .

= = Background = =

George Harrison 's inspiration for writing " Deep Blue " was the fatal illness of his mother , Louise . The youngest of her four children , Harrison often credited his mother with encouraging his music career from a young age , and a sense of individuality generally . Although a practising Catholic , she instilled in all her children the importance of spirituality over religion , a trait that was influential in Harrison 's embracing of Hinduism in 1966 . Louise was also diligent in replying to her son 's fan mail and , in the words of music journalist John Harris , she " stood alone among the Beatle parents as an active champion of their talents " .

Harrison discussed the song at length in a 1987 interview for Musician magazine , during which he recalls that his mother developed a brain tumour late in 1969 but then recovered for seven months . After hearing of the initial diagnosis in September 1969 , Harrison cancelled a recording session with Apple Records artist Jackie Lomax to see her ; author Peter Doggett comments that , because of the severity of this news , Harrison would later have no recollection of how he heard of John Lennon 's decision to leave the Beatles , on 20 September .

Although Louise 's cancer had gone into remission , it returned in the spring of 1970 . Exhausted from nursing her , Harrison 's father , Harry , was then also hospitalised . As a result , their youngest son was " running back and forth " between Warrington and London while trying to record his first post @-@ Beatles solo album , All Things Must Pass . Adding to the strain , Harrison would also tell Musician , he was having to assure each of his parents that the other one was okay . On 4 July , the day that his song " Something " won an Ivor Novello award , Harrison put his solo album on hold and drove north to see Louise for the last time . In his Musician interview , Harrison says that he wrote " Deep Blue " " at home one exhausted morning " during this period .

= = Composition = =

Musically , the song is in the folk @-@ blues style . Author Simon Leng notes " Deep Blue " as a comparatively rare foray into the genre for Harrison , along with " Sue Me , Sue You Blues " , a song he wrote in early 1971 in response to Paul McCartney 's lawsuit to dissolve the Beatles ' partnership . Leng attributes the folk @-@ blues influence primarily to Bob Dylan and American roots guitarist David Bromberg , the latter of whom Harrison had met in New York , through Dylan , shortly before beginning work on All Things Must Pass . Another Harrison biographer , Ian Inglis , writes that the style of " Deep Blue " ' s " easy , unpretentious melody " is equally influenced by the Lovin ' Spoonful

. Harrison recalled the mix of major and minor chords as reflecting the "frustration and gloom" he experienced while visiting his mother in the cancer ward.

In what Inglis describes as a "poignant contrast" with the composer's Beatles track "Here Comes the Sun", Harrison sings that the sunshine brings him no relief, but instead leaves him "suffering in the darkness", which is "so easy come by on the roadside of one long lifetime". In his autobiography, *I, Me, Mine*, Harrison says of the mood he captured in the song: "it's that smell and the whole atmosphere of doom that's in those hospitals."

The lyrics bear out the powerlessness he felt while someone dear to him died, specifically in the second verse:

When you stand there, watch tired bodies
Full of sickness and pain to show you
Just how helpless you really are ...

Harrison was at Louise's bedside until her death on 7 July. According to Rolling Stone contributor Mikal Gilmore, he read passages to her from a text about the Bhagavad Gita, "commenting on the sacred book's views of death as a changeover rather than a termination". In "Deep Blue"'s final verse, Harrison's lyrics likewise focus on spirituality:

When I think of the life I'm living
Pray God help me, give me your light
So I can love you and understand
This repetition that keeps me here feeling deep blue ...

Harrison was alone with his mother at the end, author Joshua Greene writes, and when she began to slip into unconsciousness, he "put down the book and began chanting softly into her ear". Inglis views the lyrics to "Deep Blue" as exemplifying Harrison's "fondness for family". Pattie Boyd, Harrison's wife at the time, recalls that Louise had withheld the seriousness of her condition from him for eight weeks before September 1969, "in case George was busy" with his career, and that, following her death, Harrison was anxious about how his father would manage alone. Keen to strengthen the familial bond, Harrison invited his brothers Harold and Pete to live on his Friar Park estate in Oxfordshire, along with their father.

== Recording ==

Within a year of Louise Harrison's death, Harry was staying in Los Angeles with Harrison and Boyd, while Harrison worked with Ravi Shankar on the soundtrack to the film *Raga*. A Bengali Hindu, Shankar was distraught at the news of the humanitarian disaster then occurring in East Pakistan, following the outbreak of the Bangladesh Liberation War in March 1971. After fleeing the war zone in their homeland, an estimated 7 million refugees were being accommodated in inadequate camps in India, where diseases such as cholera had become rife. Shankar later recalled that Harrison was deeply moved by his request for help in aiding the Bengali refugees, as a result of which he committed to staging the Concert for Bangladesh in New York that summer. Author Elliot Huntley suggests that, having been incapable of assuaging his mother's pain as she lay dying in 1970, Harrison gained extra motivation from "a situation his fame and commercial cache could do something to alleviate".

As a B-side for the hastily written "Bangla Desh", which he composed to bring attention to the cause, Harrison chose to record "Deep Blue". In the Bangladesh context of 1971, author Bruce Spizer writes, the song made a suitable, "intimately chilling" companion to the hard-charging lead track. Harrison recorded "Deep Blue" in Los Angeles, at the Record Plant West on 4–5 July, while organising the benefit concerts to be held at New York's Madison Square Garden on 1 August.

In contrast with the extravagant sound normally associated with co-producer Phil Spector's work, "Deep Blue" received a sparse musical arrangement. Underpinned by Jim Keltner's kick drum, the recording features three distinctive guitar parts, all performed by Harrison: two finger-picked acoustic guitars, along with fills played on a dobro. Leng cites Bromberg's influence again in Harrison's acoustic guitar playing on the track and considers the American guitarist to have

been Harrison 's inspiration for adopting the dobro , the two musicians having recently collaborated on " The Holdup " for Bromberg 's debut solo album . The dobro had since become " something of a party piece for him " , Leng writes , as " Deep Blue " preceded 1971 releases by John Lennon , Gary Wright and Billy Preston that each featured Harrison " cameos " on the instrument .

The only other musician on the session for " Deep Blue " , bassist Klaus Voormann , recalls that he , Harry Harrison and Memphis producer Don Nix then travelled to Nashville and explored the American South , before heading to New York for the concert rehearsals . " Deep Blue " appeared on Harrison 's initial setlist at the rehearsals , but was not performed at either of the two Concert for Bangladesh shows .

= = Release = =

Apple Records issued the " Bangla Desh " / " Deep Blue " single on 28 July 1971 in the United States (as Apple 1836) and 30 July in Britain (R 5912) . Before then , Apple 's US distributor , Capitol Records , had manufactured one @-@ sided promo discs , featuring just " Bangla Desh " , with the result that the lead side had already received considerable airplay in the build @-@ up to the concerts . The release was accompanied by a trade advertisement that reflected the emotion conveyed in " Deep Blue " , of someone watching a loved one " waste away " , Spizer writes ; in this case , the image depicted a mother attempting to comfort her starving child .

The B @-@ side was a popular track in its own right at the time of release . In his 1987 feature on Harrison , in *Musician* , music journalist Timothy White described the song as having been " a jukebox favorite in bars in the [United] States " . By 11 September , when the single reached its peak position on America 's Billboard Hot 100 , at number 23 , radio programmers had opted for " Deep Blue " and the entry appeared as a double A @-@ side in the chart listings . The single enjoyed more success on the other two US national charts , peaking at number 20 on Cash Box and number 13 on Record World .

= = Reissue = =

The 1971 single remained the only official release for " Deep Blue " for over 30 years , during which the song was largely forgotten . In his conversations with Derek Taylor over 1978 ? 79 for *I , Me , Mine* , Harrison acknowledged that the track had become " a bit obscure " . Inglis suggests that its exclusion from any album releases was because the lyrics ' " raw imagery " confined the track to a " very specific personal and political relevance " within the Bangladesh context .

After the expiration of Harrison 's contract with Capitol in 1976 , this and other non @-@ album B @-@ sides were among the notable omissions from *The Best of George Harrison* , a compilation that ignored many popular songs from his solo career in favour of an LP side of Beatles tracks . That same year , Harrison signed with Warner Bros. Records , whose staff producer Ted Templeman expressed his admiration for " Deep Blue " . As a result , Harrison wrote a song in the same musical style , the more upbeat " Soft @-@ Hearted Hana " , for his 1979 album *George Harrison* .

From the mid 1990s , " Deep Blue " became available on Harrison bootleg compilations such as *Pirate Songs* and *Through Many Years* . Along with " Miss O 'Dell " , a song he wrote in Los Angeles partly about the Bangladesh crisis , it was finally given an official CD release in September 2006 , as a bonus track on Harrison 's remastered *Living in the Material World* album . " Deep Blue " also appears on the 2014 *Apple Years 1968 ? 75* reissue of the album .

= = Reception = =

" Deep Blue " impressed the notably anti @-@ Harrison *Village Voice* critic Robert Christgau , who considered the song on a par with " Here Comes the Sun " and " My Sweet Lord " , while noting its status as a track " hidden away " on a B @-@ side . In their 2000 book on the four ex @-@ Beatles ' solo recordings , Chip Madinger and Mark Easter wrote of " Deep Blue " : " The track 's understated instrumentation and perceptive lyrical content make this one of the best , yet most overlooked songs

in George 's catalog . " In a 2001 appraisal of Harrison 's Apple recordings , for Record Collector , Peter Doggett opined that Harrison had " tucked away an acoustic gem " on the B @-@ side to " Bangla Desh " and described the song as " a sad but still buoyant lament inspired by his regular visits to his dying mother 's bedside " .

Among reviews of the Living in the Material World reissue , John Metzger of The Music Box describes " Deep Blue " as a " loose , swinging acoustic blues " . Writing for AllMusic , Bruce Eder views it as an " important bonus track " , as well as " a fantastic showcase " for Harrison 's acoustic guitar playing . In a review of the Apple Years reissues , New Zealand Herald music critic Graham Reid describes the song as an " especially good " B @-@ side .

Theologian Dale Allison recognises " Deep Blue " as Harrison 's " musically beautiful and lyrically moving " response to his mother 's death , a " prayer to God for help , light , love , and understanding in the midst of personal grief " . Ian Inglis praises the song 's " uncluttered production and economical backing " , adding : " ' Deep Blue ' is unlike anything he had written or recorded at that time , and its relative obscurity is undeserved . " While comparing the song favourably with better @-@ known compositions by Lennon (" Julia ") and McCartney (" Yesterday " , " Let It Be ") , Inglis concludes : " Where they differ is that Harrison 's song is about himself as much as it is about his mother ; her death is a starting point for an exploration of the ' suffering ' and ' darkness ' that afflict us all . " Elliot Huntley describes it as " a plaintive acoustic guitar tune " that became an " unjustly overlooked B @-@ side " .

Simon Leng sees " Deep Blue " as a candidate for what he terms " the ' last great B @-@ side ' accolade " , rivalling Harrison 's Beatles tracks " The Inner Light " and " Old Brown Shoe " . Leng also considers it to be a " worthy companion " to Dylan 's New Morning album and the work of Bromberg and Ry Cooder .

= = Personnel = =

The following musicians contributed to the recording of " Deep Blue " :

George Harrison ? vocals , acoustic guitars , dobro

Klaus Voorman ? bass

Jim Keltner ? drums