

The Sound of Silence

(Simon and Garfunkel)

[Verse 1]

Hello darkness, my old friend
I've come to talk with you again
Because a vision softly creeping
Left its seeds while I was
sleeping
And the vision that was planted
in my brain
Still remains
Within the sound of silence

[Verse 2]

In restless dreams I walked
alone
Narrow streets of cobblestone
'Neath the halo of a street lamp
I turned my collar to the cold
and damp
When my eyes were stabbed by
The flash of a neon light
That split the night
And touched the sound of
silence

[Verse 3]

And in the naked light I saw
Ten thousand people, maybe
more
People talking without speaking
People hearing without listening
People writing songs that voices

never share
And no one dared
Disturb the sound of silence

[Verse 4]

"Fools", said I, "You do not
know
Silence like a cancer grows
Hear my words that I might
teach you
Take my arms that I might reach
you"
But my words, like silent
raindrops fell
And echoed in the wells of
silence

[Verse 5]

And the people bowed and
prayed
To the neon god they made
And the sign flashed out its
warning
In the words that it was forming
And the sign said:
"The words of the prophets are
Written on the subway walls
And tenement halls
And whispered in the sound of
silence."

"The Sound of Silence", originally "The Sounds of Silence", is a song by the American music duo Simon & Garfunkel. The song was written by Paul Simon over a period of several months in 1963 and 1964. A studio audition led to the duo signing a record deal with Columbia Records, and the song was recorded in March 1964 at Columbia Studios in New York City for inclusion on their debut album, *Wednesday Morning, 3 A.M.*

Released in October 1964, the album was a commercial failure and led to the duo breaking apart, with Paul Simon returning to England and Art Garfunkel to his studies at Columbia University. In the spring of 1965, the song began to attract airplay at radio stations in Boston, Massachusetts, and throughout Florida. The growing airplay led Tom Wilson, the song's producer, to remix the track, overdubbing electric instruments and drums. Simon & Garfunkel were not informed of the song's remix until after its release. The single was released in September 1965.

The song hit No. 1 on the *Billboard* Hot 100 for the week ending January 1, 1966, leading the duo to reunite and hastily record their second album, which Columbia titled *Sounds of Silence* in an attempt to capitalize on the song's success. The song was a top-ten hit in multiple countries worldwide, among them Australia, Austria, West Germany, Japan and the Netherlands. Generally considered a classic folk rock song, the song was added to the National Recording Registry in the Library of Congress for being "culturally, historically, or aesthetically important" in 2012 along with the rest of the *Sounds of Silence* album.

Simon and Garfunkel had become interested in folk music and the growing counterculture movement separately in the early 1960s. Having performed together previously under the name Tom and Jerry in the late 1950s, their partnership had since dissolved when they began attending college. In 1963, they regrouped and began performing Simon's original compositions locally in Queens. They billed themselves "Kane & Garr", after old recording pseudonyms, and signed up for Gerde's Folk City, a Greenwich Village club that hosted Monday night performances. In September 1963, the duo performed three new songs, among them "The Sound of Silence", getting the attention of Columbia Records producer Tom Wilson, who worked with Bob Dylan. Simon convinced Wilson to let him and his partner have a studio audition, where a performance of "The Sound of Silence" got the duo signed to Columbia.

Simon has stated that the song was written in his bathroom, where he turned off the lights to better concentrate. "The main thing about playing the guitar, though, was that I was able to sit by myself and play and dream. And I was always happy doing that. I used to go off in the bathroom, because the bathroom had tiles, so it was a slight echo chamber. I'd turn on the faucet so that water would run (I like that sound, it's very soothing to me) and I'd play. In the dark. 'Hello darkness, my old friend / I've come to talk with you again'." In a more recent interview, Simon was directly asked, "How is a 21 year old person thinkin' about the words in that song?" His reply was, "I have no idea."

The original recording of the song is in D# minor, using the chords D#m, C#, B and F#. Simon plays a guitar with a capo on the sixth fret, using the shapes for Am, G, F and C chords. The vocal span goes from C#3 to F#4 in the song.