TUNE INTO ENGLISH
Wham!
Last Christmas

Il grande successo dei Wham!, il duo che fece di George Michael una stella, è l'opposto di un classico canto di Natale. Anche se con un ritmo molto natalizio, parla in realtà della sfortuna in amore e del rimorso.

One of the best-known Christmas songs in history is not about Christmas at all[1]. The 1984 festive favourite by British band Wham! is about a failed[2] relationship. Twenty-one-year-old George Michael (whose real name was Georgios Kyriacos Panayiotou) wrote the song in his childhood bedroom while visiting his parents, with bandmate[3] Andrew Ridgeley watching TV downstairs[4]. When they recorded it in August, they decorated the studio to create a Christmas atmosphere. George Michael insisted on playing all the instruments, despite[5] having no musical training[6].

The song was a phenomenal success, spending five weeks at No.2 in the charts[7]. It was kept off[8] the top spot[9] by the star-studded[10] charity single *Do They Know It's Christmas?*, which also featured[11] George Michael. In solidarity, all proceeds[12] from Last Christmas were donated to Ethiopian famine relief[13]. Lyrically, the song is as simple as a nursery rhyme[14], with the chorus[15] in the past simple and future. Although the narrator implies he has moved on[16], it is clear to the listener that he is still in love with his ex. *Last Christmas* remains the UK's most-played Christmas song, and has been widely covered[17], with recent versions by Taylor Swift, Ariana Grande and even Crazy Frog. Each day of the festive season the original is viewed on YouTube over one million times. The inspiration for a 2019 movie starring Emilia Clarke, it even spawned[18] a competition called Whamageddon, where the winner is the person who goes the longest[19] in December without hearing the song. *Last Christmas* finally reached No.1 in the UK in January 2021, thirty-six years after it was written, and five years after George Michael tragically died — on Christmas Day. ⊗

WHAM!
LAST CHRISTMAS

SCAN, READ & LISTEN 🔊 06
LOWER INTERMEDIATE B1

⬎ GLOSSARY

1 **at all:** per niente
2 **failed:** fallita
3 **bandmate:** compagno di gruppo musicale
4 **downstairs:** nell'appartamento di sotto
5 **despite:** nonostante
6 **training:** preparazione
7 **charts:** classifiche musicali
8 **to keep off:** lasciata fuori
9 **the top spot:** il primo posto
10 **star-studded:** piena di stelle
11 **to feature:** presentare
12 **proceeds:** guadagni, profitti
13 **famine relief:** aiuti contro la fame
14 **nursery rhyme:** ninna nanna
15 **chorus:** ritornello
16 **to move on:** andare avanti
17 **to cover:** creare una versione
18 **to spawn:** generare
19 **the longest:** più a lungo
20 **to wrap up:** avvolgere
21 **fool:** stupido
22 **to fool:** ingannare
23 **to rely on:** appoggiarsi su
24 **shoulder:** spalla
25 **to tear apart:** spezzare
26 **to bite:** mordere
27 **shy:** timido
28 **to deceive:** ingannare

Wham! in the 1980s: Andrew Ridgeley (left) and George Michael (right).

Last Christmas I gave you my heart
But the very next day you gave it away
This year, to save me from tears
I'll give it to someone special

CHORUS
Last Christmas I gave you my heart
But the very next day you gave it away
This year, to save me from tears
I'll give it to someone special

Once bitten and twice shy
I keep my distance, but you still catch my eye
Tell me baby, do you recognize me?
Well, it's been a year, it doesn't surprise me
Happy Christmas, I wrapped it up[20] and sent it
With a note saying "I love you", I meant it
Now I know what a fool[21] I've been
But if you kissed me now,
I know you'd fool[22] me again

CHORUS x2

Ooh
Oh, oh, baby
A crowded room, friends with tired eyes
I'm hiding from you and your soul of ice
My God, I thought you were someone
to rely on[23]
Me? I guess I was a shoulder[24] to cry on
A face on a lover with a fire in his heart
A man under cover, but you tore me apart[25]
Oh, oh now I've found a real love
You'll never fool me again

CHORUS x2

Special
A face on a lover with a fire in his heart
(I gave you mine)
A man under cover but you tore him apart
Maybe next year I'll give it to someone
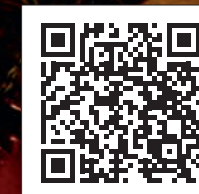I'll give it to someone special
Special
So long

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to give away: phrasal verb meaning 'to donate as a gift' or even 'to sell very cheaply'.

catch my eye: this phrase means 'to attract someone's attention'.

I wrapped it up: the singer gave his heart as a present.

But if you kissed me now, I know you'd fool me again: this is a perfect example of the second conditional (past + would), an unlikely (but not impossible) situation.

Once bitten[26], twice shy[27]: this proverb is credited to Greek storyteller Aesop. It means if someone has a bad experience they will try to be very careful not to repeat it

fool: a 'fool' is a silly or stupid person; one who lacks sense. The verb 'to fool' therefore means 'to deceive[28]'; that is, to make a fool of someone.

so long: an informal way of saying 'goodbye'.

Scan this QR code with your smartphone or tablet and listen to the official song on YouTube while reading the lyrics.

SCAN & WATCH