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Ringo Starr Honored With 'Lifetime of Peace and Love Award'

David Lynch and an all-star band paid tribute to the musician in Los Angeles last night

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David Lynch and Ringo Starr at the David Lynch Foundation's benefit honoring Ringo Starr with the 'Lifetime of Peace & Love' award at the El Rey Theatre in Los Angeles.

Kevin Winter/Getty Images

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For his 68th birthday last night, director David Lynch **threw a party** for **Ringo Starr**. More precisely, the **David Lynch Foundation** for Consciousness-Based Education and World Peace gave Starr the not-made-up-at-all "Lifetime of Peace and Love Award." Which meant that Lynch's foundation wanted to honor the peace-loving Starr as a pioneer of transcendental meditation and promote their own good works in teaching meditation to school children and military veterans. Since those worthy notions were packaged with an all-star romp through some of Starr's catalog, the crowd at the El Rey Theatre in Los Angeles could go home feeling that every one of them had all they needed.

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Paul McCartney and Yoko Ono sent videos in which they declared their Ringo-love, while Lynch gave a short speech that began "In all the galaxies of peace and love, Ringo is a giant star" and ended with "Hurray for Ringo!" Starr took the stage and discussed his own history with transcendental meditation: in 1968, when the **Beatles** studied with the Maharishi, they became poster children for the movement. "He was so full of joy," Starr said of the Maharishi, "I said, 'I want some of that.'" Starr acknowledged that he had let his own

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practice lapse for months and sometimes years since then, but said that for the past four years, he had been meditating "364 days a year." Accepting the award – before handing it back to Lynch because it was too heavy – Starr peered into the audience and said that it was "great to see a lot of people I know out there. And three of them are meditating."

The hour-long show had a stellar house band: Benmont Tench (**Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers**) on keyboards, Steve Lukather (Toto) and Peter Frampton on guitar, Kenny Aronoff (John Mellencamp's band) on drums, and Don Was on bass. Was, who also served as musical director, was sporting dark glasses, a beard, and a long scarf with orange tassels. He looked amused and louche throughout the whole show, as if he had stumbled onstage on his way to a somewhat more decadent party.

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The house band's stardom eclipsed that of some of the featured performers, such as Jesse Elliott and Lindsay Giles of Ark Life, who started the show with a bluesy version of "Can't Do It Wrong" (a deep cut from Starr's 2010 album *Y Not*). "Octopus's Garden" got a faithful version courtesy of three of the six members in the Head and the Heart (Josiah Johnson, Jonathan Russell, and Charity Rose Thielen – half the band showed up, but they never clarified whether they were the Head or the Heart.) Brendan Benson of the Raconteurs tackled "Don't Go Where the Road Don't Go" (another deep cut, from 1992's *Time Takes Time*). Benson turned up the heat somewhat, meaning that he inspired Was to stand up.

Soul legend Bettye LaVette announced "This is also my 50th year in show business – this is the best band I've ever had." After saying "I hope those aren't the lyrics, because I can't see 'em," she reprised her own cover of the Starr single "It Don't Come Easy." Slow, sultry, and powerful, it was the standout performance of the night. By the time LaVette was done, "we can make it work out better" sounded like the wisdom of the ancients.

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Ben Folds, with an electric keyboard on a stand rather than his preferred grand piano, joked that he "wouldn't play an ironing board for anyone but Ringo." Then he did a killer version of "Oh My My," romping through Starr's boogie-woogie composition and attacking that keyboard with his elbow, to the visible amusement and pleasure of the house band. Ben Harper contributed a heartfelt take on "Walk With You" (also from *Y Not*). Then Joe Walsh came out and told the crowd that everything up to that point was "the quiet part" of the evening, and backed it up with a heavy metal version of "Back Off Boogaloo."

Starr came back onstage for three songs. The first, "Photograph," was fine. Then he said, "I need to go play something on the drums, so you can see I can still hold the sticks," and delivered a thrilling, perfect version of "Boys" (the Shirelles B-side covered by the Beatles). Starr, who has been singing "Boys" since his days in Liverpool's Cavern Club, observed that he had been doing the song longer than most of the audience had been alive – but he still tackled it with the glee of a teenager. The show ended with a sloppy singalong version of "With a Little Help from My Friends," including the show's array of performers – plus other random audience members, including Sheila E., Edgar Winter, and Jim Carrey.

As a coda, Los Angeles mayor Eric Garcetti gave framed certificates to both Lynch and Starr. Lynch then recited an inspirational verse over a guitar drone, strictly instructing guitarist Steve Lukather, "One chord, Lukather."

"Very bossy on your birthday," Starr joked.

Starr concluded the evening by asking for donations to the David Lynch Foundation and touting the benefits of meditation with a classic Ringoism: "Meditation was started thousands of years ago – and I was there."

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