

MUSIC REVIEW | DAVID LYNCH FOUNDATION

Just Say 'Om': The Fab Two Give a Little Help to a Cause



Bryan Bedder/Getty Images

Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr reuniting as part of a benefit concert for the meditation-promoting David Lynch Foundation at Radio City Music Hall.

By JON PARELES
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Paul McCartney announced, "Ladies and gentlemen, Billy Shears!" Then Ringo Starr strode onstage at Radio City Music Hall on Saturday night to sing "With a Little Help From My Friends." The two surviving Beatles shared a microphone, and then embraces, in their first public performance together since a 2002 memorial concert for George Harrison.

For encores Mr. Starr moved to the drums and Mr. McCartney, surrounded by other musicians on the bill — including Sheryl Crow, Eddie Vedder of Pearl Jam, Donovan, Bettye LaVette, Moby and Ben Harper — sang two more 1960s songs, "I Saw Her Standing There" and a rarity, "Cosmically Conscious," that Mr. McCartney wrote during a 1968 trip that the Beatles (and Donovan) took to learn Transcendental Meditation at the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's ashram in Rishikesh, India.

What cause could marshal that much of a Beatles reunion? War and peace, poverty, human rights, the environment? No. The concert was a benefit for the David Lynch Foundation, which seeks to teach Transcendental Meditation to a million students worldwide. "Every child should have one class period a day to dive within himself," reads the manifesto at davidlynchfoundation.org. "This is the way to save the coming generation."

It was clearly a Lynch production. The concert began with the composer Angelo Badalamenti playing his ominous and Romantic theme from Mr. Lynch's television series "Twin Peaks." A musician stepped onstage to provide a drumroll on a tom-tom as each performer was introduced. On an overhead screen "Change Begins Within" was projected over an abstract, slowly rippling, very Lynchian image of a wave.

As at most benefit concerts, music was interspersed with proselytizing: testimonials and video clips about the benefits of meditation. There was an undeclared contest over who had been meditating longest: 37 years for the comedian Jerry Seinfeld (who did bits about movie theaters, public toilets, taxis and marriage), 38 years for the radio personality Howard Stern, 41 for the two Beatles and — the winner — 43 years for the flutist Paul

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Horn, who also made the 1968 visit to Rishikesh. That trip ended in acrimony, but the surviving Beatles held on to the mantras the Maharishi gave them and said they continued to use them.

Mr. McCartney introduced “Cosmically Conscious” (which was a hidden track on his 1993 album “Off the Ground”) as a song written around two of the Maharishi’s favorite phrases, “cosmically conscious” and “It’s such a joy.” It turned into a full-harmony chorale with the assembled singers.

Although Donovan sang his 1960s hits and Mr. Starr’s own brief set included the Beatles’ “Boys” and “Yellow Submarine” (with Mr. Vedder and Ms. Crow vigorously singing along), many musicians used the occasion for lesser-known songs about quests for spirituality and meaning.

Ms. Crow performed “Riverwide,” a Celtic-Eastern hybrid. Mr. Vedder sang a wordless vocal meditation, layering harmonies in repeated loops, and the pensive “Guaranteed,” with lines like “a mind full of questions, and a teacher in my soul.” He was joined by Mr. Harper on Pearl Jam’s “Indifference” and the Queen-David Bowie collaboration “Under Pressure,” a song about seeking love amid “the terror of knowing what this world is about.” Ms. LaVette fronted Moby’s band, bringing soulful fervor to “Natural Blues,” a song about “trouble with God.”

But it was also a night for reminiscences of the 1960s and of the Beatles. Ms. Crow sang George Harrison’s “My Sweet Lord,” and Mr. Starr spoke about writing “It Don’t Come Easy” with Harrison. Mr. McCartney sang his memorial to [John Lennon](#), “Here Today.” Video footage of the Beatles accompanied Mr. McCartney during his set, and he played the violin-shaped style of bass he used at Beatles concerts. Mr. McCartney gave robust performances of songs from his band Wings, his solo albums and especially the Beatles catalog, revealing that “Blackbird” was inspired by the civil rights movement and exulting in the high notes of “Let It Be,” “Lady [Madonna](#)” and “Got to Get You Into My Life.”

He and Mr. Starr shared the stage lightheartedly, evading all the dramatic implications of a Beatles reunion. After the encores Mr. Starr jumped in front of Mr. McCartney waving peace signs. A grinning Mr. McCartney stepped in front of him, and back and forth it went. They were old band mates, sharing songs and clowning around, remembering a trip they took many years ago.

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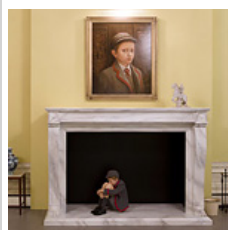
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