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Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr reunite on stage at Lynch concert

Former Beatles Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr get by after a little too much help from friends at Change Begins Within benefit

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Emma Brockes in New York
theguardian.com, Sunday 5 April 2009 16.35 BST

Article history

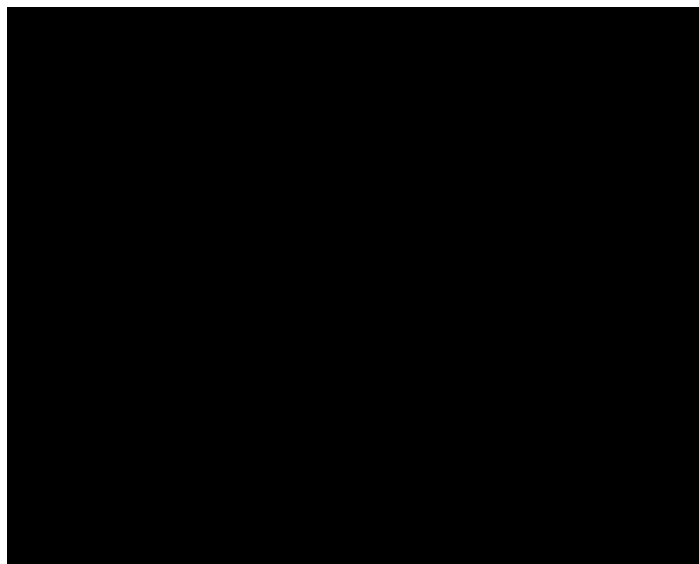
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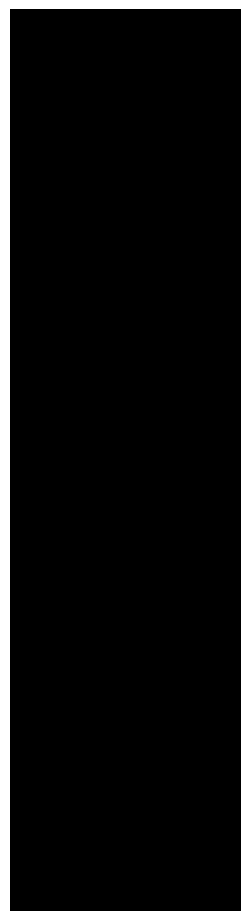
The Fab Two get back together [Link to video: Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr reunite for the David Lynch Foundation](#)

"Elvis is dead; this is the next best thing." In New York's Radio City Music Hall last night, the hyperbole of the fans was, for once, in proportion to the event.

Ringo Starr and Paul McCartney, the last remaining Beatles, appeared on stage together for the first time in seven years and before a crowd of 6,000, touching foreheads and singing With a Little Help From My Friends. The moment was so sublime it couldn't be spoiled by the friends they turned out to have.

It says a lot about an evening when the strangest moment is not Ringo Starr singing Yellow Submarine with backing vocals by Sheryl Crowe. This was the Change Begins Within benefit, a fundraiser for the David Lynch Foundation, which aims to teach transcendental meditation to children, encourage world peace and promote understanding through what Lynch himself appeared on stage to describe as the "ocean of consciousness". The crowd, some of whom had paid \$2,000 (£1,350) to see McCartney and Starr reunite, waited patiently for it to pass. And waited. And waited.

For two and a half hours the support acts including Moby, Jerry Seinfeld, Donovan and Crowe came on to perform and share details of their meditation schedules. Mike Love, a former member of the Beach Boys, spoke of his conversion to Lynch's cause. "The possibility of world peace," he said, "that got to me." In beads and a purple shirt, Donovan staggered about like a member of the Young Ones. There was a lovely



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flute solo from the virtuoso Paul Horn.

But it was Lynch's appearance behind a Perspex lectern that provided the most arresting part of the warm-up. Wearing a suit, tie and enlightened expression, it looked at times as if he might fly out into the auditorium, conduct a seance or announce plans to invade a small country. Accompanied by the actor Laura Dern and with the gift of distance that all celebrities bring to world problems, Lynch explained how state education might benefit from transcendental meditation classes in which even a six-year-old could be taught to perform a "walking mantra". The director of *Twin Peaks* and *Eraserhead* then showed a public health-style video of cheesed-off-looking pupils who, block capitals informed us, suffered from STRESS. What they needed was a CHANGE and a chance to TRANSFORM.

"Now we'd like to hear a wind," said the director. The sound of a wind blew through the auditorium. "This wind represents ancient and eternal. Now we'd like to see an ocean." Abstract patterns appeared overhead like a giant screensaver. "This represents the ocean within every human being," said Lynch. Sheryl Crowe came on for a spirited performance of *My Sweet Lord*, describing its author, George Harrison, as a man "who lived with the reality that death was a part of living", which is certainly one way of putting it.

Some time after 10pm, Starr and McCartney finally appeared and nothing else mattered. Starr was in a black T-shirt with the image of Krishna picked out in diamante; Macca was in white shirt and braces. They threw their arms around each other while Beatles iconography flashed on screen.

Their boyishness was undiminished, but still the contrast and the missing two made every song an elegy. *Drive My Car*, *Can't Buy Me Love*, *Lady Madonna* – you would think they had never performed them before. When McCartney sat at the piano to sing *Let It Be*, then accompanied himself on the guitar for *Blackbird*, every heart in the place broke.

He said "John loved New York. A song for John", and went into *Here Today*, the tribute he wrote after Lennon's death. Illustrating the principle of less is more, all he said of the cause at hand was: "The Maharishi said he wants us all to be cosmically conscious." He smiled his Macca smile. "It's such a joy."

At the end, the artists gathered on stage, Donovan danced, Crowe bothered a tambourine and Lynch, throwing a V-sign, said unsmilingly: "Peace." It was left to Macca, after he'd thanked the "David Lynch Association", to demonstrate the charm that wins hearts and starts movements. "Yeah, peace," he said, grinning. "And rock'n'roll."

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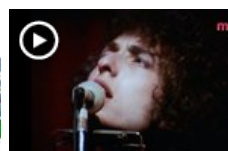
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