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Ringo Starr blends solo, Beatles hits into wonderful show

By James Grant For The News-Sentinel
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For the man who wrote and sang "It Don't Come Easy," Ringo Starr and His All-Starr Band made it look almost effortless Tuesday night as they performed a fantastic show to an enthusiastic, sold-out crowd at Foellinger Theatre.

From the first notes of the opening number "Matchbox" (a Carl Perkins song he recorded and played with the Beatles), Ringo Starr seemed confident and at ease. His All-Starr Band was on fire as they played a tight set overflowing with crowd-pleasing songs.

Dressed in a glittery full-length black jacket, black jeans, dark sunglasses and sneakers, Starr quickly won the crowd over with his charm and laconic wit.

Playing in front of a backdrop appropriately filled with stars of all shapes and sizes, Starr took turns fronting the band belting out his solo hits as well as Beatles classics then heading to the drums throughout the night playing behind his amazing All-Starr Band who seemed to hit all the right notes.

"Peace and love everybody" Starr shouted to the crowd after the first song, "Ready to have some fun?"

As the crowd roared back its approval, the night seemed like a living jukebox of hits from the '60s, '70s and '80s played ever so skillfully by Steve Lukather, Richard Page, Gregg Rolie, Todd Rundgren, Warren Ham and Gregg Bissonette, who comprise the All-Starr Band.

Starr's solo hits included "You're Sixteen," "Photograph," "It Don't Come Easy" and "I'm the Greatest" (a track written by John Lennon from Starr's best-selling album entitled "Ringo"), as well as Beatles classics such as "Yellow Submarine," "What Goes On," "Don't Pass Me By" and the iconic "With a Little Help from My Friends."

Added to the hit parade were terrific versions of Toto's "Africa," "Rosanna" and "Hold the Line," Mr. Mister's "Broken Wings" and "Kyrie," Santana's "Black Magic Woman/Gypsy Queen" and two of my favorites, Todd Rundgren's "I Saw the Light" and "Love is the Answer," which were highlights of the show.

With a youthful figure belying his age, Starr seemed to genuinely love playing music with his current All-Starr Band configuration. The audience, obviously filled with quite a few Beatles fans, also seemed to be having a genuinely good time and roared with approval after almost every song.

Starr looked as comfortable and happy playing drums, supporting his bandmates, as being out front leading the band and singing his hits.

The skill and power of the All-Starr Band really helped push the show into overdrive Tuesday. It was amazing to see all these terrific performers onstage together.

Page, former lead singer of the group Mr. Mister, really was a standout Tuesday as his vocal work shined throughout the show. His voice was nearly flawless and sounded just as invigorating and fresh as it did in the '80s when Mr. Mister was topping the charts.

One of the most majestic moments of the show happened just after 9 p.m. when Rundgren performed his song "Love is the Answer" as the sun began to set.

Rundgren's plea for peace and understanding provided a nice juxtaposition to the religious and political protestors outside the Foellinger Theatre gates who tried to cast a pall on the show's festive atmosphere.

The song was also a nice respite after the troubling national events of the past couple of weeks, and for me personally it was a superb performance.



Courtesy of Jama FederspielRingo Starr and his All-Starr Band played a sold-out show Tuesday night at Foellinger Theatre.

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STOCK SUMMARY

The one thing many audience members, including myself, took away from the evening was a night filled with good music and good memories.

Brian and Jama Federspiel, a married couple from Fort Wayne, thoroughly enjoyed the evening and both had a wonderful time.

Though each is a casual fan of the Beatles music, they both were impressed by the musicianship on display and enjoyed the variety of performances.

“Each guy was like a mini-show; you didn’t know who to watch,” Jama Federspiel said of the All-Starr Band.

“And Ringo is adorable,” she added with a laugh.

“Incredible harmonies,” Brian Federspiel said of the singing throughout the show.

“The older I get, the more I like the Beatles,” he said of seeing Starr perform.

Doug Robinett of Waterloo was also at the show and though he, too, is a casual fan of all the performers, he marveled at how well the musicians performed.

“To see this many great acts at one concert is amazing,” he said of the show. “I loved it, definitely worth seeing.”

The only note that didn’t hit quite the right tone was the fact that Foellinger Theatre let so many people tailgate in the parking lot that it seemed like paying customers were forced to park further away in the overflow lot.

Despite some of these parking issues and the protesters, the night was a smashing success.

Ringo Starr and His All-Starr Band not only performed well but gave a performance filled with heart and genuine good will, which set a joyous tone that was infectious.

All in all it was a wonderful night of music, and for Beatles fans it was certainly a pleasure to finally see a member of the legendary Beatles give an outstanding performance right in their own backyard.

This column is the commentary of the writer and does not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of The News-Sentinel.

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