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# All Together Now

By [Nancy Franklin](#)

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It's one thing to expect, at the age of seven, that you would grow up to marry Paul McCartney, and it's another thing entirely to meet him in person, forty-five years later. Kidding! They're exactly the same thing. That early expectation and the latter-day encounter both involve the maximum amount of happiness that the human frame can take, and both feel perfectly natural and, at the same time, unreal and impossible. The marriage never took place; the meeting occurred last week, when McCartney was in New York rehearsing for a benefit concert that he was headlining on Saturday for the David Lynch Foundation. The film director founded the organization several years ago in order to spread the practice of Transcendental Meditation, particularly to schoolchildren who are under stress because of poverty or any number of other debilitating, brain-scrambling aspects of modern life; the goal of the benefit was to raise enough money to teach meditation to a million kids, as the skill appears to help them focus and be happier and more resilient. The Beatles became associated with TM in 1968, when they went to India to study with Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, and two other sojourners from that time were on the bill on Saturday night as well: Mike Love, of the Beach Boys, and Donovan. And a third who also had some success in the music business, Ringo Starr. He and McCartney hadn't performed together since 2002, at a memorial concert for George Harrison.

McCartney was rehearsing with his band in a studio in the West Twenties. In the reception area, you could hear, coming from behind closed doors, "Drive My Car," and then "Got to Get You Into My Life." McCartney's publicist then opened the doors as the group began "Let It Be." If you'd been there, you'd have seen a woman's head actually snap back in the whiplash shock of catching sight of Paul, seated at the piano. (Lynch was in the room, too, sitting on a couch, wearing his usual white-shirt-and-black-jacket ensemble and his snazzy backswept hairdo. He was quiet and still as the group rehearsed, and just once reacted visibly to the performance, when he turned to a man next to him during "With a Little Help from My Friends," and made some chopping motions to try to manually express the way the drummer, Abe Laboriel, Jr., hit a series of beats that were so totally right and in there.) McCartney wore jeans and a flowered shirt, tucked in, and soft dark-brown shoes. He looked almost dewy (he will be sixty-seven in June), without any of the beef-jerky stringiness of some of his rock peers. The recognizable Paulisms were there: the mouth becoming an O when he sang certain sounds, the head moving side to side three or four times in a row during the faster numbers. He was doing a run-through of the concert, including practice versions of his between-song patter. After "Let It Be," he got up from the piano and said, self-consciously, "So we say welcome— 'Welcome'—because that's what we do," and waved his hand in a circle, and then sat

back down and played “Lady Madonna.” He then went to the microphone stand between his two guitarists, Brian Ray and Rusty Anderson, strapped on an acoustic guitar, rolled up his sleeves past his elbows, and said, “O.K., then a story about back in the sixties,” and began singing “Blackbird.”

After that, he said, “The next song is a song I wrote for my friend John.” Knowing that there would be applause at the mention of Lennon Saturday night, he added, “Let’s hear it for John.” In the song, a tender ballad called “Here Today,” released only a little more than a year after Lennon was killed, Paul wonders how John might respond to Paul’s musings about their relationship. It drifts to an end with the *pensée* “And if I say I really loved you and was glad you came along” and some “Ooh”s, and sends listeners back not just to 1980 but even further, to 1957, when the Liverpool teen-agers first met. Seconds later, the early sixties flashed on everyone’s mental screen, when McCartney took off the acoustic guitar and put on a bass guitar just like the one he played the first time Americans saw him, in 1964: a Hofner violin bass. While one was experiencing discreet, silent hysteria—the collision of the past and the present having started an internal wildfire—McCartney kept cool, tossing a smile and a wink at Lynch when he sang the lyrics “thought of giving it all away to a registered charity” in “Band on the Run,” an acknowledgment of the fund-raising effort that had brought them together.

Now, it would be hard to describe the effect the next song had. The most efficient way is just to name the title and tell you to call your best friend and scream into the phone for five minutes. Ready? “Can’t Buy Me Love.”

McCartney introduced the absent Ringo, who was at that hour flying in from Los Angeles (“I’d like to introduce to you a legend”), with an exaggerated flourish of the arm that ended with his hand about a foot off the floor. Reacting to the oddness of being in that position, he patted the air there. After “With a Little Help from My Friends,” he and the band pretended that that was the end of the show, doing, for their own fun, a little bit of James Brown’s audience-teasing faux-closing number “Please Please Please.” But there was one more song. It’s not a secret what the song was, but it is kind of personal and not the sort of thing that you can really share. Basically, it’s about the relationship that Paul has with an unnamed writer from *The New Yorker*. When he first saw her, standing across the room at a dance, she looked really good, so he went over to her. (In order to further disguise her identity, and to protect their privacy as a couple, he’s changed her age in the song.) The attraction on both sides was so strong that they danced together all night. After that, he decided that he would never dance with anyone else again, and pretty soon he fell in love with her. True story. ♦

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[Nancy Franklin](#) joined *The New Yorker* in 1978 and was the magazine’s television critic from 1998 to 2011.

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