

Lennon, Yoko rock for bread to aid mentally retarded

By CHUCK SCHMIDT

The Beatles, it seems, never really broke up. They've just retired to a life of benefit concerts.

Yesterday in massive Madison Square Garden, former Beatle rhythm guitarist John Lennon, wife Yoko Ono and a collection of rock artists gave two benefit concerts for mentally retarded children of the metropolitan area.

But unlike fellow ex-Beatle

George Harrison, who one year ago helped raise millions of dollars for the starving and impoverished residents of Bangladesh, Lennon's rock bash for charity was markedly different in two distinct aspects.

For one, the money raised yesterday at both matinee and evening performances (and the album and movie which undoubtedly will follow) is for a worthy cause not so remote and removed from American society as Bangladesh. It's for the mentally retarded children of New York City, in general, and Willowbrook State School, specifically.

From a financial standpoint, Lennon will likely generate more money than Harrison, simply because the federal government has promised to match each dollar raised with \$3. But this may be the only area where Lennon comes out on top.

The concert, musically, will never compare to Bangladesh.

Harrison surrounded himself with such rock giants as Leon Russell, Eric Clapton, Billy Preston and Bob Dylan, all of whom played with him or performed brief solo numbers.

Lennon, on the other hand, prefaced his appearance with brief sets by Sha Na Na and Stevie Wonder and his band, Wonderlove. And when Lennon finally did make his long-awaited sojourn on stage, he had only Elephant's Memory to back him.

In deference to Elephant's Memory, which was an unknown band before Lennon thrust them into international prominence, they could never hope to compare with Harrison's cast.

After what seemed like forever between Wonder's abbreviated afternoon set and Lennon's appearance (actually it was 50 minutes, due to problems which arose over getting microphones just right), Elephant's Memory blasted

through five minutes of noise before John and Yoko took to the stage.

Once plugged in, John, Yoko and company plowed through several obviously well-rehearsed numbers from the couple's latest album "Some Time in New York City," as well as songs from previous Lennon solo ventures.

The band kicked off their set with John's "New York City," swung into a fast rhythm and blues number before Yoko, clad in a white pants suit, took the spotlight for a solo effort which she later said had been banned in the United States.

Even as the concert was drawing to a close, the big topic of discussion among the fans in attendance was whether or not any "name" stars would show up unannounced.

One fan, in fact, yelled "Where's Ringo?" to Lennon, during a break in numbers.

Lennon, sipping a can of beer, shot back: "Ringo? That was last year, wasn't it?"

The ferryboat John F. Kennedy was made available by the Marine and Aviation Department for Islanders attending the festival. The boat left St. George at 9 a.m. and the ride to South Ferry was highlighted by the piano playing of Lawrence Marcus, acting commissioner of the department. Refreshments were provided free for the passengers who were heading for the music in Central Park.