

Here comes the 'Rain'

Beatles tribute takes
the stage at LMC's
Mendel Center

By JEREMY D. BONFIGLIO
HP Features Writer

BENTON HARBOR
— Jimmy Irizarry has a hard time picking just one favorite song by The Beatles.

But when it comes to his favorite moment during "Rain: A Tribute to The Beatles," Irizarry, who portrays John Lennon in the tribute show, quickly says "Come Together."

"That's when I get to come out in the all-white 'Abbey Road' suit," Irizarry says by telephone during a tour stop in Bloomington, Ind.

The singer and guitarist, who has spent the bulk of his musical career performing as Lennon, will join Ian B. Garcia as Paul McCartney, Aaron Chiazza as Ringo Starr, and Joe Bithorn as George Harrison when "Rain: A Tribute to The Beatles," returns tonight to Lake Michigan College's Mendel Center Mainstage Theatre.

Since performing at LMC in 2011, the show has spent a stint on Broadway at the Brooks Atkinson Theatre in New York City, and continues to evolve to accommodate the wealth of tunes in The Beatles catalog.

"We present the whole era of The Beatles from the early bubble-gum, mop-top era of 1964 and 'The Ed Sullivan Show' all the way through the last album, which was 'Abbey Road,' and everything in between," Irizarry says. "This is going to be a little different than the last time we were here. We did take out a couple of numbers, and put in even more material like 'Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds,' 'Magical Mystery

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Tour,' which is one of my favorites actually, and 'Please Please Me,' which was their first No. 1 song in England."

Irizarry, who grew up in Chicago, says he was first exposed to The Beatles thanks to his older siblings.

"I was basically raised on my brother's and sister's records and they were big Beatles fans," he says. "They were always played around the house as I was growing up and fast became my favorites. When I was 12 years old, I started playing the guitar and right away wanted to start playing those Beatles songs. It was the same thing with the piano. I immediately wanted to be able to play The Beatles."

As a professional musician, Irizarry had his own Beatles tribute band in 2000, and played in the Chicago band The Cavern Beat for five years before hearing from a friend in the Beatle business that "Rain" was looking for another Lennon. He joined "Rain" in 2010.

The 2015 show features updated sets that include brand-new LED, high-definition screens and multimedia content. The music itself, however, continues to be performed live by the four musicians who must master the full range of The Beatles' discography, including favorites such as "I

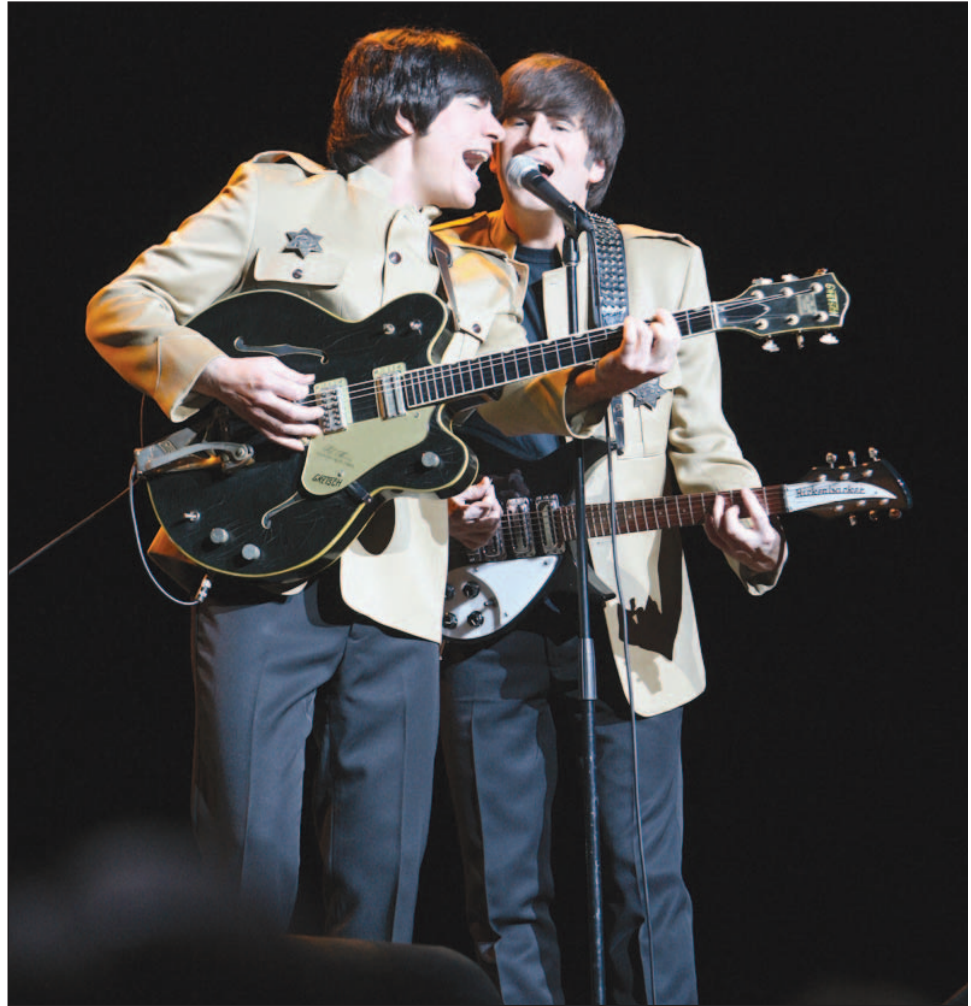


Photo provided

Members of "Rain: A Tribute to The Beatles" will channel the Fab Four when it returns tonight to play at Lake Michigan College's Mendel Center Mainstage Theatre.

Want To Hold Your Hand," "Hard Day's Night," "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band," "Let It Be," "Come Together" and "Hey Jude." But the ever-changing set list also offers more obscure Beatles tunes such as "Rain" and "If I Fell."

Part of the attraction, Irizarry says, is that shows like "Rain" often play songs The Beatles were never able to play live.

"It's a challenge, but it's a very fun job," Irizarry says. "The early Beatles songs were favorites of mine. So it's just fun to be able to

play those songs and be a part of a big show like this. It also brings the whole era back not only for the baby boomers but for kids just discovering that music. It's wonderful to let them experience that."

Contact: jbonfiglio@TheHP.com, 932-0364. Twitter: @HPBonfiglio