

ENTERTAINMENT & ARTS

## Live: B.B. King and Bono at the Kodak Theatre



Bono genuflects before Monk Institute honoree B.B. King during a performance Sunday at the Kodak Theatre. (Lawrence K. Ho / Los Angeles Times)

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Invite Bono and the Edge to a night celebrating B.B. King, and odds are pretty good there will be some “Rattle and Hum” in the air.

Lucky music fans who attended the Thelonious Monk Institute’s annual benefit show at the Kodak Theatre on Sunday watched as the 83-year-old King, backed by a host of jazz and blues glitterati and half of the biggest

band in the world, delivered a spirited rendering of “When Love Comes to Town,” originally featured on U2’s landmark album from 1988.

It was the highlight of a night dedicated to “The Blues and Jazz: Two American Classics,” a program the institute organized that centered on its 21st annual saxophone competition and a potpourri of inspired live collaborations.

The three finalists vying for a prize package that included a recording contract and a \$20,000 scholarship performed with a crack house band. Spitfire Dee Dee Bridgewater then joined them, testing their improvisational skills with high-flying vocal fireworks.

With his technically masterful if occasionally over-polished playing, Jon Irabagon earned top honors from the judges, though the crowd seemed most behind the rich tone of lanky Fort Worth native Quamon Fowler.

At the start of the program’s second half, Bono and the Edge took the stage to accept the institute’s Herbie Hancock Humanitarian Award on behalf of Microsoft chief turned Experience Music Project benefactor Paul Allen. “We’re not as smart, but I think we’re better looking,” the ever-loquacious Bono joked.

From there, it was all about the wildly influential sounds of New Orleans and the Mississippi Delta. Soundtrack favorite Terence Blanchard led an ensemble of Monk Institute students through a spirited “Bourbon Street Parade,” and blues birthplace (and recent Monk Institute beneficiary) Dockery Farms was saluted in a three-song tribute from guitarists Joe Louis Walker, Robert Cray and Keb’ Mo’, who seemed to have stepped right out of history with a slim-cut suit and a soulful rendition of “Walking Blues.”

But the night belonged to Founder’s Award winner King, who drew the evening’s entire lineup for the show’s finale, including [Hancock](#), Wayne Shorter and George Duke. As the music swelled to a close, Bono genuflected at the foot of the seated blues legend and his six-string companion, Lucille; another loyal subject forever indebted to the King.