

NASA to Beam Beatles' 'Across the Universe' Into Space

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An estimated 10,000 galaxies are revealed in humankind's deepest portrait of the visible universe ever from the Hubble Space Telescope Credit: NASA

For the first time ever, NASA will beam a song -- The Beatles' "Across the Universe" -- directly into deep space at 7 p.m. EST on Feb. 4.

The transmission over NASA's Deep Space Network will commemorate the 40th anniversary of the day The Beatles recorded the song, as well as the 50th anniversary of NASA's founding and the group's beginnings. Two other anniversaries also are being honored: The launch 50 years ago this week of Explorer 1, the first U.S. satellite, and the founding 45

years ago of the Deep Space Network, an international network of antennas that supports missions to explore the universe.

The transmission is being aimed at the North Star, Polaris, which is located 431 light years away from Earth. The song will travel across the universe at a speed of 186,000 miles per second. Former Beatle Sir Paul McCartney expressed excitement that the tune, which was principally written by fellow Beatle John Lennon, was being beamed into the cosmos.

"Amazing! Well done, NASA!" McCartney said in a message to the space agency. "Send my love to the aliens. All the best, Paul."

Lennon's widow, Yoko Ono, characterized the song's transmission as a significant event.

"I see that this is the beginning of the new age in which we will communicate with billions of planets across the universe," she said.

It is not the first time Beatles music has been used by NASA; in November 2005, McCartney performed the song "Good Day Sunshine" during a concert that was transmitted to the International Space Station. "Here Comes the Sun," "Ticket to Ride" and "A Hard Day's Night" are among other Beatles' songs that have been played to wake astronaut crews in orbit.

Feb. 4 has been declared "Across The Universe Day" by Beatles fans to commemorate the anniversaries. As part of the celebration, the public around the world has been invited to participate in the event by simultaneously playing the song at the same time it is transmitted by NASA. Many of the senior NASA scientists and engineers involved in the effort are among the group's biggest fans.

"I've been a Beatles fan for 45 years – as long as the Deep Space Network has been around," said Dr. Barry Geldzahler, the network's program executive at NASA Headquarters, Washington. "What a joy, especially considering that 'Across the Universe' is my personal favorite Beatles song."

Source: NASA

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