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Link TV threw what co-founder David Michaelis called its “coming out party,” a fifth anniversary awards ceremony/dinner/auction/concert/dance at the Golden Gate Club on Wednesday night. Headquartered in San Francisco, Link TV is a national network, available on satellite and computer (and by cable in a few markets), broadcasting news, world music and documentaries, to encourage “civic dialogue and engagement.”

One knew upon walking in that this was an event with some gravitas: The hors d'oeuvres weren't fried; every table was decorated with a blow-up globe; one auction item included the works of Bill Moyers and the Dalai Lama, and another “The Very Best of Cher — The Video Hits Collection.” Considering the aim (global communication) of its founders, it was only fitting that the shiniest stars of the event were so big that each is actually a solar event: Harry Belafonte was emcee and Dave Matthews performed two songs.

Jack Willis, another co-founder, had worked for commercial and public TV before Link TV, which he

said is freer because it doesn't run on government or corporate money. The station's biggest internal controversy was about giving freebies of Michael Moore books to individuals as thank-yous for pledges. Link TV doesn't take a political view, and the staff was delighted to hear from a number of regular watchers who said they were Republicans and liked its fare. But they also said they couldn't stand Moore. Talk among yourselves.

Matthews' second song was “Gravedigger,” and he said that he was grateful to the network for giving one of his albums airtime even after MTV and VH1 had determined it was “a bit depressing. God forbid you should be bummed out.”

On that note, I asked Belafonte afterward if he thought the world was becoming better or worse. Both, he said. “We've been struggling so long that in some areas we've succeeded and in others had dismal failure.” As to the Nov. 2 outcome, “Once I step away from a very visceral place, I look at him with huge wonder. He's a lost fact. He shouldn't exist. ... Am I optimistic? I have no choice.”