

**MUSIC**

Living Colour's  
new *Shade 7*

**VISUAL ARTS**

Bill Graham  
revealed **10**

# AGENDA

CHICAGO READER AND CULTURE, FOOD, AND EVENTS

## THE CHICAGO JAZZ FESTIVAL

The compelling characters  
on this year's lineup include  
avant-garde elder **ROSCOE  
MITCHELL** and a wealth of  
other talented locals.

By **BILL MEYER 4**

NC **9|17**



BY MIRIAM DI NUNZIO | SUN-TIMES STAFF REPORTER

# THE MAN BEHIND THE MUSIC

Bill Graham exhibit rocks on at Illinois Holocaust Museum

Bill Graham between takes during the filming of "A '60s Reunion with Bill Graham: A Night at the Fillmore," Fillmore Auditorium, San Francisco, 1986. COURTESY OF BEN FRIEDMAN

**Y**ou may not know his name, but it's almost a certainty you've heard some of his work. ¶ The man in question is the late Bill Graham, the one-time dean of concert promoters, whose penchant for self-promotion ("Bill Graham Presents" was prominently placed on pretty much all of his concert posters) was surpassed only by his uncanny ability to spot and promote music talent. Rising to prominence in the 1960s rock music scene of San Francisco, Graham set up shop most notably at the legendary Fillmore Auditorium, where the early roster of artists would include Carlos Santana (whom Graham first saw in a 1967 jam session at the Fillmore), the Grateful Dead and Jefferson Airplane. The stage would come to boast the likes of Jimi Hendrix, Muddy Waters, The Who, the Doors, Led Zeppelin, Miles Davis, The Velvet Underground and more.

Graham's journey to America (he was born in Berlin) and his career as the preeminent concert

promoter/festival organizer of his day are chronicled in the exhibit "Bill Graham and the Rock and

Roll Revolution," running through Nov. 12 at the Illinois Holocaust Museum in Skokie.

For a generation of music fans, Graham — who died an untimely death in a helicopter crash on a stormy night in 1991 at the age of 60 — was THE guy behind the scenes (and sometimes in front of it as well, including small roles in the films "Bugsy," "Apocalypse Now" and "The Cotton Club") of some of the biggest music events in history including the original Live Aid in 1985. More than 2,000 people would attend his memorial service, and an estimated 350,000 music fans turned out for a concert in memory of Graham held at the Polo Field in Golden Gate Park one month after his passing.

What brings Graham's life story to the Illinois Holocaust Museum is the fact that Graham was a Holocaust survivor. As a young boy, he was among the One Thousand Children — Jewish

children separated during World War II from their parents (nearly all of whom perished in Nazi concentration camps) and rescued by various organizations to be eventually relocated in America (or other Allied nations) to live with foster families. Graham (born Wulf Wolodia Grajonca) eventually escaped Germany in 1941 with five of his sisters; his mother perished in a Nazi concentration camp (his father died shortly after Bill was born). One of his sisters would not survive the difficult journey to freedom.

Upon his arrival in the U.S. in 1942, Graham (who would select his "Americanized name" from a phone book) was sent to live at the Cottage School in Pleasantville, New York, along with a host of other refugee children, where, in Graham's words featured in the exhibit, "each weekend, couples willing to take a foster child into their home came to look over those who

**'BILL GRAHAM AND THE ROCK & ROLL REVOLUTION'**

Through Nov. 12, Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center, 9603 Woods Drive, Skokie, \$6-\$12; additional \$5 for Graham exhibit ticket; [ilholocaustmuseum.org](http://ilholocaustmuseum.org)

were available."

During his tenure as Rolling Stone's first chief photographer, Baron Wolman captured many of the artists along the Graham music trail. Seven of Wolman's photos are featured in the exhibit, including one of his favorite subjects, Jimi Hendrix at the Fillmore.

"You had to cross paths with Bill because he was putting on the most exciting concerts and ran the most interesting venues," said Wolman, in town recently for a special event at the museum. "Bill Graham had a gift. He would give me complete access to all his concerts, including backstage. He'd always say, 'Go anywhere you want, the stage is yours.' I had unhindered access to all these great artists. That just doesn't exist anymore."

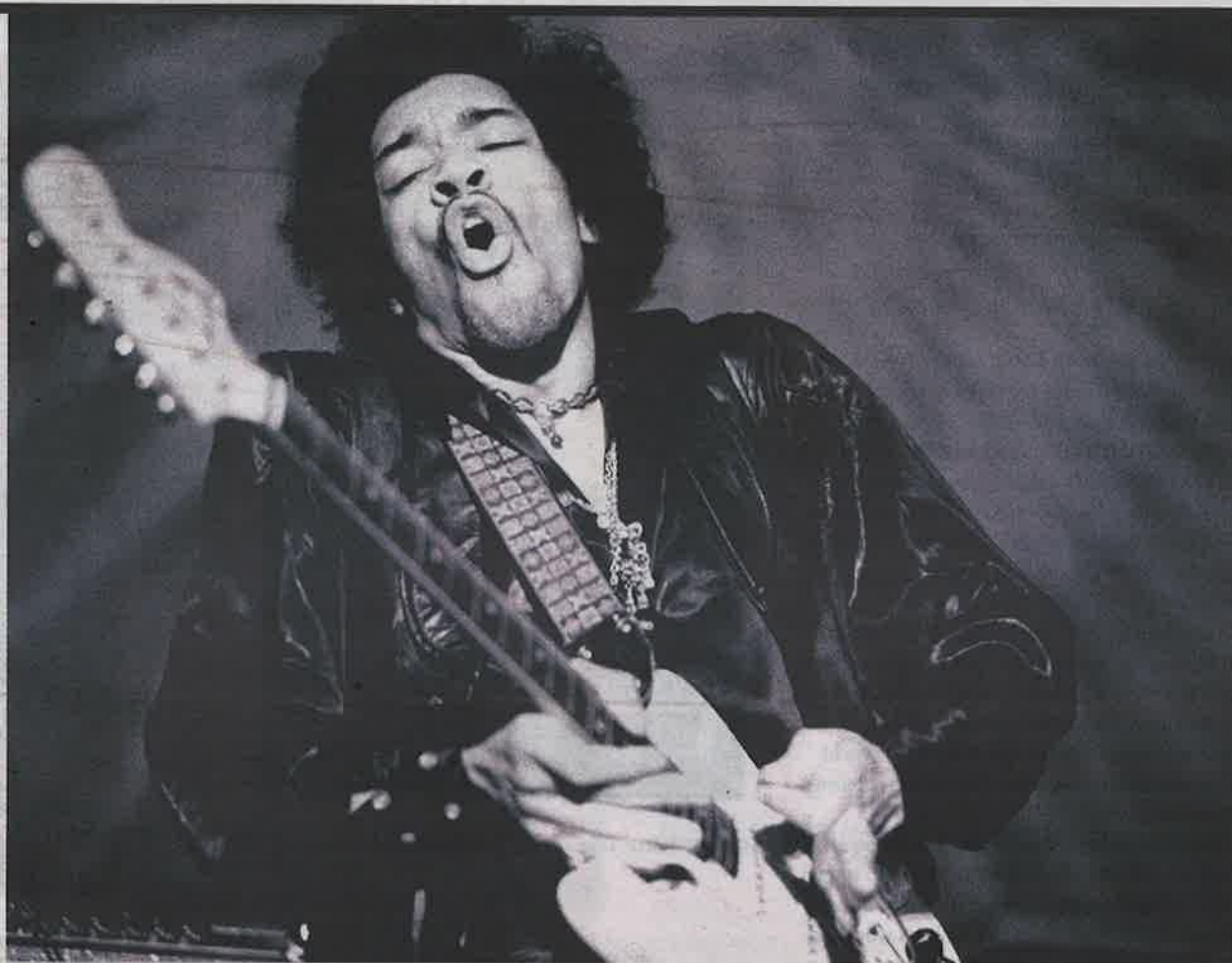
There are hundreds of items in the exhibit, including a collection of posters, concert memorabilia (a "pinwheel" of concert tickets from every stop on the Rolling Stones' 1981 American tour is genius), Keith Richards boots from the 1981 "Tattoo You" tour, the famous "Father Time" costume sported by Graham every New Year's Eve, a handwritten set list by Jerry Garcia, and the tambourine (weathered and worn) used by Janis Joplin at a Fillmore performance.

"Bill's skill set was that he was a consummate producer," said Wolman, a Northwestern grad. "Bill had rules that he forced performers to follow. That had to be on time for a show or he'd go into a fury. If you really looked at those concerts, the amount of time and effort he put into presenting them — the stages, the posters — he respected the artists and he wanted that respect, that professionalism in return. He was the most important game in town at that time, and singers knew that."

The "magic" wouldn't last into the 1970s, though, as Graham famously shut down the Fillmore and its sister location, New York's Fillmore East, in 1971, "frustrated by the demands of rock musicians who had now become international superstars with egos to match," one placard in the exhibit states. The closings, and Graham, were immortalized in Don McLean's iconic anthem "American Pie," in which Graham is "the man" who "said the music wouldn't play."

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LEFT: Jimi Hendrix performs at Fillmore Auditorium, San Francisco, February 1, 1968. Gelatin silver print. | COURTESY ICONIC IMAGES/BARON WOLMAN.

BELOW LEFT: Baron Wolman onstage at Woodstock with Carlos Santana in 1969. | BILL GRAHAM

BELOW RIGHT: The final Fillmore East concert on June 27, 1971. Photo by Amalie R. Rothschild, on display at the Illinois Holocaust Museum. | MIRIAM DINUNZIO

BOTTOM: One of the "Bill Graham and the Rock & Roll Revolution" exhibit galleries at the Illinois Holocaust Museum. | MIRIAM DINUNZIO

