



May 7 - October 11, 2015

Bill Graham played no musical instruments, save for the occasional cow bell. He could not really sing, and he never wrote a word of a single song performed on stage, and yet he changed rock music forever. During a crucial period of cultural transformation in American history, Bill Graham “stage managed” the rock revolution. His passion reflected the ideals of a generation and his life’s work has shaped musical taste and standards around the world to this day.

Born Wolodia Grajonca in Berlin on January 8, 1931, Graham came to America as a Jewish refugee at the age of eleven with nothing to his name except the clothes on his back, a few photographs of his family, and a prayer book only to become the greatest impresario in the history of rock ‘n’ roll. Though he blocked the experiences of his early childhood from his memory, the hardship he endured left indelible marks on his character. He was strong and determined—and often abrasive. His quick temper was legendary, but equally unmistakable was his charisma and his compassion.

It was one of America’s most turbulent eras. The Vietnam War was raging, the civil rights movement had progressed from non-violent to militant, and the airwaves carried messages of cultural revolution. Young people, the baby boom generation, had grown increasingly disillusioned with the world around them. Rejecting the stiff and stultifying values of the postwar era, they set out to remake the world by experimenting with new ways of living, new definitions of freedom, new philosophies, and a radical new style of music. Bill Graham was there to take hold of the chaotic music scene and channel it into an organized business that made fortunes.

No matter how successful he became or how frenzied his life was, Graham also lent a hand to just about anyone in need, whether it was the free clinic in his own neighborhood or the entire famine-stricken continent of Africa. His disdain for injustice led him to champion the causes of human rights and free speech and motivated him to raise tens of millions of dollars for worthy causes by putting on huge benefit concerts no one else would have ever undertaken.

The Skirball is pleased to present *Bill Graham and the Rock & Roll Revolution*, an exhibition that explores the making of the man who transformed rock music into rock theater. Graham’s pivotal role in making rock the multi-billion dollar global industry it is today is well-recognized. His pioneering work behind the scenes using rock to raise consciousness and deliver aid to those in need has been, however, rarely explored. *Bill Graham and the Rock & Roll Revolution* will take visitors on an electrifying trip through the social and cultural transformations that rock has fostered since the 1950s. Graham was more than a first-hand witness to this catalytic era, he helped to create it.



“Bill Graham howled. He talked. He shouted. He harangued. He laughed. He threatened. He barked. He sang (a little!)... Bill was one of the great mavericks who redefined what freedom really meant in the U.S.A.”

– Pete Townshend



EXHIBITION OUTLINE

Bill Graham and the Rock & Roll Revolution will be organized into six sections that explore:

From Berlin to the Bronx chronicles Graham's early childhood in Berlin and his harrowing journey through Paris to New York.

Becoming American explores his struggle to assimilate into western culture and redefine himself as the quintessential American.

Peace, Love and Rock & Roll – The Sixties recalls a generation in revolt and demonstrates the power of rock music to express the civil unrest and moral upheaval of the era. Graham's Fillmore Auditorium was at the center of this new music movement.

The Seventies – Lust for Life chronicles the "Me Generation" and Graham's growing frustration with the greediness he felt seeping into rock & roll bands and audiences. Graham shut down his Fillmore venues but couldn't remove himself entirely from the business, continuing to operate the Winterland Ballroom and launching a series of extremely popular outdoor mega-concerts known as Days on the Green.

The Eighties – The Heart of Rock & Roll details the busiest period of Graham's life when he channeled the power of rock & roll into raising awareness and money for numerous social causes and humanitarian aid groups, in addition to producing massive stadium concerts and managing the hugely successful Rolling Stones 1981 tour.

Bill Graham: A Legacy describes Graham's tragic death in a helicopter crash on October 25, 1991 and his enduring legacy as rock & roll's greatest showman.

EXHIBITION CONTENTS

The exhibition checklist includes never before seen artifacts from the extensive private collection of Graham's sons, David and Alex Graham as well as objects from renowned private collections and public institutions. Objects will include: rare and revealing family photographs; selections from Graham's own collection of scrapbooks; iconic photographs from rock's most famous photographers including Jim Marshall, Michael Zagaris, Herb Green, Joel Bernstein, Irving Penn, Ken Regan, and Baron Wolman; original psychedelic posters designed by such artists as Wes Wilson, Stanley Mouse, Alton Kelley, Randy Tuten, Bonnie MacLean, and David Singer; concert tickets, rock memorabilia, and stage-worn clothing from Jerry Garcia, Grace Slick, Janis Joplin, and Peter Frampton, and instruments including guitars played by Jerry Garcia, Pete Townsend, Duane Allman, and Robbie Robertson at the Fillmore; burned relics saved from the firebombed offices of Bill Graham Presents; and film and photographs of rock performances that display the raw energy and passion of the band on stage and expose the creativity and soul of rock & roll rather than just the celebrity of its musicians.



EXHIBITION EXPERIENCE

In order to make the experience interactive and evoke the feeling of walking into the Fillmore Auditorium on any given night, the gallery design will immerse visitors in the sights and sounds of the era. There will be music stations featuring bands performing live at Graham's various venues, archival concert footage and interviews with great artists from every decade, new video interviews with rock icons, a theater featuring an original Joshua Light Show, an audio tour with excerpts from interviews with Bill Graham, and an array of video screens on which Graham himself talks while being interviewed on camera.

EXHIBITION TOUR SCHEDULE

The exhibition is available to travel to four venues after its presentation in Los Angeles. The tour schedule is:

- May 7 through October 11, 2015 Skirball Cultural Center, Los Angeles
- Fall 2015 through Winter 2016..... The Contemporary Jewish Museum, San Francisco
- Spring 2016 through Spring 2017 Available
- Summer 2017 onward..... Available

SPACE REQUIRED

The exhibition can be scaled to fit galleries ranging from 3500 to 6000 sq. ft.

EXHIBITION TEAM

Robert Kirschner, Museum Director

Kirschner oversees the selection, development, design, and maintenance of the Skirball's permanent collections and changing exhibitions. He has played a central role in the Skirball's growth having guided the development of its core exhibition. Kirschner originated the concept of *Bill Graham and the Rock & Roll Revolution*. Living in San Francisco during the height of Graham's career, and having a personal passion for this musical era, it has been a long-time hope of Kirschner's to create this exhibition for the Skirball.

Erin Clancey, Curator

Clancey has developed both permanent and temporary exhibitions for the Skirball since 1999 and manages the Skirball's permanent collection. Since joining the Skirball, Clancey has originated exhibitions on a wide range of topics from ancient history to contemporary popular culture. Her most recent exhibitions include *Gary Baseman: The Door Is Always Open*, *Creating the United States*, *Decades of Dissent*, *Houdini: Art and Magic*, and *Road to Freedom: Photographs of the Civil Rights Movement 1956-1968*.

Robert Greenfield, Author/Advisor

Bill Graham Presents: My Life Inside Rock and Out by Bill Graham and Robert Greenfield (2004) is an oral history that presents the inside story of the unforgettable man who created the business of rock. Having also written an award-winning one man play about Bill Graham as well as several documentary and feature film scripts based on his life, Greenfield will serve an advisor to the Skirball for *Bill Graham and the Rock & Roll Revolution*.



Bonnie Simmons, Executive Director, The Bill Graham Memorial Foundation

Bonnie Simmons is a California based radio personality who worked closely with Bill Graham in the 1980s. Simmons is also audio director of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and a band manager, currently managing or having managed in the past Cake, Noe Venable and Etienne de Rocher. She will serve as an advisor to the Skirball and will spearhead a project to digitally preserve hundreds of hours of audio and film recordings.

Joshua White, Light Show Artist

Joshua White is the founder of the Joshua Light Show, a trailblazing group that created wild visual effects that helped define the psychedelic art movement of the 1960s. His classic liquid light show has been displayed at the Whitney, Hirshhorn, Tate, Centre Pompidou and many other museums. He will create a light show for the Skirball that, along with live recordings from the Fillmore, create an immersive rock & roll experience.

James Olness, Archivist, Bill Graham Presents

Olness worked at Bill Graham Presents from the time he was seventeen years old in a variety of jobs, ultimately becoming the archivist for its vast holdings of concert posters, photographs, and memorabilia. Olness will advise the Skirball on object identification and selection.

David and Alex Graham

Bill Graham's sons, David and Alex, have inherited and maintained a substantial archive of rock 'n' roll memorabilia and personal artifacts that were collected by their father. David and Alex will provide never before seen objects to the Skirball for *Bill Graham and the Rock & Roll Revolution*.

Arlene Owseichik

Owseichik was creative director and entertainment promoter for Bill Graham Presents for two decades. Owseichik will provide art direction for three original poster images created in the style of 1960s Fillmore concert posters by original Fillmore poster artists Bonnie MacLean, Randy Tuten, and David Singer.

For sponsorship opportunities, booking information and tour availability, please contact:
Michele Urton, Exhibition Manager
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With its museum collections, exhibitions, school outreach activities, and public programs, the Skirball Cultural Center is an essential part of the Los Angeles cultural fabric. Skirball trustees, staff, and volunteers look forward to presenting *Bill Graham and the Rock & Roll Revolution* and the related public programs to Southern California and appreciate all considerations of support.

