

# Last Rites Are Merry Ones at the Fillmore East

By MIKE JAHN

With several thousand dollars worth of free food and beer and what one Fillmore regular described as "the best vibes since the place opened," the Fillmore East closed its doors early yesterday morning.

The theater, which has been the musical birthplace of many of the nation's top rock performers and something of a taken-for-granted institution among the New York area rock set, ended its three-year life with a private party that went on for eight hours and combined a bright array of performers with an even more colorful, dancing and partying audience.

## One of Best Rock Places

The rock hall, located at Second Avenue and Sixth Street and considered one of the best places in which to hear rock music, had been open since March, 1968. Its owner, Bill Graham, announced his intention to close it and its sister hall, the Fillmore West in San Francisco, this past April.

At the time, Mr. Graham blamed the greediness of some top rock musicians who he said would rather play a 20,000-seat ball like Madison Square Garden (one hour's work, \$50,000) than the 2,600-seat Fillmore East (about four hours' work, roughly \$20,000).

The Fillmore West is scheduled to remain open through the summer, but the New York branch went out with the dramatic invitation-only party that began at 8

P.M. Sunday and ended after 4 A.M.

Music was provided by several individuals and bands: the Allman Brothers, Albert King (who played on the bill when the Fillmore East opened), the J. Gells Band, Mountain, the Beach Boys, and Country Joe McDonald. Rumors about the presence of Rolling Stone Mick Jagger and ex-Beatle John Lennon circulated continuously but these did not materialize.

## "Graduation, 1971"

The stage was draped with a banner reading "Graduation, 1971." Mr. Graham, acting as master of ceremonies, referred warmly to the audience and to his employees, saying, "It's a strange feeling. If I can just put it into little jars and put it on my shelf, I will be very happy."

It was an unusually exotic-looking audience, even for the Fillmore. Competition was fierce to see who had the shortest hot pants, and one couple wore matching see-through clothes and danced in the main lobby.

Several hundred persons who weren't invited milled outside, begging those entering the theater for free tickets. There was an occasional push toward the door, but in general the crowd outside remained calm, if bitter. According to Pat Luce, the Fillmore's press representative, there was considerable bitterness even among the mu-

sic industry and press people who were not invited.

"I spend two years building up press contacts, and blow them all in one weekend," she said. "Bill said we should have held the Fillmore East closing in Madison Square Garden."

## Dancing in the Lobbies

Many of the guests sat in their assigned seats, but hundreds danced in the two lobbies and roamed around, sampling the free food. At the upstairs refreshment counter, the countergirls took containers of yogurt, cookies and cigarettes, and threw them to the crowd.

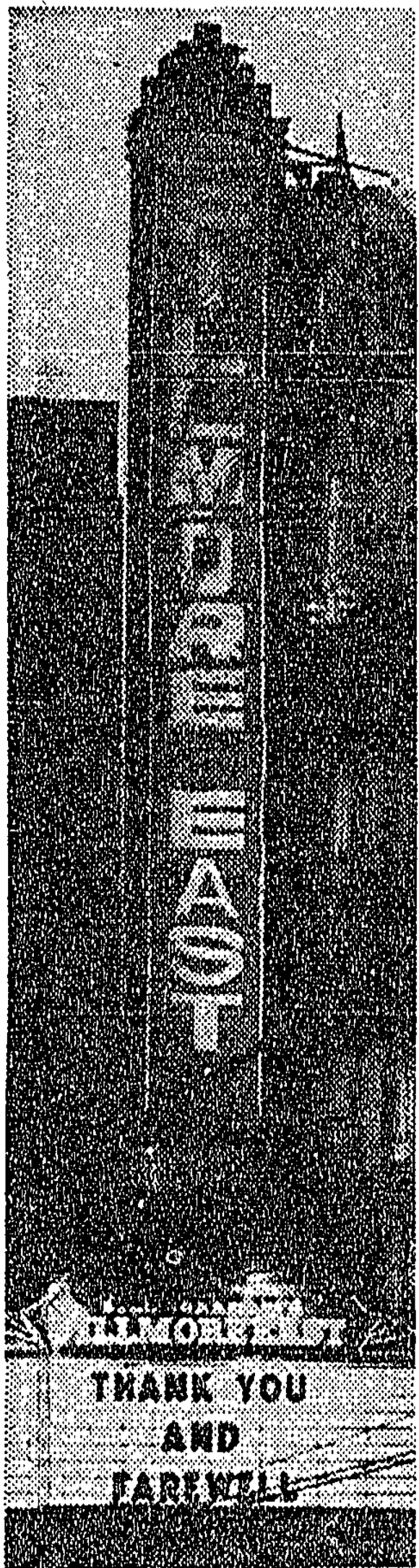
"I must say that Bill Graham knows how to throw a party," said David Walley, a writer for the underground press.

The music itself seemed to fade behind the glitter of the audience's festivities, and few spoke of it.

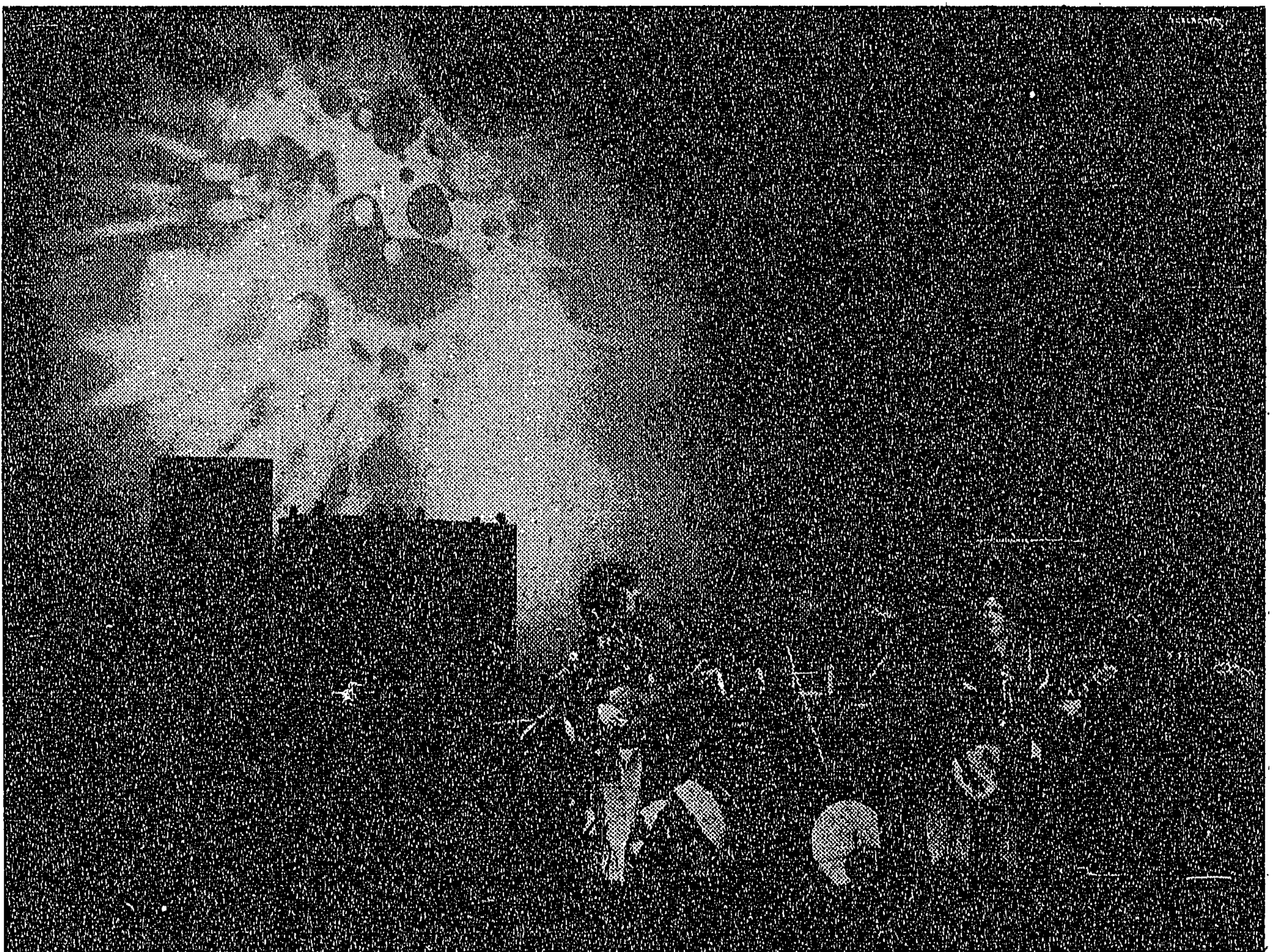
"Nobody's going to believe me, but I'm going to miss the joint," said Sgt. Ken Galvin of the Ninth Precinct, who was on duty in the theater. "I like some of the shows. I love Johnny Winter and think he's a great guitarist."

"I tried to get in last week to see B.B. King, but I couldn't make it," he added.

Though the Fillmore East per se is closing, the hall itself might soon reopen under new management. According to Kip Cohen, manager of the Fillmore, "Negotiations are close to being finalized with two or three bidders. But there won't be any news on it for a few weeks."



Fillmore East lit up for the last time Sunday night.



The rock group Mountain playing on closing night at the theater as the Joshua Light Show flickered in background

The New York Times

Published: June 29, 1971

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