

Roseland, a part of New York City night life since 1919, will soon be history.



Vivian Maier was a mysterious nanny with a camera. BY MANOHLA DARGIS

Wild boys. BY STEPHEN HOLDEN

Weekend Arts I

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Taxi Dancers to Gaga: Roseland's Life and Death

For decades, patrons of Roseland Ballroom have walked in past the Wall of Fame, which holds the shoes of famous dancers — Bill (Bojangles) Robinson, Betty Grable, James Cagney — and a plaque with names of couples who met dancing at Roseland and went on to marry. They are relics from the many incarnations of Roseland, a name that has been part of New York City night life since 1919. Roseland, which moved to its current location in 1956 with a vaunted deluxe dance floor — maple over cork padding — is to close on April 7 at the end of a string of shows by Lady Gaga, which begin on Friday.

That's a last burst of modern pop for a club whose history extends through multiple eras and attitudes: segregation and multi-racial jazz lineups, historic big bands and "taxi dancers" for hire, grueling Depression-era dance marathons and glittery disco nights, a ban on the twist and, decades later, more than one mosh pit. In recent decades it presented both nostalgic music for dancers and — although its acoustics and sightlines were never ideal — current rock and pop concerts, including shows by superstars scaling down for special occasions: Madonna, Beyoncé, the Rolling Stones. Yet taken as a whole, through the years, what happened on Roseland's dance floor may have been as significant as anything onstage. Below is a timeline of Roseland's bumpy history.

JON PARELES



The Roseland Ballroom evolved over the years from a place to dance cheek-to-cheek to a concert venue, sometimes with mosh pit.



EVAN AGOSTINI/ASSOCIATED PRESS

2008

Madonna celebrating new CD.

1981 Nancy Brecker Leeds sells the club to Albert Ginsberg, of Algin Management Company, in August. Taxi dancers, both men and women, are reinstated.

1984 Metallica performs on Aug. 3.

1984 Robert Dudley, 18, of Staten Island, is shot and killed in a crowd of 1,400 in November.

1989 The Love Ball, a fundraiser for Design Industries Foundation for AIDS, is held on May 10. It "introduced voguing to a wider public and featured the spectacle of poodle-walking voguers from Barneys New York competing against staff members of Metropolitan Home magazine dressed as telephone tables and settees," Woody Hochswender wrote in *The Times*.

1990 Brian Watkins, a tourist from Utah, is stabbed to death in the subway in September by a group of young men trying to get money to go to Roseland. Shortly after, Roseland announces that it will discontinue its disco sessions on weekends.

1997 The muralist Tom Christopher and five teenagers create Roseland's street mural — 225 feet by 23 feet.

1999 Frankie Manning, known as the Pied Piper of the Lindy Hop, danced with 85 successive partners at the Roseland Ballroom to celebrate his 85th birthday. It was satisfying, said Alan Sugarman, a producer of that event, since, in 1935, Mr. Manning had been excluded from the hall because he was black. "In 1999, Roseland apologized and put Frankie's dance shoes on their wall of fame," he said.

2000 Fiona Apple cries, curses at critics, then leaves midway through a sold-out concert on Feb. 29. She said technical difficulties were to blame.

2000 Hillary Rodham Clinton holds her 53rd birthday bash, on Oct. 25. Guests include Cher, Ben Affleck, Cameron Diaz, Chevy Chase, Tom Cruise and Robert De Niro.

2002 The Rolling Stones play on Sept. 30 as part of the band's "40 Licks" tour.

2008 Madonna gives a free concert on April 30, to promote her "Hard Candy" album. Fans began lining up for tickets 60 hours before the 32-minute show started.

2014 Lady Gaga is scheduled to perform the final concert at Roseland on April 7.

LORI HOLCOMB-HOLLAND

1917 With a \$20,000 investment from the brewer Frank Yuengling, Louis J. Brecker opened a high-end ballroom at Chestnut and 12th Streets in Philadelphia. Brecker, a recent University of Pennsylvania graduate, and his fiancée, Dorothy Faggen, wanted a place where they could dance but wasn't "overrun by ragtime," according to

"Broadway: An Encyclopedia," by Ken Bloom.

1919 Roseland opens in New York on Dec. 31 as a whites-only venue for "refined dancing." Frustrated by Philadelphia's blue laws, and with the help of a \$40,000 investment from Yuengling, Brecker decided to move the club to an old carriage factory at 1658 Broadway, at 51st Street.



1940

Frank Sinatra, left, Harry James, rear, and Bernice Byers, right.



1997 The muralist Tom Christopher and five teenagers create Roseland's street mural — 225 feet by 23 feet.

1923 A planned six-day dance marathon begins at 12:01 a.m. on April 24. To avoid breaking laws that banned competitions lasting more than 12 hours in a 24-hour period, Brecker chartered the Josephine, a 60-foot sloop. As reported in *The New Yorker* in its June 27, 1942, issue, around dawn, 18 marathoners "danced out of Roseland, boarded a van, and, gyrating all the way," were taken to the Josephine and then sailed three miles to the sea and out of the code's jurisdiction. Later in the day, Mr. Brecker sent a telegram to *The Brooklyn Times* reporting that the boat was to return to shore after the dancers became seasick. "Would be inhumane to continue. May result in permanent physical injury and possible mental disability," the telegram read.

1924 In February, Brecker offers \$200 to a couple willing to be married in public at Roseland in a "jazz wedding." The wedding party had 20 pairs of bridesmaids and groomsmen, 20 flower girls, and one scantily-clad "Cupid" who shimmied down the aisle.

1924 On June 24, Armand J. Piron's New Orleans Jazzers becomes the first black band to per-



2000

Hillary Rodham Clinton celebrating her birthday.

form at Roseland.

1924 Fletcher Henderson's New York-based band of black musicians begins its stint as a house band at Roseland on Sept. 8, playing on an opposite end of the dance floor from Sam Lanin's white orchestra.

1924 Louis Armstrong makes his New York debut at Roseland in September as part of Fletcher Henderson's orchestra.

1926 Roseland features the "Battle of Music" in the fall. Fletcher Henderson's orchestra, which was said to have the best black musicians in New York, competes against the Jean Goldkette Orchestra, which is said to have the best white musicians of Detroit. The Goldkette trombonist Russ Morgan remembered that on the band's closing night, there were musicians from 52 different orchestras in the audience. After the last number, people refused to leave, and the police had to intervene, according to the jazz historian Dan Morgenstern. "The event has gone down in jazz history as probably the first time a great white jazz band battled a great black band," Loren Schoenberg, artistic director of the National Jazz Museum in Harlem, said in a phone interview. The Goldkette Orchestra won.

1936 Count Basie makes his Manhattan debut at Roseland with the Barons of Rhythm, on Dec. 24.

1951 Brecker eliminates hostesses, more commonly known as taxi girls, who are paid to dance with patrons for a fee.

1956 Roseland's original location closes on Dec. 28, but it re-opens the same night one block away, at Broadway and 52nd Street. The new location, a for-

mer skating rink, was billed as "a magnificent metropolis of melody and merriment."

1961 In October, the twist is banned from Roseland. "It is lacking in true grace," Brecker told *The New York Times*.

1974 Harry James, Sy Oliver and Tito Puente stage a "big-band ball" at Roseland on July 1, as part of the Newport Jazz Festival, which delighted the owner. "Cheek-to-cheek dancing, that's what this place is all about," Brecker told *The Times*. "When the twist came out, my children warned me I was crazy not to allow it. Well, I didn't, and I'm still here, and the business is just fine. A lot of those twist places aren't around anymore; one, I think, is a massage parlor."

1977 Roseland's founder, Louis J. Brecker, dies on July 8, at 79; he leaves the venue to his daughter, Nancy Brecker Leeds.



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