

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

It's The 40th Anniversary Of The Clash's Legendary Times Square Concerts

BY JEN CHUNG

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Members of The Clash, Joe Strummer, Paul Simonon, Topper Headon, and Mick Jones, speak to the press at Bond International Casino in 1981. MARIO CARBERA/AP/SHUTTERSTOCK

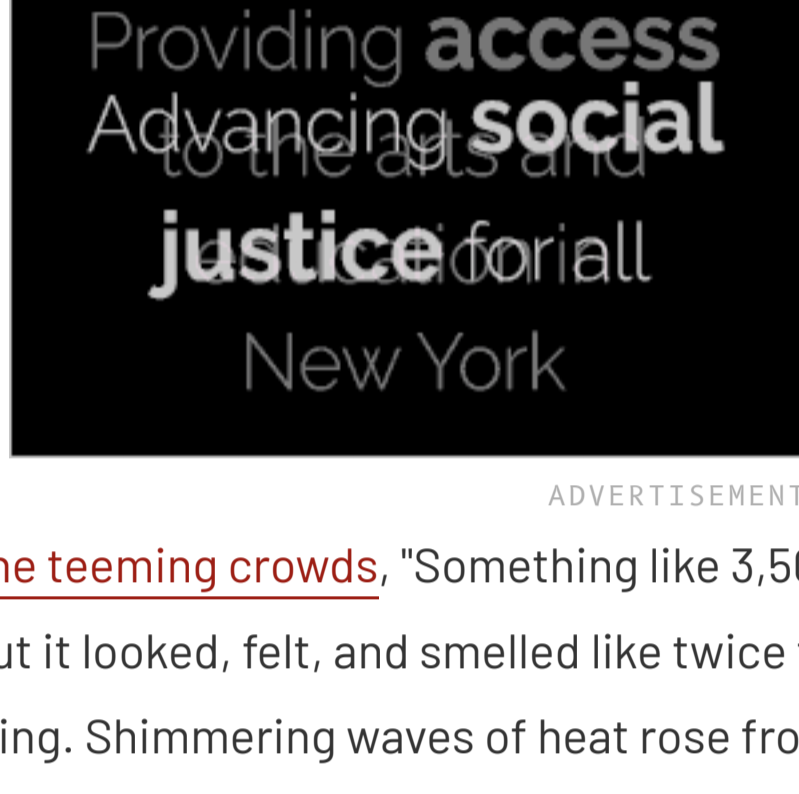
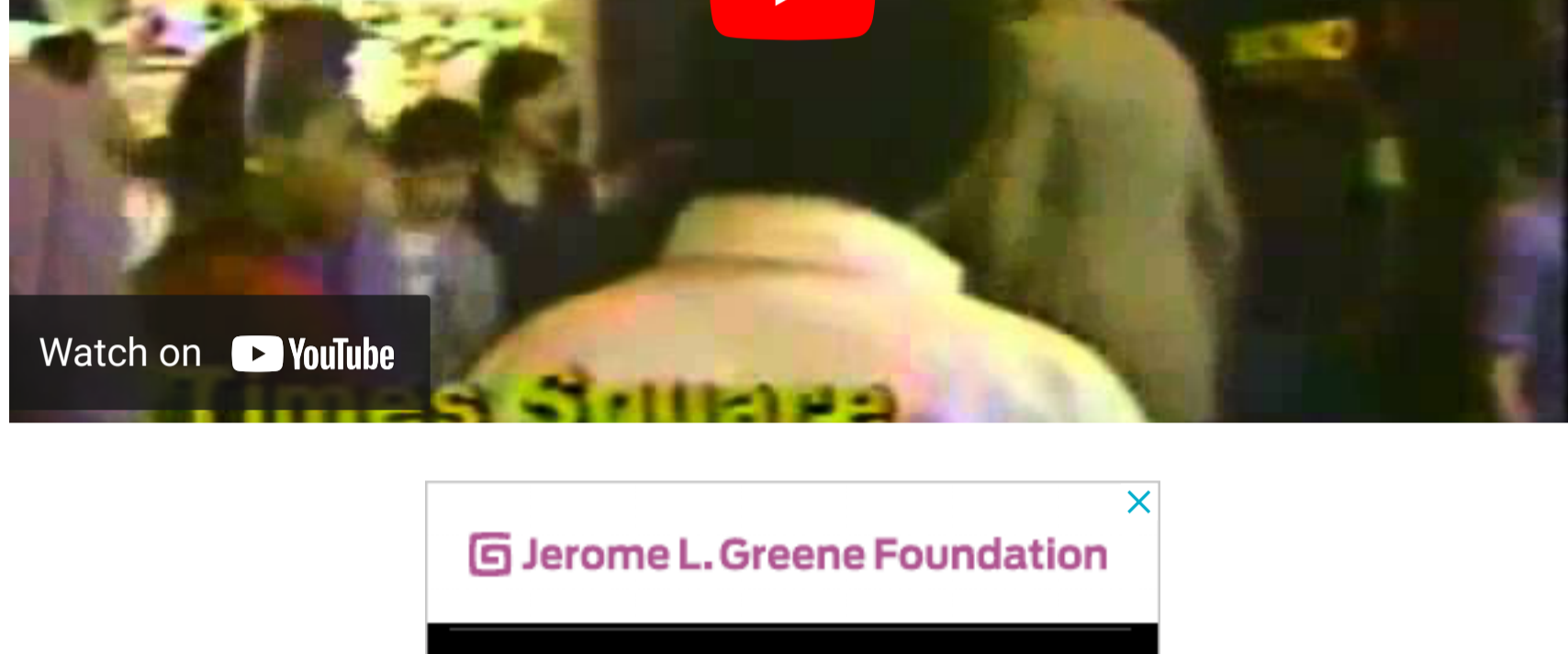
In 1981, pioneering punk rock band The Clash arrived in New York City for an eight-night stand, beginning on May 28th, at now-defunct Times Square music venue Bond's International Casino. But the May 29th show was oversold by over 100%—the former clothing store turned performance hall had a capacity of 1,800, but they apparently had 3,640 people in the space.

The [NY Times reported](#) at the time that the Department of Buildings shut down the club, "but after the club complied with building inspectors by installing fire-exit signs and making other minor alterations, it was allowed to reopen - on the condition that audiences not exceed the legal limit."

The Clash, while anti-establishment, were still a very fan-focused group, and since all of the other shows were similarly oversold, the band decided to play a total of 17 shows, so anyone who bought tickets could potentially see them or they could opt for a refund.

"Everybody who has a bonus ticket has got to wait a few days," their manager said on a 1981 news segment. For those who couldn't go, "they'll get their money back, that we promise."

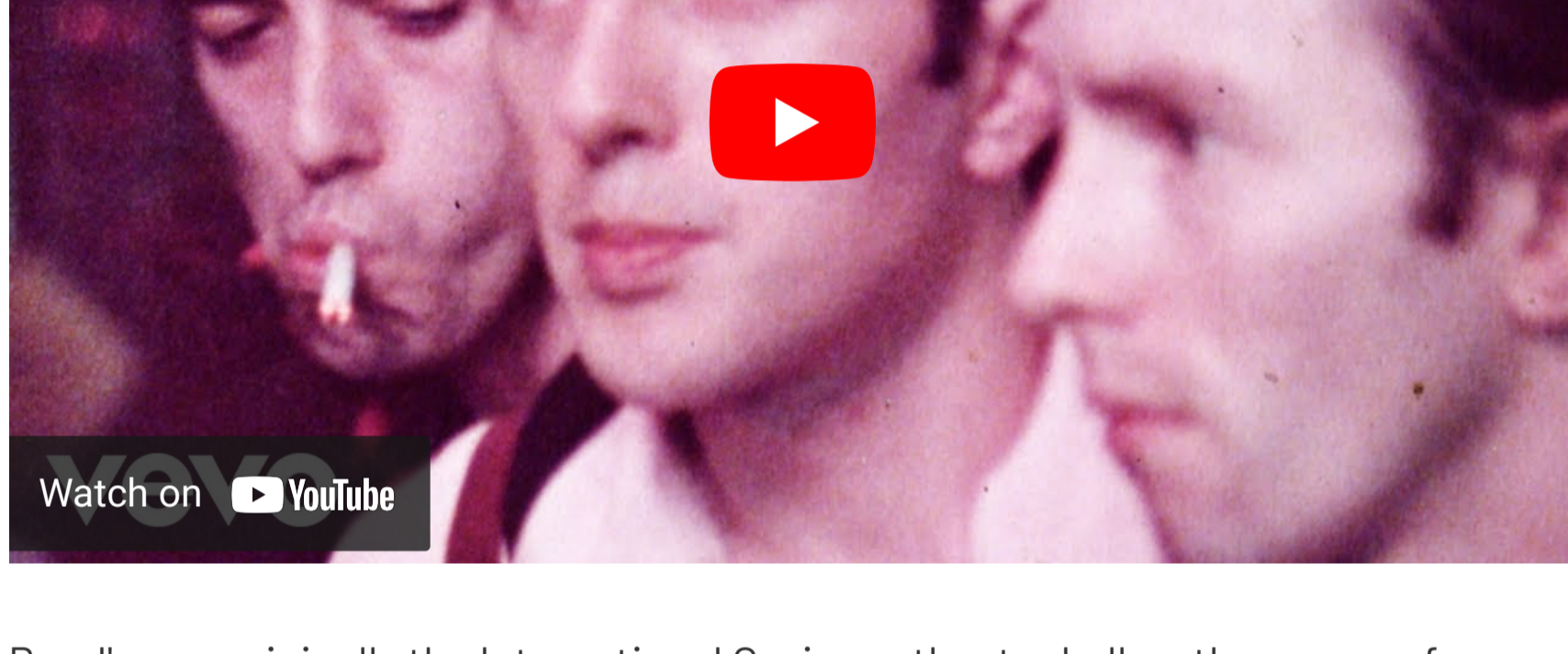
Each night [had a different opening act](#), including the likes of The Dead Kennedys, Bad Brains, Joe Ely, and Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five. In the news footage below, you can see the crowd [reacting badly](#) to Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, throwing items at the stage. Writer Joe Bosso, who saw the first performance where the rap legends were the openers, [recalled that Strummer's voice came on the PA system](#) to admonish the audience, "Cut the crap and give them a chance! The Clash picked Grandmaster Flash to play for the rap, and if you don't treat them with some respect, then you don't deserve to see the Clash!"



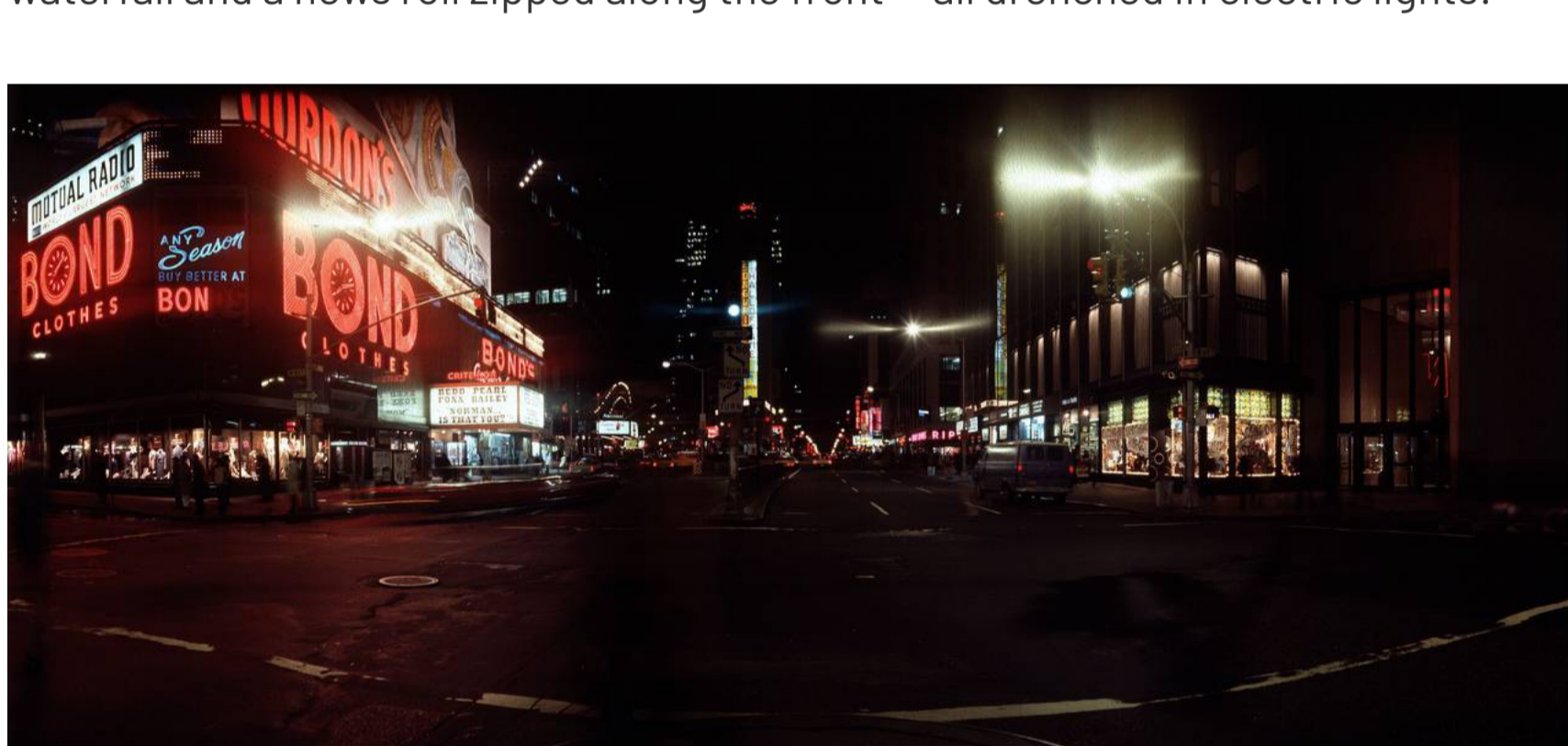
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Bosso also wrote [of the teeming crowds](#), "Something like 3,500 people were packed into Bond's, but it looked, felt, and smelled like twice that amount. The temperature was stifling. Shimmering waves of heat rose from the crowd and formed a cloud overhead. Every time we moved, broken glass crunched under our feet. It seemed as though everybody had a secret stash of something and the air was thick with smoke. We were being shoved, pushed; we were swaying. It was terrifying and exciting. This was it. I was finally going to see the Clash, live..."

The shows followed the 1980 release of their masterful triple album *Sandinista!*, and film director Don Letts shared footage from the 1981 NYC trip to accompany a new video for "The Magnificent Seven" recently (the performance shots are from their appearance on Tom Snyder's Tomorrow Show).



Bond's was originally the International Casino, a theater hall on the corner of Broadway and 45th Street, in the 1930s, [according to Bowery Boys](#). They write, "Bond Clothes took over the location as a men's clothing emporium, and chose a flashy facade to match the rooms of garments inside. A huge neon sign held a clock in the O of BOND, alongside a 50-foot man and woman, an electronic waterfall and a news roll zipped along the front — all drenched in electric lights!"



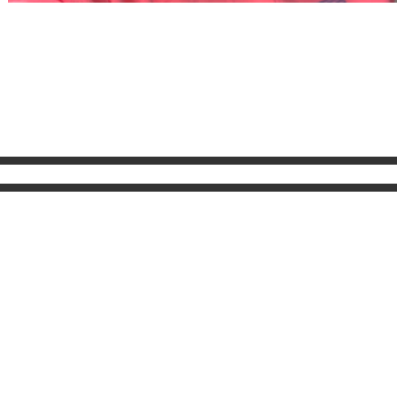
Times Square in 1976; Bond's Clothes SANDY COLTON/AP/SHUTTERSTOCK

The clothing store closed in 1977, but the space was resurrected as a nightclub and concert venue in 1980, marrying its two past incarnations with the name Bond's International Casino. There is now a restaurant, [Bond 45](#), in the space.






And for those of you wishing you were there, here's remastered audio of the May 28th, 1981 show:



For more information on the band and their music, visit [The Clash's official website](#).



Jen Chung
CO-FOUNDER OF GOTHAMIST + SENIOR EDITOR
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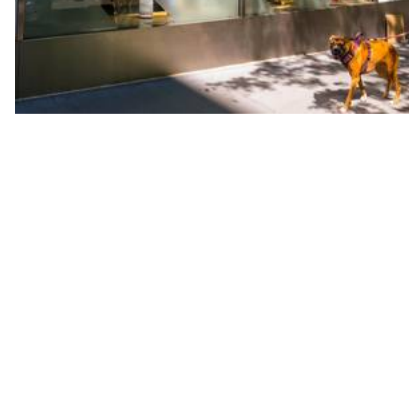
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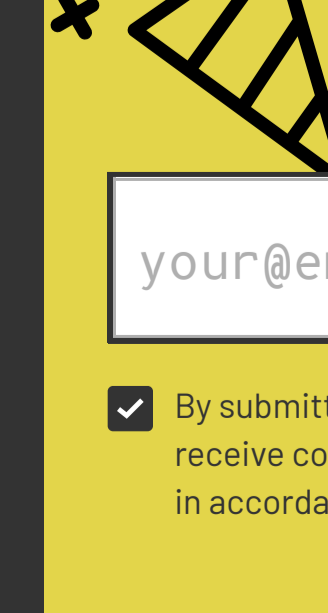
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