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SAN FRANCISCO — The last waltz is always a bitter-sweet affair. There is the joy of completion and the poignancy of the coda.

Those mixed emotions seemed abundant early last Friday morning when The Band, an extraordinary quintet of Canadian musicians who have been a leading pop music group for more than a decade, finished their last public performance—a nine-hour-plus Thanksgiving Day blast they had named The Last Waltz.

Five thousand faithful fans came from all over—Europe, Canada, New England, New York—and paid \$25 each for a night of holiday dining, dancing and the waltz and listen-

ing to five hours of The Band and such guest performers as Bob Dylan, Ringo Starr, Van Morrison, Joni Mitchell, Neil Diamond, Neil Young and Muddy Waters.

The Band spent \$150,000 of its own money to have the epic affair filmed by Martin Scorsese, the director, and a crew of 45; and Bill Graham, the promoter, was reported to have spent \$75,000 of his own money to supplement the \$125,000 taken in ticket sales to pay for such items as the 38-piece orchestra, the seven cut-glass chandeliers from the La Traviata set of the San Francisco Opera, and a staff of 513.

"It was more than we expected it to be," said Robbie Robinson. The Band's guitarist, after the final encore that left the group exhausted but

still charged with energy.

"But it feels good to have all that under my belt," he added, as he discussed the group's decision to quit touring while remaining a unit for recording purposes and for friendship. It is now seven years since they emerged as Bob Dylan's backup band at the Woodstock festival and eight years since their first album.

The evening began promptly at 5 p.m., as thousands of ticket-holders, dressed in everything from jeans to white tie and tails, filed quietly into Winterland, the ancient auditorium in the Fillmore district of San Francisco where Graham has presented pop music shows for a decade now.

Most of the fans dined on 220 turkeys, weighing 5,600

pounds and smothered in 90 gallons of gravy, 2,000 pounds of peeled yams, 40 crates of lettuce and 18 cases of cranberries. There was a special dressing made with 70 bunches of parsley, 500 pounds of onions, 500 pounds of celery sauteed in 100 pounds of butter, mixed with 350 pounds of croutons, 5 quarts of garlic, 10 quarts of sage and a quart of thyme cooked in 140 pounds of butter and 20 gallons of apple cider.

At a special vegetarian table, there were 300 pounds of Nova Scotia salmon brought in from New York by Dylan, and a stew made from six crates of fresh vegetables.

Patrons dined at candlelit tables on the main floor of Winterland or in balcony seats; and many then began to waltz, some expertly and

some clumsily, to the music performed by the Berkley Promenade Orchestra.

At 8 p.m., the staff cleared the tables from the floor and collected the trash and moved many of the potted plants to one side. The auditorium darkened at 9 p.m. A few minutes later, Robinson said, "Good evening," and the band opened the show with one of its standards, Cripple Creek. It played 11 others without comment for the next hour.

At 10:09 p.m., without a break, Robinson introduced the first of the guest stars, Ronnie Hawkins, who sang with The Band in its formative years when it was known as the Crackers and the Hawks.

After that, it was Dr. John and Bobby Charles, then Paul Butterfield, then Muddy Waters, then Eric Clapton,

then Neil Young, then Joni Mitchell, then Neil Diamond, then Van Morrison.

Each guest was an old friend. Each was a pop music star able to generate screams of adulation from the eclectic crowd that ranged from babies to grandparents. Yet all the guest performers were almost deferential to the Band and tried to play with its members harmoniously.

The band ended this portion of the evening just before midnight with Acadian Driftwood, accompanied by fellow Canadians, Neil Young and Miss Mitchell. After a 30-minute break, during which Bay Area poets such as Michael McClure read some of their works, The Band returned with several songs, including Last Waltz, which Robinson finished writing

Wednesday morning.

"We'd like to bring on one more good friend of ours, Bob Dylan," said the guitarist at that point, and the crowd roared. Sounding as if he had never left, Dylan played and sang four of his own songs with the group and then joined in with all the other guest stars for a finale of I Shall Be Released.

That seemed to be the end, but the former Beatle, Ringo Starr, and the band's drummer, Levon Helm, started a drum duet, then guitarist Stephen Stills and Ron Wood appeared and there were two long encores by all the musicians.

Then Graham sent The Band out for one last encore, which ended at 2:15 a.m., when Robinson said, "Thank you and goodbye."