

a rock gig is a big – possibly fatal – mistake and it was for their own safety as well as his own that we made sure they never got close to David. With other acts, the Bay City Rollers, for example, you'd go through the same process but for different reasons – but that's another story!

I know about the dangers involved with concerts involving very young girls through bitter experience – David's ill-fated show at the White City Stadium (now long gone) on May 26th 1974, at which a fourteen-year-old fan called Bernadette Whelan, despite our best efforts to protect the kids from their own hysteria, collapsed into a coma from which, tragically, she never awoke. A few days after the event, when her doctors were forced to make that awful decision to switch off the machines that were all that kept her body, if not brain, alive, there were two inquests on the agenda. One was the legal inquiry into the precise cause of her death. The other was our own painstaking investigation into what could have been done to prevent the tragedy, if anything, and what could be done at concerts in future to ensure that it wasn't repeated.

With hindsight, of course, I can see some of the underlying conditions that contributed to a situation that got out of control – but I can say with all honesty that they have little to do with the security operation itself and a lot to do with the physical and emotional state of the kids by the time the show started. As I've said countless times in this book, pop concerts for younger kids are incredibly fraught with emotion and there's not much you can do about that. All you can do is your utmost to provide a safe environment in which the kids can work themselves up into a frenzy of adulation without doing themselves any damage. A good thirty years on, today's promoters have learnt lessons from past events and the industry as a whole has come up with innumerable measures to keep crowds under control – but back in the early seventies a vast open air pop concert for young kids

was pretty much unprecedented. With very few prior examples to model it on, the design of the crowd control operation had to come from our own experience and ingenuity and it was very effective at meeting the demands we expected to be placed on it. What we hadn't counted on – and I don't think anyone could have expected us to – was the fact that a stadium show almost by definition, means there are no allocated seats.

That last point may sound trivial – but it's absolutely crucial to a teenybopper whose life revolves around getting a glimpse of her idol! In a normal venue you buy your ticket with a seat number on it – and there's no rush to get in there because your seat's your seat and that's that and it was easy to marshal what little space was left between the front seats and the stage. In a stadium, you might have a ticket – but there's no guarantee you'll get a good view. You have to fight your way to the front. Which is why we were faced with hundreds, probably thousands, of little girls queuing up right through the night before the gig, which incidentally was in the daytime. I briefed all my men very carefully so as to do everything possible to keep them safe and relatively comfortable throughout their wait. We arranged for Portaloos to be provided nearby and maintained patrols throughout the night in case any of the 'nonce cases' I'd become so depressingly familiar with on the inside put in an appearance and tried to interfere with any of the kids.

As you can imagine, by the time the gates opened and the fans poured into the stadium like the charge of the light brigade, we had thousands of utterly exhausted, unfed and probably dehydrated kids on our hands: a combination that would be enough to make anyone light-headed. Add the arrival on stage of David Cassidy and you've got one giant hysteria bomb. The sheer volume and pitch of the screaming was unbelievable, even to a tour-hardened pro like myself