

CHAPTER SEVEN

1973/4

DAVID CASSIDY, AUSTRALIAN TOUR

NEW CROSS HOTEL, SYDNEY

'Don!! My room's on fire!!' came the panicked voice on the phone. It was David Cassidy, phoning from his penthouse suite. Three floors below in rather more humble accommodation, I shook myself awake and glanced at the clock as I hopped around the room feverishly struggling to get my trousers and pants on, literally getting my knickers in a twist! It was 6 am. Once trousered I raced barefoot up three flights of stairs, arriving breathless and banging at David's door. It opened and WOOF! Out billowed an impenetrable cloud of inky black smoke, through which the slight form of David Cassidy emerged choking and gagging. I lunged for him, caught his arm and dragged him outside, a black and white minstrel figure, naked but for his underpants and a thick coat of soot – in fact the only bare white skin visible was the two white lines traced by the air entering his nostrils. Shutting the door on the black pall, I rushed him down two floors to Gerry Slater's room, where I kicked, police raid style, on the door, my arms being occupied in trying to support the dead weight of David's slumping form. Having instructed Gerry to take care of David, I rushed up to the floor below the penthouse with Billy Francis and a couple of the others and we sprinted up and down the corridors banging on doors yelling 'FIRE!!!' and telling everyone to get out of there sharpish. As the hotel's befuddled and blinking guests peeped mole-like from their doors and were suddenly

galvanised by the look of urgency on our faces, I called down to alert Reception and the emergency services.

We went back down to check on David, my heart pumping with a sickening mix of adrenalin and the awareness that his safety was my responsibility alone – this was a personal security man's worst nightmare! But he was reasonably OK, thank God, although he'd inhaled an awful lot of smoke and had to go to hospital to be cleaned up and given oxygen and what have you. The fire department, on investigation, found that there hadn't in fact been a fire at all. The swimming pool pump had somehow gone into reverse and started pumping noxious fumes directly into David's room – and only David's room. In hindsight it all suddenly made sense. There'd been no sense of heat when he'd opened the door – and I'd seen no sign of flames. Nevertheless, who knew what the fumes could have done to him! He might have died in his sleep from carbon monoxide poisoning, not to mention the hundreds of other guests, many of whom were families with young kids.

The firemen escorted us back to the penthouse. It was like walking into a black hellhole – drifts upon drifts of soot like a negative shot of a white Christmas. Everything in there was coated in soot – including every last thread of David's stage clothes. That morning the big question was whether or not to cancel the day's show. In an ideal world you wouldn't do a major concert after inhaling a chimney's worth of soot – but the schedule of a major international tour's incredibly tight. If we cancelled the gig, it couldn't just be slotted in – it would be ages and thousands and thousands of fans would be disappointed. So in the end the old showbiz adage prevailed: the show must go on! Now there was the problem of stage clothes. I suppose if he'd been The Damned or someone a bit on the Goth side, we could have got away with him going on in clothes covered in pitch black soot – but it wouldn't

exactly sit well with David's whiter than white image! We did somehow manage to salvage some of his costumes and get everything cleaned in time for the evening's show. David somehow managed to turn in a decent performance – though understandably a tad under par, but the audience, mostly aware of the previous night's near tragedy were even more than usually on his side and they buoyed him up and carried him through it. Nevertheless, that was one long, horrible, stressful day for all concerned.

When the press got hold of the story there was quite a furore – and I was lauded as a hero for saving the star's life and perhaps those of the hotel's other guests! But it's not false modesty when I say that I was only doing my job – keeping my priorities straight and making sure my artist didn't come to harm.

I first met David Cassidy when David Bridger, the Artist Promotion guy at Dick Leahy's Bell Records, rang me up to ask us to look after David – because his first promotional tour of the UK a short time earlier had been fraught with problems. I think they'd based him on a boat on the Thames and they had hordes of kids turning up and trying to get out to the boat. Anyway, they didn't want a repeat of those sorts of shenanigans so they asked the best in the business to handle David's security (though I say it myself!) on what was to be his first proper British and European tour!

Of course I agreed like a shot – after the success of the Partridge Family (a popular TV programme at the time, David was hot property – and as soon as he arrived we went to meet him and his crew, including, of course, his manager Ruth Aarons who, incidentally was the former American table tennis World Champion. Ruth didn't join the tour though – she delegated all that sort of thing to her fresh-faced bunch of preppy types who worked in her office, two young

guys and a girl called Teri Geckler. They'd hired a plane for the tour from a Dutch company called Transavia, which the Osmonds also used – which was a very good idea because it meant they could take all of the band and crew and, crucially, the press, including all the broadsheets as well as the tabloids and the pop papers.

A couple of days into the tour – in Spain I think – a couple of the press guys came up to Gerry Slater, my business partner and Tour Manager, who was also helping me with security, and me with a bit of a gripe.

'Look Don,' they said, 'this is all very nice being flown around Europe and seeing all the concerts – but they're keeping us away from David!'

Now that didn't seem like a very clever move. This was David's first tour outside the US and if the journalists felt shut out and weren't getting any interviews they were bound to get the hump. And since their editors would expect them to come back with something, they'd end up making the whole thing up in a way that was unlikely to show David in a very sympathetic light! Then, the very same day, all the press were assembled for a pre-arranged photo call. They waited patiently as the appointed time came and went. Then they waited impatiently a little longer until finally Teri Geckler appeared to make an announcement and this supposedly professional manager proceeded to make one of the most inept and downright damaging press statements I've ever witnessed in all my years in the business. No pictures today, she was saying to the disbelief of the bored and frustrated press posse, who were just dying for something juicy to get their teeth into.

'David's broken out!'

Well we all knew the security was tight – but surely that didn't mean Cassidy himself was under lock and key! No, it turned out that his celebrated baby face had 'broken out' in –

horror of horrors – a few zits because he was understandably out of sorts after all the travelling.

Not the greatest disaster to befall the career of a teen pop idol. But it could be if you blurt it out to every hack in the notoriously vicious British press! I couldn't believe it! Of course they reported this little nugget – but someone had to do something about this before they got hold of something really damaging so, the first chance I got, I tackled David about it on the plane.

'Look David, you've got to start cooperating with these guys. Talk to them – otherwise all you'll get is bad press. Don't worry about photos. Leave it with us. If we say they can't take any shots of you, they won't do it.'

Of course this was naughty of us – we were taking advantage of the close proximity to the star that security work afforded us to go behind the back of his real manager and her assistants. But after all, it was for his own good! Once we explained the total inadequacy of the people he'd surrounded himself with, David took everything we had to say on board and the atmosphere of the tour was transformed. From that moment on he was happy to sit down and chat with the press at almost any time they liked – and since he was undoubtedly an extremely charming person, he put them completely at ease and he soon had them eating out of his hand.

The remainder of the tour went off without another hitch and as soon as the show arrived back for the English leg, David called a meeting with Ruth Aarons and almost immediately the entire original crew and tour management staff was gone. On David's recommendation and with the cooperation of Bell Records, Ruth put David's entire world tour in the hands of Gerry and me. I never saw Teri Geckler again – or her two sidekicks. Hardly surprising when you consider that their utter lack of experience nearly caused one of the biggest PR disasters in pop history. From day one it was evident that none of them had ever been on a rock 'n' roll tour before –

they were running things the way they ran their office in LA – and it just doesn't work like that!

Gerry and I became very close to David during the course of that tour and became his confidants as well as his security and tour management advisers. The world tour, and by extension his career, went from strength to strength, helped in no small part, I'm proud to say, by our company's guidance and careful management. Of course the guy's a major talent – but he was no ingénue. On the contrary that baby faced young star had a very old and wise head firmly on his shoulders; one of the people that manage to combine being a 'personality' with real strength of character. Because he'd first achieved fame in the Partridge Family, it was easy to be misled into thinking of him as a kid – but you have to remember that he was already in his mid-to-late-twenties when he was playing the sixteen-year-old Keith Partridge! An essential part of David's character was his unfailing ability and willingness to turn on the charm when it was called for – and that talent and cooperative attitude came to our rescue on many occasions when the shit was about to hit the PR fan.

The next great test of our security prowess was a set of four concerts, two of which were matinee shows, over two days at Wembley in March 1973. Since matinees are, by definition, in the afternoon, the kids were able to turn out in force – so as well as all the thousands on the inside, we had thousands upon thousands more milling about outside the venue, which made getting David safely in and out a complete nightmare. And this was where, though I say it myself, my unique skills came to the fore: the kind of ability to plan a quick getaway you don't tend to develop in completely legitimate careers, shall we say! Call it escapology, if you will (I will!) – I know that I was the best man in Britain, maybe even the world, for spirited famous faces in and out of places undetected by the thousands of fans or the press. I could put anyone –

absolutely anyone – through a crowd without even the most rabidly desperate fans finding out!

I remember one time we got the Osmonds – all of them – out of the Churchill hotel without the world's press and mobs of fans noticing, only to have the group's management demand that we sneak them back in and bring them out of the front doors again. It was the only way they could get rid of this mob that was verging on a full scale riot and, thanks to the cameras they had set up in front to capture everything, it made good viewing on CBS news in the US! Incidentally, The Jackson 5 were staying in the same hotel at the time – but no one made a fuss because they weren't yet quite in the Osmonds' league and the two groups' famous friendly rivalry had yet to come into play.

Anyway, I got David in and out for all the four shows without a single fan sussing what we were up to – until the very last show. We'd parked an unmarked transit van outside the back of the stage and left it there all day – that way it would have been there so long without moving that no one would give it a second look. A TV crew from either the BBC or ITV was filming the show and as David left the stage they filmed his rapid escape, running backward with their cameras as he dashed down the corridors towards a discreet side exit right beside the waiting van. Incidentally, unlike some artists, who stick around for a bit of a 'meet and greet', David was always out of the venue, into a vehicle and gone like a shot. His fans were so insistent that, if he didn't get away the instant he closed the show, he'd be stuck in there for hours before there was any hope of the hysterical mob dispersing.

Anyway, on this occasion, we bundled David into the van and the camera crew bundled in behind him with all their lights and equipment and we pulled the roller shutter down behind them. The driver, deliberately, was a fairly old gent –

far from the big muscle-bound security guy they'd be expecting and anyway, we arranged for some noise to kick off at the main stage doors to create a diversion while we made our getaway. But something went wrong. Suddenly there was a deafening banging on the van's flimsy metal panels and the frenzied wailing of hysterical fans crying, 'David!! David!!! We know you're in there!!!'

It was actually quite terrifying – and it's all dramatically documented in footage shot for the programme that the TV crew were making. Oh shit, I thought, wondering how the hell they could possibly have found out. Maybe they're just taking a long shot and banging on every vehicle in sight on the off chance he's in it, I mused, completely baffled.

Then I sussed it. They had a pretty good idea all right – because the van had a fibreglass top and the camera crew's fiercely intense lights were shining out of it, lighting the whole thing up like a Christmas tree! We might as well have had a giant flashing neon sign saying DAVID'S IN HERE GIRLS – COME AND GET HIM!!!

Anyway, it wasn't a major disaster – after all, the doors were locked, so we and our star were perfectly safe and the poor girls never even got a look at him. Hindsight being 20:20, of course, it was the fact that we'd taken the TV crew with us that was the flaw in the plan. On another night, I'd slipped in with David crouching unnoticed under a coat in the footwell of an old VW. My guys were so well-rehearsed that they were expert at looking in the other direction, thereby diverting the fans' eagle eyes while we rolled casually past with the window open and I slowed down so that David could slip out and enter the venue through a side door while I drove on a little way to a separate door. The next night I used the same tactics with Gerry's little mini and cruised through with the sunroof open and no one paid me any attention whatsoever.

It has to be said though that none of this would have worked if David hadn't been so impressively fit and limber. He could squeeze himself into what seemed to be the most impossibly small and awkward spaces – which made my job a lot easier. Just as helpfully, he wasn't one of these stars that insists on making a grand entrance regardless of the risk to the kids created by the inevitable hysteria or the vast public expense involved in policing his appearance. And the danger wasn't only to the kids themselves – if they actually got hold of the object of their adulation, he or she was in very real danger. They might not mean to harm their hero or heroine but hundreds of flailing, frantic teenage fingernails can cause a frightening amount of injury! The great thing about David was that he never questioned my judgement or my instructions – however bizarre they might sound...And sometimes the plan could be quite elaborate. A not untypical Don Murfet briefing to David was: 'Wait here in complete darkness for precisely three minutes and, on my signal, the door will open. Then you run across the corridor, down the stairs, round the back, over a wall and into the open top of the getaway vehicle'

David would listen carefully – and then he'd just do it! It was the same with the Osmonds – because I had a reputation for getting people in and out unnoticed, even the biggest stars would comply with the strangest instructions.

The only trouble was that my success in this department inevitably dropped the problem of the fans in the laps of my people handling the security at the venue. Surrounded by thousands of screaming girls who were utterly convinced that the star was still in the building, they hadn't a hope in hell of convincing them otherwise. They used to try all sorts of angles to get rid of them. They'd point out that no one had seen them come in – so how could they know that their hero/ine hadn't left the same way they'd arrived? They used

to try and convince them that there was a secret tunnel through which the stars escaped, presumably Colditz style from under their teenage sentries' noses. Some – not my boys I hasten to add, even negotiated with the fans and allowed a small party back inside to search the place for the star, see for themselves and then let the others know that he or she really had left the building! Of course that never worked. They'd emerge to declare that the star wasn't there and their cohorts would accuse them of making a deal, just so that they could meet them alone. They had my sympathy, those beleaguered security guys – but that part wasn't my problem, thank God! I gave my guys standing orders that if the fans were still around once they'd secured what needed to be secured they should say goodnight to the fans and walk away to their transport. That's what they always did – and the fans didn't usually hang around for long.

Actually, over the years this constant game of cat and mouse with the fans became a normal part of the job – and we had quite a lot of good-humoured fun with them. The girls would actually come up to us before a show.

'We're gonna beat you this time!' they'd say playfully.

'Great – give it your best shot,' I'd reply, because it was all part of the game.

But they never did beat us, I'm proud to say.

There's one very important point about David's concerts – and those of acts like The Osmonds and The Monkees. And it's one that, refreshingly, David understood completely. That is that the audiences are much, much younger than those for a rock 'n' roll concert – in their early teens, or even younger – which means they're more hysterical and generally are less able to look after themselves – and you have to plan everything accordingly and build that awareness into every move you make. Handling these events the way you'd handle

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

and my crew – and it made David's job near impossible, almost completely drowning the foldback (the wedge-shaped on-stage monitors by which performers hear each other on stage). Straining valiantly to make out the band's music above this cacophony, David did a top job as usual – as did my men in the front line against the waves of frantic teenagers vying for position at the front.

We'd deliberately designed and built a curved barrier (as opposed to the usual straight line) between the arena and the stage, thereby controlling the pressure against it. My men faced the crowd, spotting girls (and it was almost all girls) who seemed to be in trouble, plucking them from the crowd and taking them out to the wings of the stage. This was standard practice – and one that's always worked very well. The trouble was that the kids caught on that if they appeared to faint the security staff'd rescue them – and that just might mean getting a bit closer to David, or even meeting him. In fact, all it meant was that they'd get treatment from the St John Ambulance people if they needed it and then be sent back into the arena nearer the back. But that didn't stop a massive epidemic of feigned fainting – to which we had to react just in case they weren't acting. In fact the crowd (I think they numbered something like ten thousand) can't have been too compressed because time and time again we'd rescue a girl who was fainting at the front and send her out at the back only to find that she'd worked her way to the front again a few minutes later. And of course she'd be doing an Oscar-worthy job of acting again!

You could never assume that they were faking it of course – and, sadly, among the hundreds of kids we extracted from that dog eat dog mob, was poor Bernadette Whelan. She didn't look good. I could see those dedicated St John Ambulance people carrying out the chest compressions and mouth to mouth resuscitation with urgent determination –

and then she was carried away to an ambulance to hospital, where, as I said, she slipped into a coma and died about three days later. But of course, we weren't to know that she would later die. The show, as they say, must go on – especially since all these kids had paid what was to them a fortune and stayed up all night for this. But I had to do something to reduce the feverish intensity. I took David offstage. Not a popular move, as you can imagine. Mel Bush, the promoter, tried to speak to the crowd but to no avail. So I had a word with Tony Blackburn, who was the compere, and asked him to appeal to them for some calm. He did his best and some sort of order was restored – but not for long. As soon as David reappeared the hysteria was amplified to its former level. So I took him off again and bundled him backstage before walking back to the front to face the hordes of frantic girls and address them myself.

'Look,' I appealed, 'everyone must take at least two steps back to relieve the pressure at the front. OK? Two steps back is all we need. If you don't we won't be allowed to carry on with the show again. I repeat: David won't be coming back unless you all take two steps back.'

It worked. For the rest of the show they were a bit more controlled, if you can use the word control for that kind of adulation. David completed a triumphant show and, as usual, we whisked him away double quick – in fact he was out of the building almost before anyone realised he'd left the stage. It was then, when checking on Bernadette's condition, that we were informed that she was still in a coma. Not the best news. And the start of a very sad and testing time for all concerned, not least because of the inquests, legal, formal and otherwise, that I mentioned at the beginning of this sad episode. Much as you wish you could, you can't just put something like that behind you and forget about it. The Health and Safety people, the local council and the press were all looking into the matter, along with the official coroner's inquest and out of all this came the beginnings of

what came to be known as 'The Pop Code' – a set of guidelines for safety at concerts, which I believe Lord Melchett was instrumental in drawing up. It was a document full of good intentions, which unfortunately were countervailed by some impractically idealistic ideas – but more of that elsewhere.

Before long, David was being relentlessly hounded about the whole tragic affair. Utterly and completely distraught, he just went to ground. No interviews, no appearances and certainly no shows – we buried him, kept him out of the way for as long as it would take for him to get his head together again. The press, circling like vultures round poor Bernadette's death, laid the lies on thick and laid the blame at David's door – and mine. There were reports of her having broken legs and of others injured in the crush. They were lies. There were accusations that the security had been wholly inadequate – and they were lies too. Of all the vast number of people seen by the St John Ambulance teams, I think four had to go to hospital, three of whom were diabetics suffering from hypoglycaemia as a result of having stayed out all night without food and water before going through a bout of complete and utter hysteria. There were no broken bones and, in fact, the only person detained at hospital that day was Bernadette.

The worst thing about that kind of allegation is that you can't really answer back. The part that hurt me most, obviously, was when they claimed that we hadn't provided proper security. In fact that couldn't have been further from the truth. As Mel Bush testified at the official inquest, not only did we comply with the current GLC regulations stipulating the levels of staffing and security measures required – we doubled them! Yes doubled!! So you can see why I resented the suggestion so deeply that we'd cut corners in any way. The bastards were suggesting that I'd been gambling with

little girls' lives – I'd only have been doing that if I'd just fulfilled the legal requirements and ignored what my experience and conscience told me was needed – which was a lot more.

At one point I was confronted by a surveyor, employed to look into whether any structural problems had contributed to the situation. Of course there weren't.

'What do you know about crowd control?' I demanded of him. 'And how much experience have you had of dealing with thousands of hysterical teenage girls?'

None was the answer. And there's the problem – there have been similar incidents since and now we recognise the state people can get themselves into and just how dangerous it can be. I still maintain that the root cause of tragedies like this is the fact that these kids stand in a queue for 36, even 48, hours and will not leave it for food or water or to get out of the sun or the cold because that means losing their position and their one chance of getting to the front at the show. Once you take that fact on board, it's not surprising that they're often in a desperately weakened condition long before the concert even starts. Then, having fought their way to the front of the stage, nothing on earth is going to make them relinquish their prime position – not the need to eat or drink or go to the toilet. And that's something that the people in charge of security can do nothing about. In effect, the kids are made ill and their bodies in a distressed condition before they even get in – to an environment in which you'd never dream of placing anyone in less than totally rude health!

The inquest concluded that Bernadette's trunk had been compressed for some short period – I don't know how long, something like a minute maybe...But anyway whatever the cause, it certainly wasn't the barrier because she wasn't tall enough for it to have compressed her midriff and chest area. And anyway, according to her friends' testimony she wasn't

anywhere near it. Even if there had been the enormous pressure of thousands of bodies thrusting her up against it, it would have been her ribs or perhaps her shoulders that took the brunt of it. Interestingly, her friends reported that Bernadette was holding her bag in front of herself so it seems much more likely that the pressure of the bag against her trunk area was part of the problem. Maybe the crowd pushed it up against her; maybe a friend was squeezing her too tightly in the euphoria of seeing their idol...Maybe...Well there are so many maybes that it was downright irresponsible of the press to claim that she was simply crushed to death. All we know for sure, thanks to the coroner, is there were no bruises on her body (as surely there would have been had she been crushed against the barrier or trodden upon) but the red flecks of blood in her eyes showed that pressure on her trunk had prevented breathing and deprived her brain of oxygen, resulting in the coma from which she never awoke.

And then, of course, came poor Bernadette's funeral. And the press showed their usual degree of respect – buggery all, that is. They put it about that David would attend and, as much as he wanted to, it simply wasn't on. It would have turned it into a circus, a feeding frenzy for media vultures and fans alike, which was the last thing David wanted. So staying away and allowing her a reasonably dignified ceremony was the best thing he could do for Bernadette. Paying our respects by not attending the service itself, we arranged for a very nice wreath to be sent to the family and David personally took a lot of trouble to get the words right that went with it. The media, of course, don't have any such scruples and Bernadette's family had to run a gauntlet of insensitive hacks and a gaggle of fans that had gathered in the hope that David would turn up. I doubt very much that any of them were there to pay their respects! Just to make sure it all went without incident – and to pay my respects privately – I went along

and watched the funeral from a respectful and discreet distance.

The press may have insinuated that David was somehow to blame – which was ridiculous – but in later reports it was some consolation to him that Bernadette's family made it quite clear that they didn't blame him at all. Anyway, I personally, and everyone I worked with in the security business learned a lot of lessons from that awful day's events and kept them in mind in our concert security plans from then on.

Depressingly, not everyone in the business took the lessons of Bernadette Whelan's death to heart – as The Who later found out when several people were crushed to death in the scramble as the doors opened on their gig somewhere in Cincinnati. Yet again the fans had been queuing all night in freezing cold conditions and those at the front were at the most pressure not to relinquish their prime positions. So they hadn't eaten or been to the toilet – they hadn't even moved. They were weak, numb and possibly verging on hypothermia – so when the doors finally opened and the hordes behind them started charging in, their legs and bodies couldn't get moving fast enough. The people at the back hadn't been there as long – and if they had, they'd at least had some exercise, eaten and drunk. So they surged forward, those at the front just crumpled and the rest trampled over them. No one had learnt – and people died.

I'm happy to say, though, that we did take those lessons on board – and that's why there were no tragedies at Queen's massive NEC concert in Birmingham that Autumn, which I believe was the biggest standing indoor gig ever with an attendance of some 12,000. Again thousands of fans had queued all night – and we gave a lot of thought to planning things to take account of their weakened and distressed

condition by the time the band came on. For one thing we'd arranged the barriers outside in a sort of zigzagged chicane, which meant that they couldn't charge straight through. Inside the hall, that measure was backed up my guys, whom I'd briefed very carefully. They lined the entrances to slow the fans down; if anyone tried to run through, they were stopped and told to slow down. That way, those who'd waited all night got the prime positions they deserved without a stampede and once the first thousand or two were safely in place the fans that followed were easier to keep calm because they knew the best places had already been taken. With no pressure, they just ambled in, in a civilised fashion with no trouble at all. You see it's all about recognising where the crisis points occur – and we knew that the riskiest of the lot is the moment the doors open. That's why, on many occasions, we'd get the doors opened quite a while before the advertised time.

DAVID AT THE RACES

When the chance came up to play a huge outdoor show at the Sydney racetrack, David jumped at the chance, being an avid racehorse aficionado and breeder and David, Gerry and I all went for an enjoyable day out combining a pre-gig recce with a bit of a flutter a couple of days before the day of the show.

Since it was a daytime gig in the height of the Australian Summer, there was no need (or any point) for the vast (and hugely expensive) banks of high-tech lighting you see at concerts these days. So the stage was a lot less elaborate than the purpose-designed show stages you see at places like Glastonbury these days. Come to that it was a lot less elaborate than the kind of thing you'd get at Wembley or White City in those days. Basically, it was just scaffolding – and I'm damn sure it wouldn't have met the safety requirements for a London gig. But I was still gobsmacked

when, halfway through David's show, the stage seemed to join in the frenzied dancing and the whole thing began, visibly, to move as the sheer weight of the crowd pressed against it. Swaying sickeningly backwards and sideways like a building in an earthquake, it was downright bloody terrifying. But of course the fans were oblivious to the peril they were in, surging and crashing against the front in rolling waves that threatened to sweep the whole ramshackle construction off its shaky foundations. Heroically – but stupidly – some of the security guys were trying to get under the stage, trying pointlessly to prop it up. Suddenly envisioning another rock 'n' roll tragedy, I tried to stop them. 'If it's gonna go, let it go,' I roared, while at the same time wondering how the hell I could get David, his band and the full-on orchestra off the thing before it fell apart...But maybe there was another way. Stop the cause of the problem!! I rapidly gathered together as many guys as I could get hold of and positioned them in front – a human dam, to hold back the teenage tide. Somehow, they succeeded and we got through the show and the accident that had been waiting to happen wasn't allowed to happen.

David's Adelaide Stadium show proved to be just as hairy. It wasn't looking too good from the start – we arrived to find that the whole area had been severely flooded and the waters were still receding, leaving the entire ground floor of our hotel about a foot deep in water so that we had to wade through Reception to reach dry land at the stairs! But we'd obviously missed the worst of it because when we got to the stadium for the dress rehearsal, we found a massive tidemark right the way round – and it was a full eighteen feet up from where we stood. Now that's one hell of a flood! Otherwise, though, everything seemed OK and the show went ahead as planned...for a while.

As David emerged from the tunnel, through which the sportsmen would usually reach the pitch, my blokes and I surrounded him, protecting him from all sides as usual and setting a swift pace towards the stage. But suddenly David came to a halt, panic stricken, and tried to turn and dash back into the tunnel. Confused, we attempted to steer him forward...And then we realised. A mob of fans was hanging down from the seats over the top of the tunnel and some had got hold of him by the hair! With his hair being wrenched upwards, us pushing him forwards and himself fighting his way backwards he was lucky to get on stage with a hair left on his head – and I bet a few of those girls went home happy with a clump of those precious Cassidy auburn locks!

Halfway through the show, I was watching the audience from my usual position at the side of the stage when I saw a sight I'd hoped never to see again, one that sent cold shivers right down my spine. At the back of the stadium was a cantilevered stand, mobbed out with screaming kids. And, unbelievably, the whole thing was moving; it was swaying like a bush in a breeze! The consequences of it collapsing didn't bear thinking about and, with Bernadette Whelan's fate foremost in my mind I dashed frantically off the stage and got hold of the promoter and the police.

'Look at it!' I shouted at them. 'That stand's alive! The whole bloody thing's swaying about all over the shop!'

Amazingly they didn't seem very bothered.

'Oh, that's OK, no problem,' they breezed.

'Well it might be OK for us standing here,' I stormed back at them. 'But it's bloody well not OK for those kids on the stand. Call me old fashioned but I'm not really in the mood for watching a whole stand collapse at a David Cassidy concert and seeing hundreds of teenagers get crushed to death...I don't really fancy being part of that kind of thing – I'm funny like that!'

They muttered some rubbish about how they knew their stand and how much strain it could take – but I wasn't reassured.

'That's all very well,' I replied angrily, 'but it's designed for cricket fans, who all sit there quietly and clap politely. It ain't the same thing as thousands of hysterical little girls all jumping up and down in unison, believe you me! I think I'm going to have to take David off stage,' I went on, knowing that was the only way to get the kids to calm down. All I knew was that at least if I could get the kids to stop rocking, so would the stand!

At least that made the complacent promoters and plods respond – and they said they'd send some of their people over to check it out. But when they came back, it was with the same blasé attitude: 'We know our stand; it'll be fine!'

I wasn't happy, but I allowed the show to go on against my better judgement and, thank God, the stand stood up to the punishment as they'd said it would. Nevertheless I couldn't breathe easily until the show was over.

Scariest still was David's show at the Bellevue in Manchester. I was looking on as BBC TV presented Martyn Lewis was doing a piece to camera about the concert as he walked along an elevated walkway, when suddenly dirty great lumps of roof started raining down around him. Wondering what the bloody hell was going on, I looked up and – to my absolute horror – saw that the roof was straining under the weight of hordes of teenage girls! Never underestimate the superhuman ability of a star struck teenager! They'll do anything to get a bit closer to their idol – and this lot were risking their lives with gay abandon as they crawled across this rooftop to get into a section of the venue that was closer to David. With visions of horrendous carnage making me shudder I went charging up staircases, out of a fire escape and out onto the rooftop. It was only as I was standing there hauling the kids one by one back from the brink of disaster that it occurred to

me that the appropriate response to this situation was to be downright bloody terrified!

Hang on a minute, I thought. If this roof goes I'm going down with it, and with all these kids on top of me!

Not a pleasant prospect. I've never been so terrified in my life. But somehow, with the help of some of my men, I managed to get them – and myself – off there and down to safety. It wasn't easy though. Trembling with fear as we were, we knew there wasn't any point in just telling these girls that the roof was going to collapse any second. In that hysterical state, all that mattered to them was David Cassidy. Death meant nothing whatsoever – and nor did injury. If these kids saw David on the other side of a busy main road they'd be off across it like bullets out of a gun. And they wouldn't care if there were a sixteen-ton truck bearing down on them. To them, at that time, it was totally irrelevant. So we had to physically grab them and manhandle them kicking and screaming off the roof – all the time struggling to stop hordes more of them climbing up there.

The moral of the story is that there's a lot more to security than having a few blokes standing about near the doors – which is all some of these half-arsed outfits used to do. It wouldn't surprise me if they're still as lax today. You've got to get a grip on the psychology of the crowd you're dealing with – and if you're not on top of that, you'll lose control, very probably with tragic consequences. That's why throughout my security career I made damn sure that the teeny bop idols such as Cassidy, The Bay City Rollers and the like were never seen by the fans in a situation where the kids could come to harm if they tried to get closer.

That's another thing people get arse about – they make the assumption that security's mainly for the artists' benefit. It's not! It's relatively easy to keep the artist safe – because he or

she's surrounded by experienced, expert bodyguards. It's the kids you're really looking out for – or at least you should be!

With all that experience I thought I knew pretty much everything there is to know about security – but when we arrived in Japan with David, the way the police handled things was a real eye opener. At the airport I was horrified to see a sea of expectant faces waiting for David – there must have been three thousand of them, identical in their school uniforms and clutching pens and paper. That in itself was weird – all Japanese schools have the same uniform apparently, making them look like an army of clones! Well I could see no way of getting David through.

'There's no way I'm allowing David to go through there. There must be another way out of here!'

No there wasn't, they said. I was having none of it.

'Well what happened when The Beatles came through here then?' I demanded to know.

'They come through this way – no other way,' said one of the cops.

'Oh come off it,' I persisted. 'There's got to be. Are you going to risk the safety of all these kids by trying to get David through that lot? You can't just pile through three thousand screaming girls. Someone's gonna get hurt!'

But they were unmoved.

'We show you,' the cop said confidently.

'No you bloody well won't mate!' I chipped back at him indignantly. 'I'm not risking David's life – let alone all these kids!'

'No, we'll have no problem,' the guy insisted again. 'We have what we call "the truncheon,"' he added with a smile.

'Hold up a minute – did I hear you right? You're not thinking of beating your way through with a bloody truncheon are you? Are you bloody mad?'

'No, no, no,' he repeated. 'We show you.'

Well, I had no choice but to cooperate – against my better judgement. And I've never seen anything like it in my life! With the kind of efficiency that only the Japanese could muster, they formed up about thirty policemen into two parallel lines either side of Billy Francis, David and me. The ranks met at one end, making a sort of pencil shape. This, evidently, was what they called 'the truncheon'. Then, with Billy and I holding on to David at either side, the whole 'truncheon' started marching briskly forward, their thirty pairs of boots pounding the ground in unison with utter precision, sounding like a train. I couldn't believe it; in this 'truncheon' formation we cut through that crowd like a knife through butter. No one got near us and in minutes we were in the car and gone, the 'truncheon' now re-formed into a wall of cops between the car and the kids until we were safely out of sight. The organisation, the discipline, the machine-like regimentation...It was all absolutely amazing. I've never been so impressed before or since! They could teach our police a lesson or two about crowd control – and they prove that there's absolutely no need for the hysterical scenes you see at the airports in the UK when some star or other arrives.

Of course, when you're looking after a major star it's not just at the concert itself or the airport that security's an issue – you have to keep a constant eye on them, which is why I would usually take a room adjoining David's. As usual, I'd got a room with a communicating door to David's and Billy Francis had a similar arrangement on the other side – so our man was as safe as houses. Or at least so we thought until I heard this almighty banging on David's door and some bloke ranting and raving outside in the corridor.

'Come out! I know you're in there!' he was shouting. He was not a happy bunny.

Then it dawned on me what must have happened. Earlier, down in the hotel lobby a very attractive young woman was hanging about, evidently not with anyone, and even more

evidently with the serious hots for David. Nothing unusual about that – it would have caused more fuss to have found a bird that wasn't mad about David to be honest. So we thought nothing of it when she disappeared with David and went to his room. Now it seemed that she wasn't alone – and her husband was understandably upset that she'd bugged off with this international pop idol and was presumably doing what millions of other young women would have given their right arms (and probably their left arms and both legs and all the tea in China too) to do! I looked out of my door – and sure enough there was this guy, banging away on David's door like there was no tomorrow.

'What's up mate?' I asked innocently. As if I didn't know.

'I know my wife's in there!' he wailed. The poor bloke was absolutely gutted – and I can't say I blamed him. Bit of a tough one to live up to really, your wife getting off with one of the most sought after stars in the world! God knows how he'd found out she was in there – it wouldn't surprise me if she'd phoned him from David's room to taunt him with it. I've seen that happen and worse besides.

'No! You're mad mate! There's no one in there with him,' I said, all pally and soothing. 'Wait here a sec mate. I'll go and have a word with him,' I went on, tipping the wink to Gerry, who'd appeared behind me. While I placated the bloke, who was now beside himself with jealousy, Gerry alerted David on the phone, nipped through the communicating door, plucked the bewildered babe from David's arms and, hushing her protests, hustled her through the communicating door into my room just in time for my entrance to David's room accompanied by the frenzied husband. 'Look, mate,' I was saying breezily, waving my hand at a suite inhabited only by a slightly dishevelled and bemused pop star, 'there's no one in here with him!'

Of course, while her husband was searching the wardrobes and the bathroom for his errant other half, she was off and

out of my room like a shot, no doubt to get up to more mischief elsewhere. The husband never twigged. And, I must admit, we added to his humiliation by giving him a right old coating off for crashing the hotel, banging about the place and accusing us and our artist of all sorts of rubbish. He looked like a broken man by the time we let him get away. Poor mug!

When you're dealing with a man in as much demand as David was, you're bound to be party to all sorts of sexual shenanigans – and of all the incidents, one in particular springs to mind. On that same Japanese tour yet another gorgeous girl was making her intentions towards David more than clear – and Mr Cassidy was evidently in a playful mood. 'Let's have a bit of fun,' he said to me with a wink as he whisked her, hardly believing her luck, off to his room, along with Henry Diltz – a lovely and charming man – who was David's official photographer and who started taking a few shots of her and David.

Meanwhile, Gerry, Billy and I were in my adjoining room, looking on through the crack of the door that we'd unlocked and left just slightly open. We must have looked like a bunch of horny but oversized schoolboys, peering avidly through the tiny gap with me, the smallest at the bottom, Gerry leaning over me and Billy gaping over the top of Gerry. David and the girl were sitting on the bed, chatting and beginning to engage in a bit of gentle petting – nothing too naughty. Yet, Henry, permitted to remain there by virtue of his status as 'court photographer' and snapping happily away, said lightly, 'Hasn't she got a lovely figure David!'

'Yeah, she sure has,' murmured the appreciative Cassidy. With that it took little persuasion to get her to expose her breasts, which were very nice, as all us onlookers agreed. Henry wasn't displaying a lot of the professional detachment you might normally expect of a seasoned photographer. Far

from it – he was ogling this pert pair and snapping away like his life depended on it, getting closer and closer...then closer still until his lens was virtually prodding the girl's boobs. We weren't that surprised – Henry was famously a 'tit man'. But we were surprised when he suddenly dropped all pretence of being interested in photographing her, leant forward and BIT HER NIPPLE!!!

Well, we fell apart, laughing till we cried. How we avoided being discovered I'll never know! I don't know if David could hear our stifled giggles but anyway he shouted loudly enough to drown us out.

'Henry! What the hell are you doing? You're mad! Get out of here!'

And with that Henry came to his senses – or at least he seemed to.

'I'm sorry, I'm sorry...' he bumbled in the unusually gentle version of an American accent I'd come to love him for and that made him so forgivable, 'I got carried away.'

And the lovely thing about Henry, with his laid-back attitude and ponytail to match, was that you knew he meant it. Well, I say that, but as he retreated humbly he was still snapping away – almost compulsively, now I think about it. He just couldn't help himself. A tit man to the last and a photographer too, what else could the poor bugger do? Anyway, he kept backing away – towards the door...Well, you'd have thought so. But no. While David and the girl were otherwise engaged, shall we say, he slipped behind the luxuriant curtains that draped from ceiling to floor and, incredibly, kept right on snapping feverishly away.

In the adjacent room the three of us collapsed in spasms of suppressed laughter. We were writhing about on the floor in side-splitting agony – which only got worse as things hotted up in David's room when the poor girl proceeded on the mistaken assumption that Henry had shuffled out of the door.

She resumed the level of intimacy she'd reached before Henry's *faux pas* with considerable enthusiasm – but David was understandably distracted, knowing that Henry hadn't been the only voyeur and assuming that there were still three pairs of eager eyes out on stalks behind that door. It was clear that things couldn't go any further. He needed rescuing – and, wiping tears of laughter from my eyes I stumbled out of my room into the soberingly cold corridor lights. I rapped smartly on David's door – and he answered, clearly marshalling the acting talent that made him such a hit in 'The Partridge Family' to create an aura of total innocence and comply humbly with some spurious demand about some fake interview I'd come up with on the spur of the moment.

Politely and apologetically, David explained to the girl that this was an unavoidable commitment that his dutiful manager had brought to his attention and that there was no alternative to her leaving. Left with no choice she complied. And the second the door closed behind her and the three of us plus a humble Henry entered his room, David exploded into the laughter he'd been holding back for what had seemed like hours. He was streaming with tears. 'Henry! Henry!' he spluttered. 'I could not believe it – you bit her tit!!!'

Of course there was more than that – and worse. On David's tours and on all the others but most, I'm afraid, has to stay under wraps to protect the innocent – and the not so innocent. The fun and games pop and rock stars famously get up to when they're on tour may look outrageous, even a bit pervy, to the uninitiated. But what it comes down to is the fact that these people can't just go out for a drink like the rest of us – people like David were literally trapped in their hotel rooms by the fans outside. And that's why people make their own entertainment, push the limits of what they can get away with

and generally piss about. And whatever you read in the press, I can tell you that there's almost never any malicious intent.

David had a serious side though. I've already mentioned how mature he was in outlook – and he was also just as caring and romantically inclined as his countless fans would have imagined him to be. One day I received a phone call. It was David.

'Don, I'm flying in from LA. Landing at six am. You've got to meet me!'

It sounded urgent, whatever the problem was.

'Sure,' I said and in the morning I picked him up at Heathrow, bursting to know what the mystery was. But even when he got into my motor Mr Cassidy wasn't giving much away.

'OK Don, we're going to the Westbury Hotel,' he said as if he was briefing me on a military operation. I put my foot down and headed back into the smoke and, as we sped along the Westway he finally smiled and turned to me.

'We're going to meet my future wife!' he stated.

Blimey I thought, he's a fast worker. I didn't even know he had a girlfriend. And I was a hell of a lot more impressed when he told me the name of his intended. It was only the fabulously gorgeous film star Kay Lenz!

'Bloody hell!' I said with feeling.

'But, Don, here's the thing. She's not expecting me...But it's her birthday and I've bought her a real special present. I want to surprise her – but I don't even know what room she's in...'

'Leave it to me,' I said, just for a change.

Now I began to see why he needed me with him so desperately. If you've ever tried to contact a major international celeb in a snooty hotel you'll know that you get short shrift if you don't have the room and probably the fake name they've registered under. Mind you, if you've got David Cassidy in tow it gets a lot easier – and anyway we'd

stayed at the Westbury many times, so I knew the manager. Apologising for the ungodly hour of the morning I explained the situation, pointing out that David had just flown in from LA specially to surprise Miss Lenz. The manager thought for a moment and then gave me the room number.

I knocked on the door.

'Who is it?' a sleepy, muffled but familiar voice called out.

'Telegram Madame!' I chirped in my best mockney accent.

'Leave it outside will you...'

'Sorry Maam, I need a signature,' I replied officiously.

'One second,' came her reply.

The door opened, revealing to her the sight of David holding out a resplendent silver fox fur.

'Happy Birthday!' he beamed as she gazed, amazed and adoring, at him through tear-filled eyes.

With that I took my leave of the happy couple. It was the end of my little good deed for the day – and the beginning of a very happy chapter in David's life.