

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