

Cassidy Concert Injuries Spur Measures for Crowd Control

By GRAHAM PUNTER

(Music Week Staff Writer)

LONDON—The greater London Council is preparing a report on David Cassidy's White City concert in a bid to prevent a repetition of the hysteria that led to hundreds being injured, including one 14-year-old girl who required emergency treatment after her heart stopped and is still seriously ill in hospital.

And a GLC spokesman admitted this week the council may have been slow to appreciate the age group the teen idol would attract because the law does not require a promoter to name the performer.

The GLC was responsible for granting the license that allowed the concert to go ahead.

A spokesman said: "There is nothing more dangerous about a concert at a football ground than any other site provided it is properly conducted. But a promoter is not obliged by law to tell us who is performing and obviously the age of the audience is a factor that in the future we should perhaps take more into account. We regret the injuries and are preparing a report on the White City concert to avoid a similar occurrence in the future."

A Home Office spokesman said it is prepared to listen to recommendations on safety at pop concerts following the Cassidy affair.

"People can of course make representation to us but we are dealing with a very complex issue and there is no easy answer," said a spokesman.

Leading the fight for tougher measures is the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents which has been campaigning for a Minister of Public Safety since the tragedy at the Celtic-Rangers soccer match at Ibrox Park.

A spokesman said: "Sunday's incidents merely confirm what we have been saying. Responsibility for safety at concerts or football matches is too diversified at the moment between the promoter, police,

security forces and authorities granting licenses. There needs to be someone with ministerial powers to have total over-all control."

The scenes at the Cassidy concert have put a question mark on the future of sports stadiums as concert venues. The use of open-air venues is a recent development of U.K. concert promotion. Earlier this month, when about 30,000 people attended a concert given by Elton John at Watford FC ground, there were early indications of the possible danger of uncontrolled crowds packing on to the pitch and pressing forward to get close to the stage. And more recently at the star-studded concert at Charlton, headlined by the Who, which passed off without trouble, there were nevertheless misgivings about the potential danger of thousands of people being massed on the pitch and being out of reach of medical services.

But Michael Alfandary, promoter of the recent Who concert at Charlton Athletic FC's Valley Stadium, said it is not so much the venue—more the kind of audience.

"Open air venues are unsuitable for large numbers of young hysterical fans. I think an artist who makes a living out of hysterical devotion should play more shows at smaller halls so the audience aren't at risk.

"I made a bid for the Cassidy concert with a plan that included barriers to prevent people pushing forward but the cost was too high."

A spokesman for Artists Services, which provided a human barrier in the arena, said: "We provided 200 men. Their responsibilities included stopping children getting onto the stage which was done successfully."

A Scotland Yard spokesman would not comment on the police involvement on Sunday.

Neither Mel Bush, promoter of the White City concert, nor Adrian Hopkins, promoter of Tuesday's

Cassidy concert at Manchester City's Maine Road ground for Chrysalis, were available for comment.

Dick Leahy, departing general manager of Bell U.K., Cassidy's record company, said it is difficult for him to comment since his field is recording, not concert promotion.

"I suppose at the heart of the problem is the lack of suitable venues for big American acts which means we have to resort to stadiums like the White City."