

## Rock and Roll History The Who Response Paper

By Brittany Babcock

As I listened to the 30-year anniversary of The Who tragedy, I notice so many different voices pointing fingers at many different causes for the pandemonium. It's frustrating to hear that a venue as large as US Bank Arena would be so lackadaisical about running one of the biggest shows of the time. To open only one or two of the doors to let in 15,000 people while running late in starting the process is mind-boggling. I realize that teens are outside getting high and drinking before the show. Today, we call that pre-gaming for the show. I don't believe that teen mindset has changed since the 70's, except for maybe the amount of drugs being consumed at the time. My point is that it wasn't the fans' fault.

As I listen to the recollection of the event, I begin to imagine myself in these kids' positions. I hear there was no public restroom available, which is reason enough to make women upset. I know it was cold outside and I know the doors didn't open on time. The show originally sold out in 90 minutes of the ticket release time. People were thrilled about this show. General admission was an obvious problem because people are showing up early to get in and then not being able to go inside. I just don't understand how event security had never dealt with a crowd in proper fashion before. None of this should've ever occurred and steps weren't taken to keep the people organized.

I know what it's like to be within a crowd and not being able to do anything. Listening to the woman's account reminds me of a night in New York City at a Crystal Castles Show on New York's Eve. In this particular show there was a coat check you had to use because it was super packed in the venue and it was 90 degrees inside. People were drinking, getting high on drugs, and jumping around crazy. When the show ended it was a mad rush to the coat check to get your stuff and book it outside to hail a cab or make the last subway ride out of Brooklyn. Unfortunately, all it took was one person to push a girl and all hell broke loose. It's New York; people do not mess around. Security was cursing and pushing people back because it was nearly impossible to calm a crowd this size. Finally we saw our coats, threw some money at the girl, and got out of there as soon as we could to hail a cab.

What's difficult about hearing the many different accounts of The Who tragedy is the blame being placed on so many things. I used to work at US Bank Arena as an intern for the Cincinnati Cyclones. I know the amount of people that attend events there and how many donors go all around the outside of the building. How was it possible to only open a couple of doors? It will never make sense to me the disregard for the security of the event. It's like they refused to staff enough people to work the doors and accept tickets. It was supposed to be one of the biggest shows ever to come to Cincinnati and that is how the city prepares for it?

Listening to the man remembers "almost becoming number 12," brought tears to my eyes. He lost his wife within a crowd and couldn't do anything about it. It's so devastating to imagine coping with large events ever again after this. I don't know what I would do.

I agree with the with the Who management that you cannot tell a crowd that people have died outside in that it would spread panic. The best thing they could've done was continued to play and get fans out of there safely and soundly. It's devastating to have that tragedy associated with your band because it truly wasn't their fault. A sound check is normal procedure and the message of the sound check should've been delivered to the crowds in order to calm the commotion. Hindsight is 20/20 and we can remember and we can say what if, but nothing can change the past. We can only pray that this will never happen again and plan better for the future of this city.