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## Andy Kershaw on booking The Clash to play at university

Andy Kershaw remembers booking The Clash, Bob Geldof and Elvis Costello at Leeds University in 1981.



Andy Kershaw remembers booking bands at Leeds University, 1981 Photo: al thompson

By **Jessica Salter**  
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This is me in my office in Leeds University Union. I was the entertainments secretary and it was my job – although an unpaid one – to book bands to play in the Refec, a space that could hold 2,200 people. Behind my head is a photocopied sheet for Elvis Costello and the Attractions. Elvis had released an album in 1981 called *Almost Blue* but he wasn't doing a UK tour. Well, I wasn't having any of that and I managed to book him for £4,000 (we usually paid about £1,500); we charged £4 a ticket (usually they were three quid). I couldn't get proper posters done in time; but it didn't matter, he sold out.

I came from a non-musical household in Rochdale. My dad frowned on rock and pop music, so I found out about it myself – I was reading music papers from the age of 12. I saw that all the great bands in the 1970s – the Who, the Rolling Stones, **Led Zeppelin** – played at Leeds University. My university application form had six spaces and I wrote 'Leeds' in every slot.

I started in October 1978 and went straight up to the ents sec at the time and said, 'Please can I have your job when you leave.' I started volunteering as a steward and then in March 1980 I got the top job. It was a non-sabbatical role that I was meant to juggle along with my politics degree. On the edge of my desk here someone's stuck a newspaper headline: andy, 15, has played truant for 3 years. It wasn't about me, but it was a pretty accurate description of my academic record. I worked in that office from 9am until 10pm and had no time for lectures; I made a decision then to surrender my degree.

The greatest gig I ever saw at Leeds was the Clash on January 31 1980, so I was thrilled when I secured them again for my final term as ents sec in 1982, a few weeks after the Boomtown Rats were due to play a sell-out gig. On the night of the Rats gig in April I saw a bloke ripping down posters for the Clash in the Union; he turned around and it was **Bob Geldof**. He was swearing about the poster, which said the Clash was the 'greatest rock'n'roll band'. To me it indicated a fundamental insecurity in him.

My ambition was to be a music promoter. That sort of got derailed but it did lead to broadcasting, first with Radio Aire and then Radio 1. When I was awarded a doctorate by Leeds University in 2005 I thought it was for my journalism and broadcasting achievements, but they said it was in part for my work as ents sec back then and its contribution to student life and the reputation of the university. I was really moved by that.

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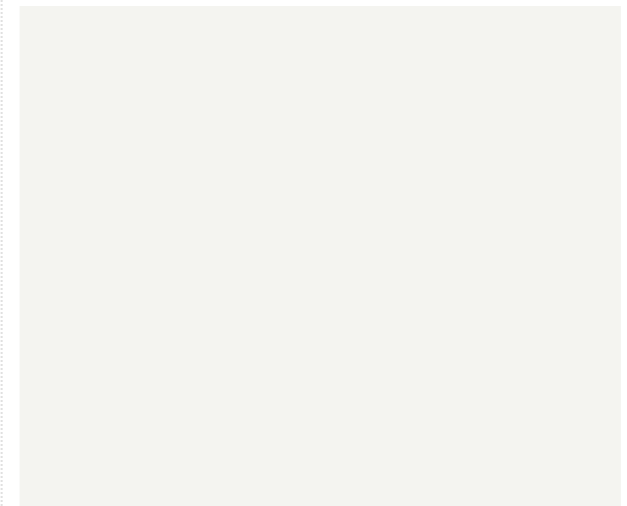
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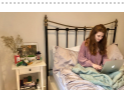



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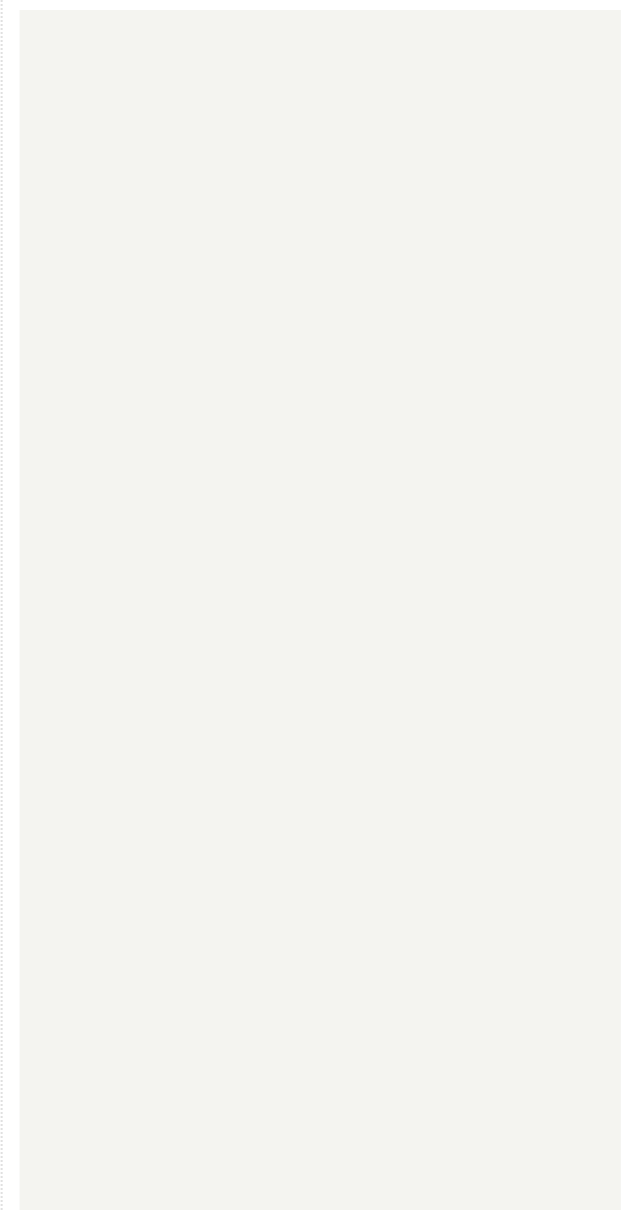
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