

## 10 classic gigs that defined Glasgow's Apollo Theatre from The Clash to the Quo :: Reader View

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[Glasgow music history](#) was made 50 years ago this evening as the city's legendary [Apollo Theatre](#) raised its curtain for the first time.

On September 5, 1973, the Apollo, which had formerly operated as Green's Playhouse, got off to a rip-roaring start with the iconic Johnny Cash going down in [history](#) as its first ever headline act.

Over the next 12 years, the cavernous Renfield Street venue would play host to the great and good of rock and roll, with everyone from The Who and AC/DC to The Clash and Status Quo treading its hallowed stage.

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David Beckham checking chicken coop for eggs



The entrance to the Apollo Theatre

The iconic venue stood where Walkabout is now, part of the Cineworld complex. The place paved the way for many a band – renowned for its boisterous yet highly discerning crowd, drawn in from all across Scotland.



Tina Turner rocked Glasgow's legendary Apollo in 1984.  
Picture: Creative Commons.

There were gigs every week at the Apollo, the biggest venue in Scotland at the time – and it was always well over its 4,500 capacity.

Its notoriously 'bouncy' upper balcony and 16ft-high stage made it a unique place to see your favourite band - despite the fact, by most accounts, its interior was falling to bits.



Marc Bolan pop singer on stage at Glasgow Apollo 1974  
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The official final show was headlined by Paul Weller and The Style Council in June 1985. The building was eventually demolished in 1987.

## Promoted Stories

Even as the Apollo decayed and latterly earned the nickname 'The Appalling', thousands of music fans who ventured there over those 12 years know there will never be anywhere else quite like it.



Bay City Rollers fans outside Apollo theatre Glasgow  
April 1975

We've had a look through the gig archives to bring you a selection of the most legendary shows the Apollo ever hosted. Let us know in the comments if there are any you think we've missed and should have included.

## Status Quo



The Apollo went mental for the Quo on numerous occasions in the 1970s and '80s. In fact the two entities became synonymous with one another. The denim-clad rockers played two nights at the venue on March 18 and 19, 1981 that, according to those who were there, just about brought the balcony down. David Norwood wrote on GlasgowApollo.com: " The stories about the balcony are true, I remember being in the stalls just below the edge of the balcony and I wasn't the only one during

'Roll Over Lay Down' headbanging away but with one very wary eye constantly watching the balcony bounce up and down; and believe me it bloody well did!! Francis Rossi made frequent comment about it moving. Scary stuff but the stuff of legend!"

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## The Clash



Glasgow went tonto for the Clash when they played the Apollo on July 4, 1978, so much so that this gig has gone down in legend. Even the band's Mick Jones described it as one of the best they ever played - in spite of the ugly scenes during and after the gig which saw fans battle with police. Pogoing and foot stomping being a feature of this particular musical genre, how the Apollo's famously bouncy balcony survived punk, we don't know.



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## The Rolling Stones



The Rolling Stones playing the Apollo in May 1976.

Picture: Daily Record.

The Stones rocked the Apollo several times throughout the 1970s, but many fans agree that their concert on May 27, 1982 was unbeatable. Mick Jagger whipped the already wild audience into a frenzy by taking to the stage in a Scotland jersey, as the band powered through hits, including Under My Thumb, Honky Tonk Women and Start Me Up.

Writing on the Glasgow Apollo website, Paul Lynch recalled: "Mick ran on stage with his Scotland top on and the place erupted. I think it was the first time I had seen a cableless mic, and he ran around and in and out of all the boxes at the side. I saw them again twice at Hampden and St James Park, but nothing like that night in '82 at the Apollo. Man I miss that place badly."

## Blondie



Deborah Harry of the pop group Blondie holding the famous Apollo Theatre Glasgow trophy in 1979. Picture: Mirrorpix.

Blondie were the band of the moment back in '79, and Glasgow got to bring in not just a new year - but a new decade - with Debbie Harry and co. Highlights of the Hogmanay 1979 show, which was televised live at the time, included a bagpipe rendition of the band's hit Sunday Girl, which sent the crowd bonkers. Picture: Mirrorpix.

## Bob Marley and the Wailers



Promotional poster for Bob Marley & The Wailers at the Glasgow Apollo in 1980.

On July 10 and 11, 1980, Bob Marley and the Wailers played two nights at the Apollo in what would turn out to be the reggae icon's only Scottish gigs. The Wailers capped off their epic three-hour set with a lengthy encore that concluded with a mass singalong of Get Up Stand Up. While it was noted by many of the 3,500 in attendance that Bob was looking frail at the time, few would have believed he would pass away a little under 10 months later.

## Queen

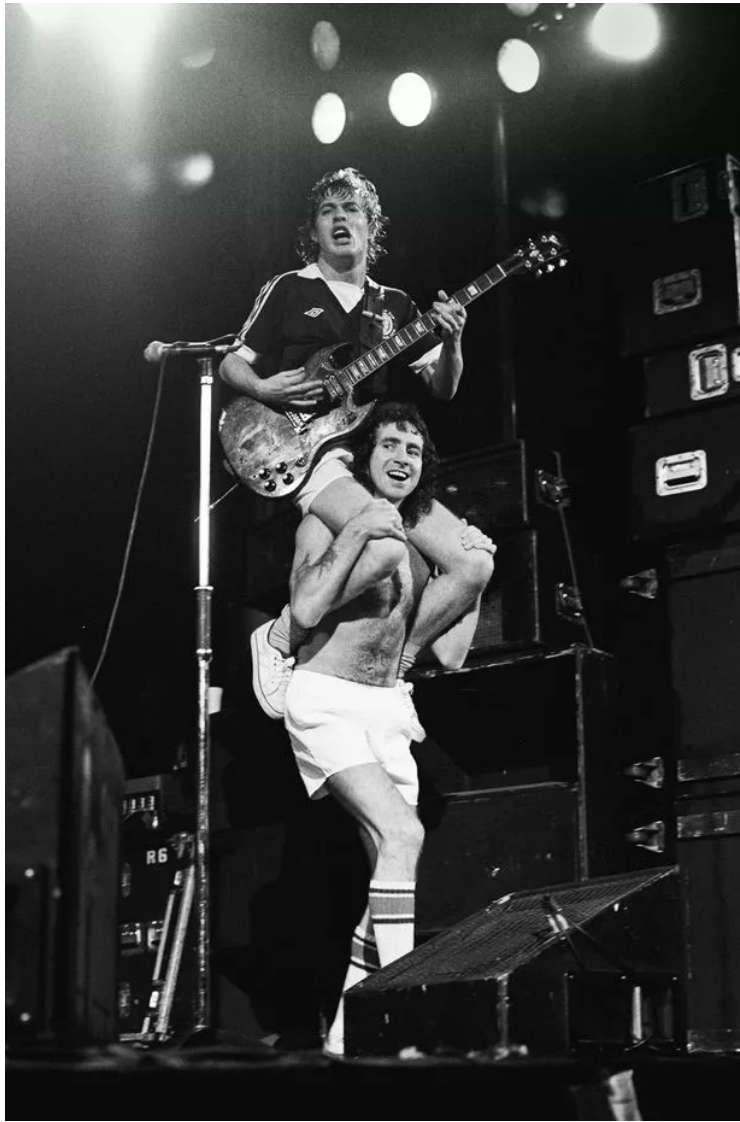


Queen perform on stage in 1979. (Photo by Rob Verhorst/Redferns)

Queen headlined the Apollo half a dozen times, and while everyone will have their favourite, their setlist for the November 30 and December 1, 1979 concerts takes some beating. How the Apollo's decrepit upper circle dealt with the incessant foot stomping during We Will Rock You is anyone's guess. (Photo by Rob Verhorst/Redferns)

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## AC/DC



Bon Scott lead singer for the band AC/DC with Angus Young playing the guitar sitting on his shoulders while performing at the Glasgow Apollo Theatre, 1978.

The Glasgow origins of Aussie rockers AC/DC are legendary and this homecoming show, which took place on April 30, 1978, is regarded by many avid fans of the group as one of their greatest ever. A volcanic atmosphere awaited the band at the Apollo and it resulted in a performance for the ages.

This was also the gig that guitarist Angus Young turned up donning a Scotland World Cup 1978 jersey. Just magic.

"I was blown away," Doogie White told Loudersound.com. "The power of AC/DC had the force of a storm coming off the hills and knocking the bejesus out of you."

## David Bowie





British pop singer David Bowie performing on stage during his concert at Earls Court, London on his Isolar II -1978 World Tour. 29th June 1978.

Between June 19-22, 1978, the absolute legend that is David Bowie played four consecutive nights at the Apollo, which proved to be a record for any single artist at the venue. This was Bowie's so-called 'Berlin era', with compositions such as Warszawa and Speed of Life contrasting splendidly with his earlier Spiders from Mars material.

Writing on fan website David Bowie World, Phil Roberts said: "I attended all four nights at the Apollo. In fact I went to every night on the whole UK tour.. Bowie was fantastic throughout, but Glasgow (and Newcastle) were the highlights of the tour. Fond memories indeed.."

## The Jam



The Jam appeared at the Apollo twice over the course of 1982, but the November 25 gig was definitely the bitterest pill for fans to swallow as they already knew the band were splitting up for good. This undoubtedly helped ensure that the Glasgow crowd were right up for it. They certainly gave the band a farewell to remember.

Writing on YouTube, Gordon Hay commented: "I was at this, my first gig, 16 years old, right down the front, which at the Apollo was no place for the faint hearted! Absolutely amazing experience, still got the ticket."

Lead singer Paul Weller's next band the Style Council would later make Apollo history on June 16, 1985 as the last ever band to play the venue before its closure.

## Ozzy Osbourne



Black Sabbath lead singer Ozzy Osbourne with short hair, feeding the pigeons in Glasgow's George Square. 29th November 1982. No winged animals were harmed on this occasion. Picture: Mirrorpix.

For a man who is unafraid of biting the heads off flying critters, Ozzy Osbourne was surprisingly fearful of playing in Glasgow. His wife and then manager Sharon Osbourne recounts his gig at the famous Apollo venue in September 1980.

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In her autobiography, she said: "Glaswegians were said to be the most difficult of any audience in Britain, especially on a Friday night, which this was, when they got paid and got p\*\*\*\*d. I didn't tell Ozzy - he was nervous enough already, on and off the toilet shaking with stage fright... Before the doors opened they were lining up round the block, and we were all in shock. The show was unbelievable.

"At the end, Ozzy knelt down and kissed the stage. "Thank you, thank you, I love you, love you," he said, his voice breaking with emotion. And we all cried, the three of us: Ozzy, Randy and me, sobbing with tears of joy, and we could still hear voices from the auditorium calling for more...He had done it."

***A version of this article was originally published on May 10, 2023.***

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