

YES

THE MOST IMPORTANT YES CONCERT POSTER?

(1968 LEEDS UNIVERSITY)

By David Watkinson

Now and again in the memorabilia world an item comes along that is very special. Not only something that could be classed as an era defining item of rock history for that band, but more than that an item that documents a major event in a bands life and one that changed the bands future immeasurably. An unknown, and very important YES poster came to the open market in September 2020, originating from a date on the first YES tour, Saturday, 16th November 1968 at Leeds University.



Above: The unrolled poster showing signs of wear and tear but is still in amazing condition. This Saturday show is later than first advertised as the 15 November. (David Watkinson Collection).

It measured 20" x 18" (50 x 45cm) and is in fair condition. Believed to come from a one owner student for the bulk of its life, then passed to a recent dealer, and then for the first time, on the open market after 52 years. Memorabilia for YES from 1968/9 is very scarce indeed. These early years having mostly produced the Marquee Club flyers, the odd handbill, and some financial documents, but a poster with YES featured on it is extremely rare. At the same time in the UK in 2020 a large selection of Jon Anderson personal cassette tape recordings had been found and proposed for sale.

The find included reel to reel unreleased demo tapes, photos and more. Excitingly there was live material, decades of various tapes with YES, A.B.W.H material, and tapes for the planned album called 'Chagall'. A private collection of maybe forty items that had been lost a long time ago, all were returned to Jon Anderson in the USA after much negotiation.

This YES poster then, as with any memorabilia from the bands that went on to global stardom, these early years posters do attract a lot of attention and make high prices. Early memorabilia from the likes of The Pink Floyd at the Marquee, early David Bowie, or anything by Led Zeppelin, reach thousands of pounds yearly. In order of importance in the collector's market, behind the likes of the top tier artists, The Rolling Stones, Beatles, and Queen, YES have always been in the second tier, like Genesis, ELP, and Jethro Tull. Some significant collectables for YES can hold up to the top-notch artists, this being one.

Rarity is the key, and this poster ticked that box fully, understandably condition is important also, but when it comes to items such as this YES poster, which is highly likely the only one of its kind in the world then you know interest in it would be strong whatever condition it was in. Any poster can be restored but it's just being a survivor that makes it highly important. This exciting and previously unknown poster up to that date shows YES as a new band, only 39 gigs – ish old, into a 50+ year career. The poster came to the market with an amazing provenance, proposing to have a full documented path to sale from 1968, now that is rare.



Above: A rare Atlantic promotion photo with the CMA logo being the promotional agency. (Atlantic Records).

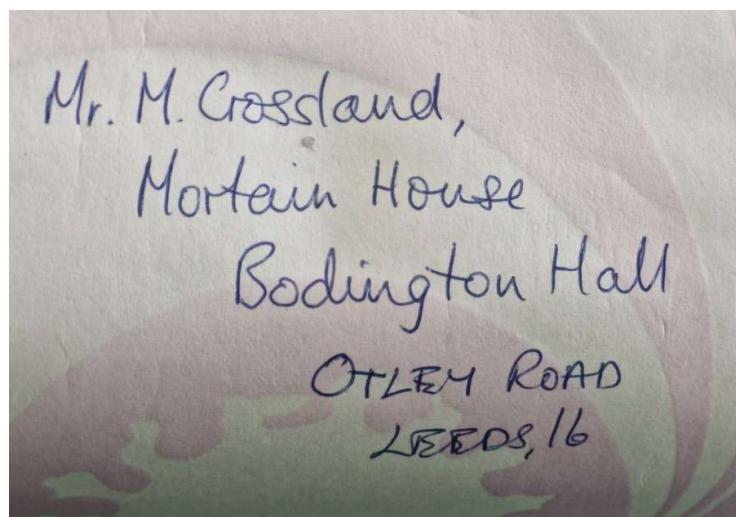
The claim I make in the title is one that can be argued of course, but when you add up the individual points it's hard to come up with alternatives, but I can give you a few to start the discussion with. The Royal Albert Hall Cream show, The Marquee Club first

gig, the 'Sly' no show gig, or maybe the first Essex show in East Mersea. They all have a good case for them I can see that, but let's just see the evidence for this poster first.

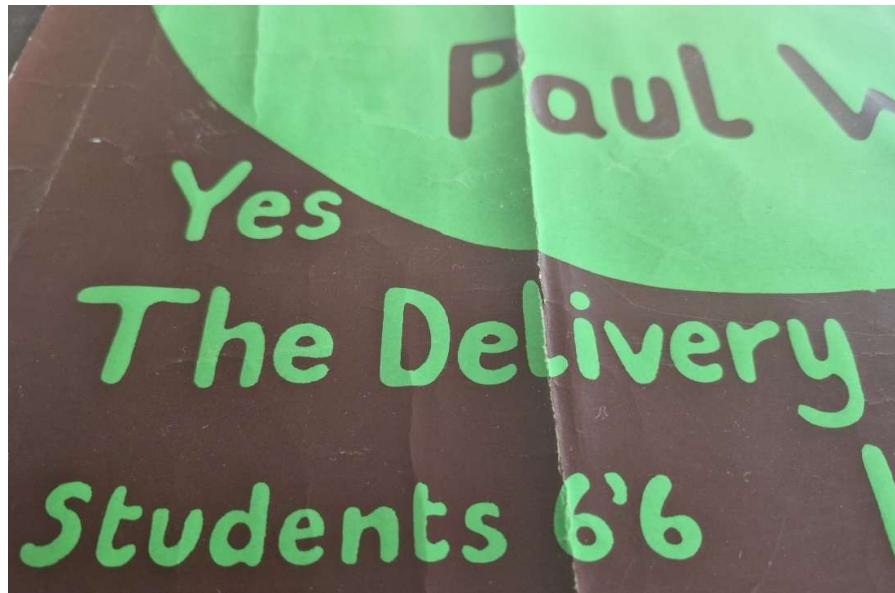
As a collector for many decades it's hard to find a more poignant, historically important poster. The background then, this poster was requested by a first-year undergraduate student fan who lived in the hall of residence in the all-male Boddington Hall (the Bod) student residence of the University of Leeds. Posted out on a Wednesday before the gig from the venue on the 13 November 1968. It's quite incredible that it survived that ordeal never mind still being around over 50 years later. The 1960s Royal Mail postal service in those days had a caring attitude obviously, as the condition was always going to be delicate to send out, but they did, and it wasn't even in a protected poster tube. Extraordinary when you think about it.



Above: Amazing condition postal stamps, and the inked post office stamp from the Leeds postal office. (David Watkinson Collection).



Above: The student fan Mr Crossland, who ordered the poster in 1968! The hall of residence was several miles from the main University site. Opened in 1961 it was the largest campus; it was closed in 2013. (David Watkinson Collection).

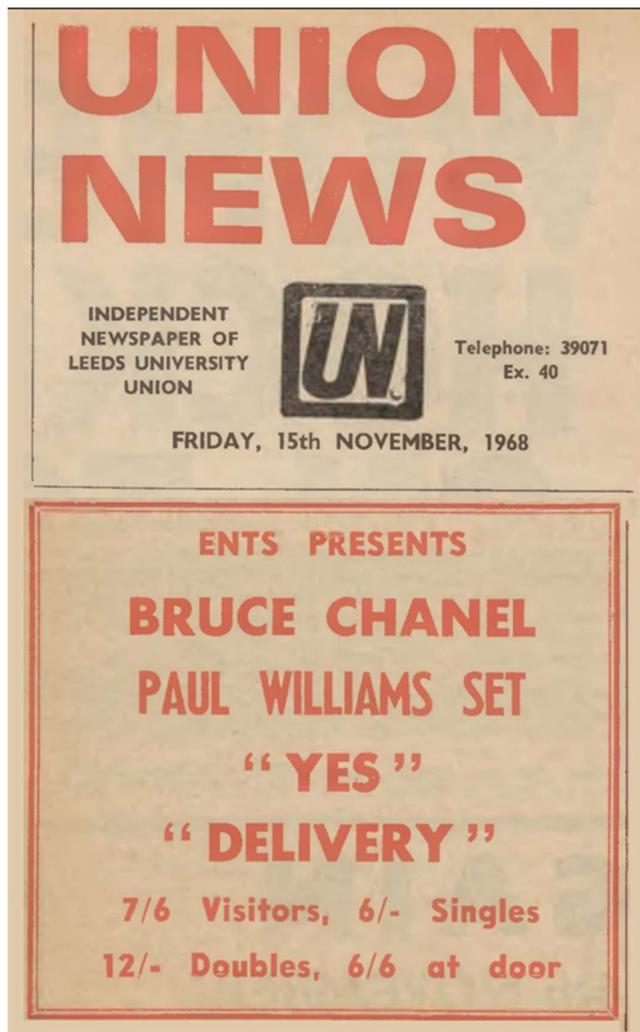


Above: A close-up of the YES name with no exclamation marks or 'THE' added before Yes. (David Watkinson Collection).

The poster which was rated as only fair condition had creases, markings and scuffs, small tears, tape and some pin wholes, so 'fair' was indeed an accurate categorization. The fact that this poster even survived at all is wonderful, luckily it does still present very well by keeping its bold colours and clear to read type face. The bands featured in order of importance are Bruce Channel, who had a USA hit record in June 1968, but didn't like to tour at all, so that was that! Paul William's Set (previously the Alan Price Set) who would go on to play with Zoot Money, John Mayall, and Allan Holdsworth (Tempest), YES' future drummer Alan White played drums also, YES, and lastly the British blues/progressive rock band The Delivery, who went under this name for two years before changing the name to Steve Miller's Delivery. Steve Miller would go on to join Caravan.

An impressive bunch of names you will agree with I am sure, many that would grace the music scene for decades. A busy YES had plenty of gigs around the country and so for a visual link to the UK, and were they played please follow the link...

<http://www.forgotten-yesterdays.com/dates.asp?qbandid=1&qyear=1968&qdateid=660>

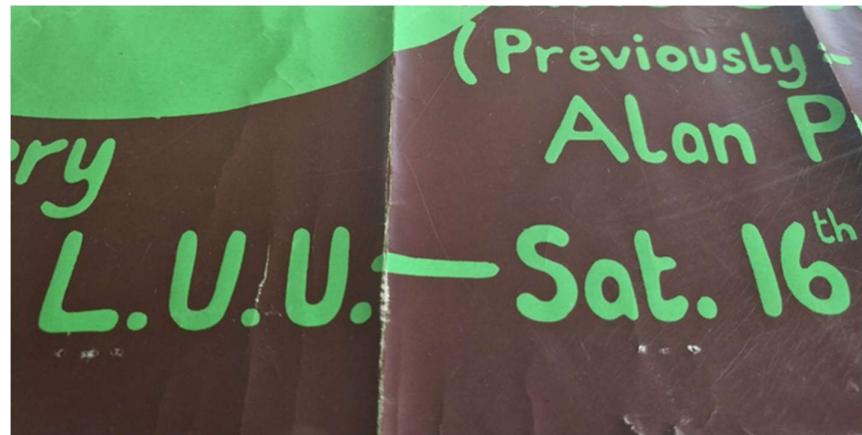


Above: A local Leeds newspaper advert for the evening. (Geoffrey Mason)

We have this poster saying Friday for the show! YES played in London the Friday and we have clarification of such, and so a change in plans and date happened.

<http://www.forgotten-yesterdays.com/dates.asp?qcateogryid=3&qbandid=1&qyear=1968&qdateid=659>

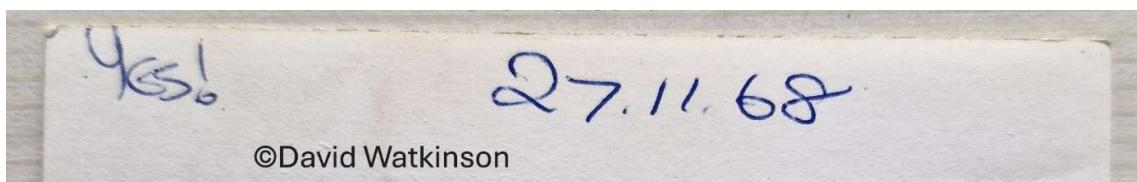
What was utterly surprising with this poster was the personalisation attached to it. The fact that the rolled poster comes with the address of the buyer written in hand, a post office seal stamp showing the 16 November 1968, along with two English stamps attached. I have rarely heard of and only ever seen one other poster for a band documented this way, but it must have been commonplace in the 1960's to post out and so do look out for more.



Above: More close photos of the condition before any restoration or conservation. (David Watkinson Collection).



Above: The earliest known YES band image, edited here and highlighted for detail, it shows YES as they were a day after the Cream show with Bill. (David Watkinson Collection).



Above: The back of the image the handwritten dates and YES! Logo. (David Watkinson Collection). <https://share.google/7cSe5WqdWhc8jiKDr>

In YES' long and distinguished career as THE prominent progressive rock band, I would argue the case as a collector, and say that this is probably the most important YES poster found because:-

- 1, It is the earliest known YES poster to survive, when YES were only three months old, and way down the bill. Handbills survive but not wall posters for a gig showing YES.
- 2, The only poster found that covers the Tony O'Reilly lineup period with YES, the short-lived drummer (ex Koobas, and friends from Jon Anderson's Warriors days). The good-looking Tony who once supported The Beatles on tour, played his small part in keeping YES going.
- 3, It is the evening that Bill Bruford watched YES play a gig as a student fan after leaving YES. He watched along with his friends, and Jon's family too. It became such an important evening, seemingly liked by Jon's brother Tony Anderson, saying he thought they were great, but a troublesome gig by the band as their patience had run out. Bill noticed while in the crowd that the drummer seemed to be a beat behind and not good. YES begged Bill to rejoin them, and fortunately he agreed and re-joined ready for the Cream show shortly after. Can we contemplate an early YES without Bill Bruford? What if he hadn't re-joined?
- 4, Three YES drummers at one show the same evening, Tony, Bill, and Alan! Not something you see everyday and perhaps it was fifty years later that it happened again with Bill, Jay, and Alan.

With a poster that tells of such an important evening, its rarity, and with its unbroken history, along with all the significant pointers, is this the rarest, most important YES poster?

Thanks to Forgotten Yesterdays, Olias, David Watkinson Collection.