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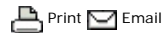
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The Miami Showband were treated like heroes by their army of adoring fans after completing a "milestone performance" in the town where three of their members were massacred by the UVF 33 years ago.

The six-piece showband — whose members come from both sides of the border — had tried to treat the show in Banbridge, Co Down, as just another gig... then realised it was impossible to do so.

The emotions and memories of the three surviving original Miami members were just too strong as they took part in their first gig back in the town since the terror attack on July 31, 1975, when the band made international headlines for all the wrong reasons.

On that night — now remembered as one of the bloodiest of the Troubles — the band had been stopped at a checkpoint after their gig at the Castle Ballroom.



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The gig had gone well, the band had been in great form and the audience had been crying out for more at the end of the show, and their journey home was lighthearted and heady.

However that all changed in an instant when the lads were ordered out of their vehicle while the UVF planted a bomb in their minibus which exploded prematurely, killing two of the terrorists instantly.

The remaining gang members opened fire on the band killing singer Fran O'Toole, guitarist Tony Geraghty, and trumpeter Brian McCoy in a hail of bullets.

Bassist Stephen Travers, singer, sax and keyboard player Des Lee and drummer Ray Millar all survived the attack and they were back in Banbridge on Friday night at the Iveagh Movie Studios with new members Gerry Brown, Johnny Fean and Barry Woods.

Stephen (57) originally from Co Tipperary, but now living in Cork, said after the show: "Returning to Banbridge after what happened to us there was a real milestone performance for us.

"We had tried to pretend it was just like any other gig and was just another venue on the tour but we soon realised that it was quite different. We have done it — now we have turned full circle. It was a very emotional night."

The band were heartened that the reaction from the crowd was so positive throughout the show — which featured a guest appearance from singing star Dana — that every member of the audience was on their feet by the end.

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