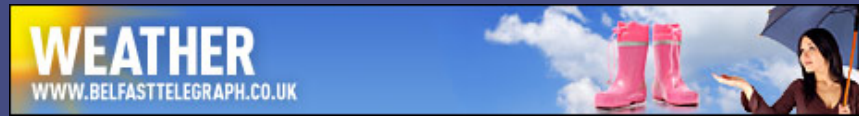




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Miami Showband play in Belfast 33 years after massacre

Thursday, 18 September 2008

The surviving members of the legendary Miami Showband took to the stage for an emotional sell-out concert at Belfast's Grand Opera House last night.

Miami trio, Stephen Travers, Des Lee and Ray Millar were last night joined by Barry Woods, Gerry

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Brown and former
Horslips guitarist
Johnny Fean.



What are these?

The last time the band was seen on stage was in 2005 in Dublin at what was lauded at the time as the greatest showband concert ever staged. That concert was performed to mark the 30th anniversary of the notorious Miami massacre. Last night's performance was the first time the band have performed in Belfast in the 33 years after the terrible July night in 1975 when three members of the group were murdered by the UVF.

Lead singer Fran O'Toole, trumpet player Brian McCoy and guitarist Anthony Geraghty were killed on the main road between Banbridge and Newry after playing at a dance at the Castle Ballroom in Banbridge. Two of the UVF gang, Harris Boyle and Wesley Somerville, were also killed when a bomb they were attempting to load onto the band's van exploded prematurely.

The incident changed the face of the entertainment industry during the Troubles.

Speaking before the Grand Opera House concert, the band's bassist and manager, Steve Travers, said: "This is a special one, the first time the band have played together in the north. The Belfast audience was always massive for us. It's party time."

On stage, the tight suits and flares the band used to sport have given way to smart black suits, but none of the magic was gone, if the delighted crowd was anything to go by.

The early part of the set was filled with singalong classics. Neil Diamond's Sweet Caroline sung by Des Lee got things really swinging.

Eurovision song contest winner Dana joined the Miami to close the first half with a heart-wrenching version of the ballad Love Is. Behind the band a slide show showed images of the band from the sixties and while Dana sang Fran's picture towered over the stage.

Before the intermission Angus McNalee came on stage to play guitar for the Miami's new charity single. The band was also accompanied by the founder of Children in Crossfire Richard Moore.



In front of a giant photograph of Fran O'Toole, one of the original Miami Showband members killed in a UVF loyalist terrorist massacre on 31/7/1975, survivor Stephen Travers took to the stage again as The Miami Showband reformed in Belfast for a sell-out charity concert in aid of the 'Children in Crossfire' charity at the Grand Opera House in Belfast. The two other survivors of the massacre, Des Lee and drummer Ray Millar also joined him on stage as the crowd rolled back the years to the big showband sound the Miami made their own. Throughout the performance, old photographs of the original band and their promotional material were scrolled across a giant screen behind the band

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Remember Me

 So wish I could have been there, I have read the book Steve wrote and have a Miami cd - such great music.

Posted by Anne Fallon | 19.09.08, 21:58 GMT

 I am sitting here with tears in my eyes thinking back to that awful nightThanks for coming back boys

Posted by Siobhan | 18.09.08, 18:25 GMT

 No mention of the fact that two members of the UVF murder gang (Boyle and Somerville) were members of the Her Majesty's Ulster Defense Regiment and were attired as such whilst perpetrating the massacre...

Posted by See no Evil | 18.09.08, 15:11 GMT

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