

[Most Popular](#)[Most Emailed](#)

[Breaking](#)[Sport](#)[Business](#)[World](#)[Gossip](#)



**Irish News**  
*Ulster All-Stars 2008*



Issue Changer:



[NEWS](#) >

## Miami reel in the years for charity

By AP Maginness

15/09/08



**CUT DOWN IN THEIR PRIME:** The original Miami Showband were attacked at the height of their fame. Now concerts

in Dublin and Belfast are to be a celebration of the lives of those who died during the massacre

The Miami Showband takes to the road again this week, more than three decades after being ripped apart by ruthless UVF killers. AP Maginness reports

Even among a catalogue of atrocities during the Troubles, the murder of three members of The Miami Showband in south Armagh in 1975 stands out.

The band, who were at the height of their fame, had been travelling home to Dublin after a gig in Banbridge when they were stopped outside Newry by loyalist paramilitaries posing as a British army checkpoint.

The gang attempted to plant a bomb on the band's minibus but it exploded prematurely, killing Harris Boyle and Wesley Somerville, who were members of the UDR as well as the UVF.

After the explosion, the remaining UVF members mercilessly opened fire on the dazed band members.

Three of the musicians were killed – lead singer Fran O'Toole (29), guitarist Tony Geraghty (23), and trumpeter Brian McCoy (33).

Bassist Stephen Travers was gravely wounded by a dum-dum bullet but survived his injuries.

Thirty years on, surviving band members came together for a concert to remember their friends and interest in their music was revived.

But for Tipperary-man Travers it was a matter of dealing with some unfinished business before he could truly

celebrate the music that he and the band had delighted so many audiences with during the 1960s and 1970s.

“Remembering the lads’ anniversary was a huge success but the elephant in the room was writing the book – I felt that I had to write a book of the event and set the record straight,” he said.

“I still remember the incident quite vividly. It was necessary while writing the book to visit places in my head that I would not normally want to visit and places that I had never visited before.

“You take for granted that the whole country knew what had happened but people move on and the truth becomes distorted and so we were able to put the record straight.

“It was absolutely necessary to do.

“I felt that if people were asking for another concert then I would be able to play.”

He said concerts planned for Vicar Street in Dublin tomorrow and Belfast’s Opera House the following night also needed something extra attached to make them work.

“I needed a motivation and the motivation is Children in Crossfire. We were looking for a charity to donate the proceeds of the Dublin and Belfast concert to, so we asked the promoter David Hull and he suggested that we meet with Richard Moore, the director of Children in Crossfire,” he said.

“I met him and I was very impressed. He invited me to go out to Tanzania and I went out to east Africa in May of this year. It was a life-changing experience.”

Mr Moore was blinded at the age of 10 by a rubber bullet fired into his face at point-blank range in Derry in 1972.

He set up Children in Crossfire in 1996 to try to make a significant and lasting contribution towards the eradication of poverty with the help of the community.

For Travers the spirit of the charity reflects the spirit that the band wanted for their new gigs.

“There are several reasons for doing Dublin and Belfast on two consecutive nights. It is symbolic of reuniting the fan base with the way that things were before certain people drove a wedge between the two communities,” he said.

“It is symbolic also that the music of the Miami has outlasted the sound of the guns that killed three members of the band, with people coming along and remembering the band and having fun and feeling nostalgic. And finally it is also about saving lives because it is for Children in Crossfire.”

There will be a series of guests at both gigs including singer Les McKeown from the Bay City Rollers and former

Eurovision winner Dana, who are both friends of the band.

The concerts are a celebration of the lives of those who died during the massacre and Travers is still wistful about where the the band were before their creative force was ripped apart.

“The Miami had become a modern pop group. Fran O’Toole had become the front man and he had massive talent,” he said.


“He had the image and he was a great keyboard player as well a great singer songwriter. We had the world at our feet and we were about to take on the world and then this thing happened.

“Those early days were great, I mean, we were pop stars – who could ask for anything more than that?”

### Related Stories

- [Miami Showband to play at one-off special concert](#)
- [Miami reel in the years for charity](#)

Bookmark:  Delicious  Digg  reddit  Facebook  StumbleUpon

 Email this story