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That's me in the picture

The Clash

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'It was described as a riot': the Clash at the Rainbow, London, 1977

Eddie Duggan on a legendary punk gig



Eddie Duggan, left, at the Rainbow: 'The look on our faces hardly suggests that it was a riot.'

It was a few weeks after the Clash's debut album had been released. I was 17, and it was the biggest gig on the punk scene at the time.

Those were turbulent times, dominated by unemployment and discontent. A few months earlier, the Sex Pistols had been interviewed on TV by Bill Grundy and caused outrage.

Violence would often erupt at gigs, and there was rivalry between youth factions: punks, teddy boys and skinheads. London could be a dangerous place for a young punk like me.

This gig was described in the press afterwards as a riot, but the look on our faces hardly suggests that. The Rainbow operated as a seated venue, and really the seats should have been taken out for this.

I had started taking pictures at gigs. Behind me in the photograph is my schoolfriend Mick - I would borrow his mac to smuggle my camera in.

This picture brings home how much times have changed. If this gig had been in 2016, someone would have done a risk assessment and the seats would probably have been taken out.

There was a real DIY ethos to punk in the 1970s and, as a teenager, anything seemed possible - despite the recession, the growth of right-wing politics in the form of the National Front, and the high levels of unemployment.

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