

**Basczax** were formed by Mick Todd in 1978 and were based in Teesside UK. Their first gig was at the Middlesbrough Rock Garden supporting the Rezillos and from then they played over 150 gigs around the country including a tour with OMD. Their last gig was at the Nottingham Theatre Royal, with OMD.



In 1979 the band released 2 tracks on Fast Product alongside Joy Division (Karleean Photography & Celluloid Love) and also released a single on Pipeline records - 'Madison Fallout/Auto Mechanik Destruktor'. The band split in 1980. Two of the members, Alan Savage and Jeff Fogarty, formed The Flaming Mussolinis and signed to CBS records in the mid eighties.

Line Up:

- Alan Savage - Vocals - guitar**
- Mick Todd - Bass**
- Jeff Fogarty - Saxophone**
- Alan Cornforth - Drums (ex Blitzkrieg Bop)**
- John Hodgson - Keyboards (ex Blitzkrieg Bop)**

### Mick Todd recalls

September 1976, I had just turned 18, living in Redcar and working at British Steel and by that stage I was a bit of a loner who couldn't be bothered going out too much as any other normal 18yr old would do due to being a bit shy and not much of a mixer. What got me buzzing during the 70's was my love of music and football but of the two music was the big motivation for me. In the early 60's I was a big fan of The Beatles and The Stones but sad to say the first record I bought was in 1968 and it was 'Young Girl' by Gary Puckett and the Union Gap, the song makes me cringe now and even more so in these days of political correctness. In the early 70's I was heavily into Glam rock with Bowie and Roxy Music being my idols, I had every early Bowie and Roxy album and knew every song off by heart.

Things changed drastically in the mid 70's when Bowie became a Young American and Disco began to rule, I was pissed off big style and football didn't help much as England didn't make the 74 and 78 world cup but the Scots did to rub salt in the wounds, thankfully they were shite when they got there.

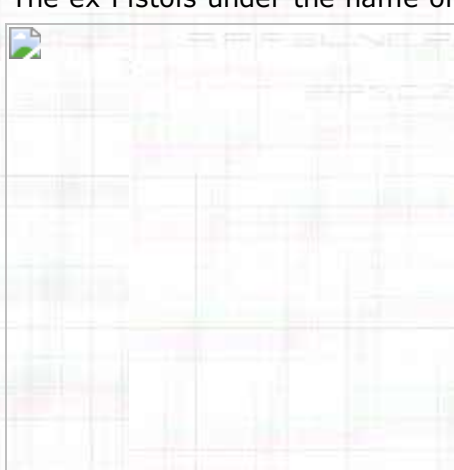
Anyway I remember being really bored one Sunday morning in early 1977 and I was laid on the front room carpet reading the papers when an article in the 'News Of The World' grabbed my attention. It was in the centre pages and it was on about this horrible sordid type of music called Punk Rock and it was championed by groups with offensive names like the Sex Pistols and the Damned who had band members with strange names like Johnny Rotten and Rat Scabies. The movement was based in London but it was spreading like a plague and was going to corrupt youngsters, something had to be done to prevent it. At this stage I was a bit curious but I just went back into my boring cocoon and clocked on at the steel industry to add to the massive pollution that was around Teesside at the time.

One afternoon I was reading the local evening gazette and to be quite honest I only ever really read the sports pages but as I fancied going out maybe to the pictures I had a look inside for the listings and to my amazement there was an article about a punk band called the Clash and they were playing at some place called The Rock Garden in Middlesbrough in a few days time. I fancied going but just to be sure I wanted to hear what they sounded like so I went to WH Smiths in Redcar and bought a copy of the Clash's first album, I was a bit shocked that they even stocked it. On arriving home I put it on the record player and turned it up loud, and the hairs on the back of my neck pricked up as that amazing drum roll from 'Janie Jones' pounded out to be followed by a crescendo of noise, I was hooked and I played the album to death all day much to the disgust of my Mam and Dad but hey, wasn't that part of it all, rebellion, and I was taking the first steps of many to follow in turning my life around and bucking the system.



A couple of days later and I was entering the dark dingy place that was to become my home from home for the next couple of years, The Rock Garden. I nearly turned around and cowered back to Redcar when I spotted my first glimpse of punk rockers. There was only four of them but what an impact they made on me, the two lads were festooned in safety pins and badges while they both were holding dog leads and at the other end of the leads wearing diamond studded dog collars were their girlfriends wearing short skirts and torn stockings, all of them looked pure evil but cool as well, I was gob smacked as I stood there in drainpipe jeans and leather jacket and thinking 'What the Fuck!'. A couple of pints eased my nerves and I eagerly awaited my first punk band who were called 'Subway Sect', they were ok but didn't do much for me, they just stood there and made an inaudible noise, I just hoped that the Clash were not going to disappoint but I needn't have worried, they were fantastic in sound and image and I went home a very happy chappie indeed.

Within weeks this had become the main focus of my life and I quickly came out of my shell and began to make friends with fellow regulars at the Rock garden including the initially much feared punks and I got to see most of the first wave punk bands at that venue, the highlight being The ex Pistols under the name of Acne Rebel as they had been banned from most towns. Sid Vicious and Johnny Rotten just emanated class and it was a pleasure to be so close to them and to hear that they could in fact play their instruments. Another vital aspect of the punk movement was that for the first time you began to realise that you could change things, you could make an impact and I realised that some of the groups that I was watching were from the local area and I began to follow a Middlesbrough band called Blitzkrieg Bop who had members called Blank Frank and Mick Sick. Even though I couldn't play an instrument I wanted to start a band so I bought a homemade bass and amp from Mick Sick and formed a band going away. Within a few weeks I had assembled a band and to the horror of my neighbours began to practice in my dad's garage, as none of us could play a note we stank to high heavens but that didn't stop us. We wrote a whole set of pure garbage and started making tapes of it, I actually dug one out the other day and played it, honestly the drums sounded like someone had threw them down a set of stairs and the sax player sounded like a strangled cat.



I named the band 'Basssax' due to the fact that the two main instruments in the band were bass and sax. I wrote a song called '1999' as I had read about Nostradamus saying the world was going to end then and I was well chuffed with it as it had five chords, verses and a chorus.

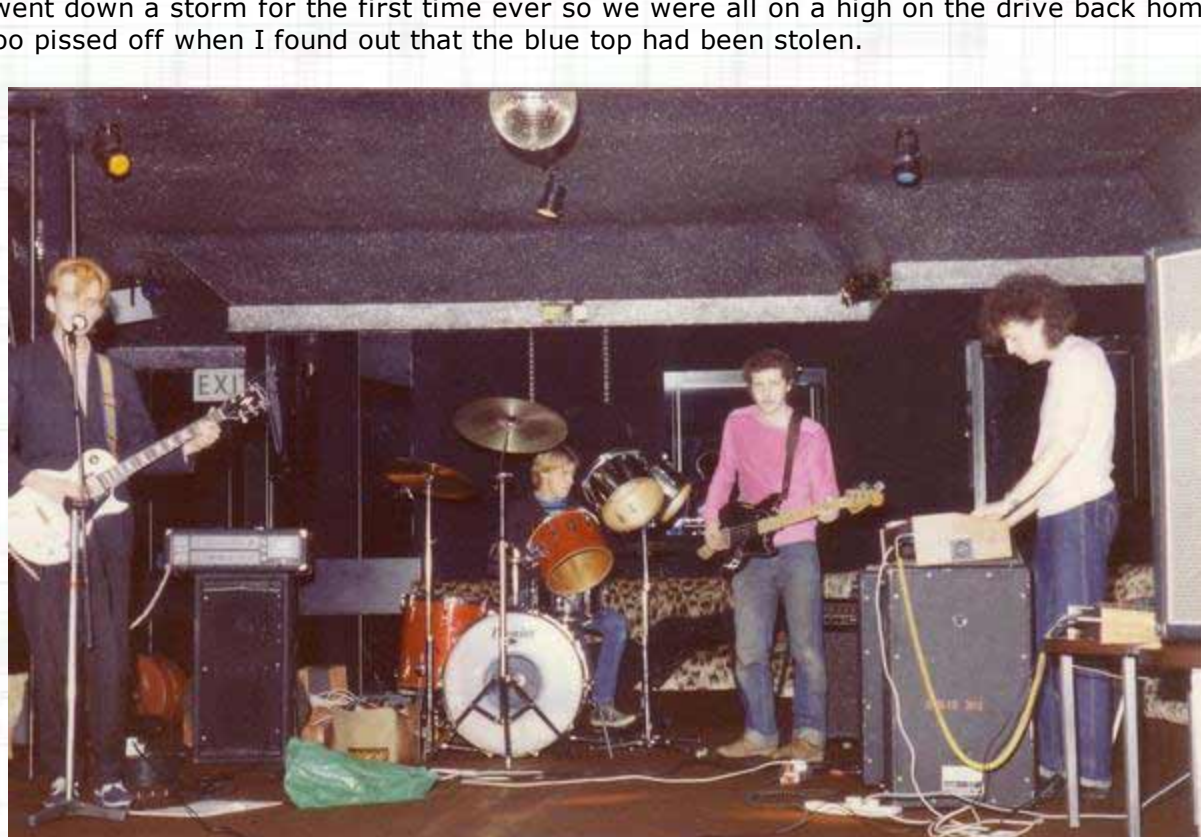
Being daft, young and brave I went to the manager of the Rock Garden and blagged a gig, he gave me one on the spot for next week, could we support 'The Rezillos'? You bet we could. So to disguise the fact that we were crap we put a lot of thought into our image and we went back to my love of Glam and came up with a mix of Bowie and Sparks (Kimono my house album cover) when I got everyone to dress up in kimonos and white face paint and black nail varnish. The gig was a shambles and the punks and skinheads gave us a torrid time but I loved everything about it, what a buzz it was playing live in front of hundreds of people. To my surprise we were invited by Bob Last who managed the Rezillos to play with them at Liverpool Erics the following week and due to a mix up with bands we ended up doing our set after the Rezillos had played which was a bit of a disaster but no doubt Pete Burns will have enjoyed our image eh!

Shortly after this gig I splashed out on a £200 Synth which was a hell of a lot of money in those days and after a weird dream that I had I wrote a song called 'Karleean Photography' which we somehow managed to make a decent recording of. I set about writing some more tracks but I soon realised that most of the band weren't up to speed so I had the awful task of getting rid of some of them. A lad called Jeff Fogerty whom I got to know at the Rock Garden said he'd heard our demo and he wanted in as Sax player, he also knew a singer/guitarist called Alan Savage who joined us and became the main front man of group. With Cog on drums and Nigel Trenchard on keyboards we played a few gigs with this line up, out went the kimonos to be replaced with black suits and white face paint and the fact that we could actually play. During this period we did a 4 track demo which we took to Bob Last in Edinburgh, it took us ages to find out where he lived and apart from Alan and myself the rest of the group drove back to Teesside. We arrived at Bob's flat just after 11pm and he fed us, listened to the demo and let us crash out at his pad which we were totally grateful for. The next morning we hitchhiked back home happy in the knowledge that Bob had agreed to do something with us on his Fast Product label.

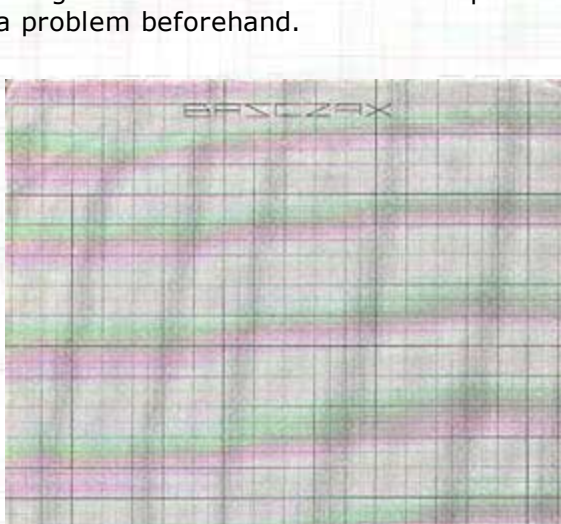
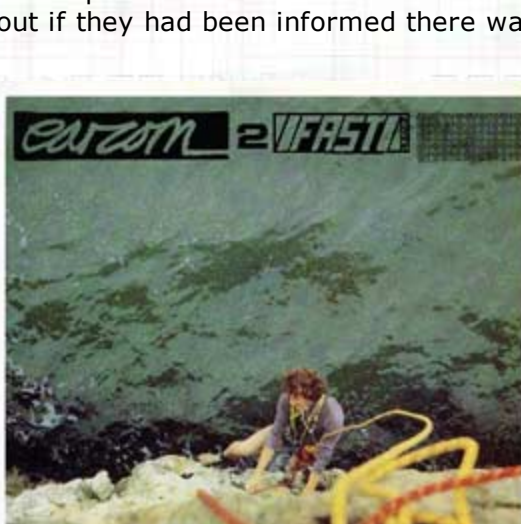
As we in our minds were now potential recording artists we wanted to get even better musically so we did a bit of a dirty on Cog and Nige and replaced them with John Hodgson on Keyboards and Alan Cornforth on drums, 'So what!' you might say but at the time this caused a hell of a stink on the local music scene as John Hodgson was Blank Frank the singer/songwriter of Blitzkrieg Bop and Alan Cornforth was the drummer from the Bop, so in one foul swoop we became a hell of a lot better while we split up the Bop to do it.



We practiced like mad, changed our name to the Russian sounding **Basczax** and played our first gig with this new and stable line up at Cleethorpes Wintergardens supporting the Damned. For this gig I had specially made for £10 a blue feather top by a lad called Bennie; it looked amazing. When we got to Cleethorpes we soon found out that there was a problem, no pa system or back line for the Damned had arrived. So after many phone calls and much begging the local groups chipped in with gear to make sure the gig took place. I bottled out from wearing the blue top but front man Sav was more than willing to do so. We went down a storm for the first time ever so we were all on a high on the drive back home and I wasn't too pissed off when I found out that the blue top had been stolen.



A few weeks later and we played with the Damned again but this time we were on our home patch at the Rock Garden. Walking into the sound check the first person we spotted was Captain Sensible wearing a rather nice blue feathered top, his words to us were 'Fucking Hell!'. Do you lot live round here then? I called him a thieving bastard but after he bought us a few drinks to say sorry we let him keep the top which became an iconic piece of clothing for him in the years ahead. Again at this gig no PA or back line turned up so the Damned ended up thrashing the locals gear again, now that is what you call tapping on the cheap but not damned within the ethics of the blossoming DIY culture who would have quite happily sorted gear out if they had been informed there was a problem beforehand.



We recorded two tracks for Fast Products at Rochdale's Cargo studios, the tracks being 'Celluloid Love' and 'Karleean Photography' and these two tracks ended up being on Earcom 2 alongside 2 tracks from Joy Division and Thursday and as some of you know this sold very well and is a collectors piece today. We then played tons of gigs including a tour with OMD and released a self financed single 'Madison Fallout' which sold out of the two pressings we did, 2,000 copies in total. The band signed to CBS records in 1985 but had to change their names to The Flaming Mussolinis.

Mick Todd -June 2008

### Links

[www.myspace.com/basczax](http://www.myspace.com/basczax) | <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basczax> | <http://www.blitzkriegbop.info/basczax/gallery/index.htm>