

British Columbia

How 3 teenage girls opened for The Clash 40 years ago

'The Clash were actually standing by the side of the stage, dancing'

[Dominika Lirette](#) · CBC News · Posted: Feb 03, 2019 1:00 PM EST | Last Updated: February 3, 2019



The Dishrags opened for The Clash three times, as well as for The Ramones. (Don Denton)

It's been 40 years since female punk rock band, The Dishrags, scored a gig opening for The Clash at The Commodore Ballroom in Vancouver.

In 1979, bandmates Jill Bain, Chris Lalonde and Carmen Michaud were 17 years old when they performed at The Clash's North American debut.

"It was a really thrilling moment because we were huge Clash fans," said lead singer Bain, also known as Jade Blade.

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The Vancouver-based band played a cover of The Clash's *London's Burning* as their encore.

"I think the biggest thrill was that when we were playing the song, The Clash were actually standing by the side of the stage, dancing. I mean, that was just the most awesome thing to see them there," Bain told [Early Edition](#) host Stephen Quinn.

Getting the gig

Bain and her bandmates were pretty new to the music scene, having dropped out of high school in Central Saanich only two years earlier to pursue their punk music dreams in Vancouver.

She thinks it was The Clash's manager, Caroline Coon, who had the idea to hire the girls.

"[She] had her own mandate to hire female bands to open for The Clash," said Bain.

"Every chance they got they would hire female bands, which was awesome because punk was a bit of an opening for women to enter into the scene."



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The Dishrags continued to get gigs and played together until 1980, and then the band members began to play with parody bands for a while.

Bain said at that point the punk scene had shifted and it didn't have the same familial quality as when they entered, but the women kept collaborating with other groups, like Corsage, into the 1980s.

Today, Bain is an art history teacher at the University of the Fraser Valley, Lalonde lives in Nanaimo and is a transit bus driver and Michaud lives on Salt Spring Island.

Novelty

In 1979, The Dishrags stood out for being an all-female punk band.

"It was pretty new and I think that for us was an advantage in that we got on a lot of bills, because we were a bit of a novelty act," said Bain.

"It was also really difficult though, because we weren't taken that seriously because we were considered a novelty."



Jill Bain, also known as Jade Blade, stopped by The Early Edition to share her experience. (CBC)

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Hanging with the band

Bain remembers the British punk rockers were excited to explore Vancouver because it was their first North American tour.

"[The Clash] actually came down to The Windmill on Granville Street, which was a little hole-in-the-wall punk club, and they hung out there," she said.

"We got to hang out with them before the show too, which was really nerve-wracking because [we were] three 17-year-old girls, and these guys were our idols."

She recalls being wowed by a buffet dinner they were served, but being too nervous to eat.

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"[We were] pushing the food around on our plates while trying to make conversation with these guys."

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After that night, The Dishrags went on to open two more times for The Clash, as well as The Ramones.

The last time they opened for The Clash was in 1984, as backup singers with the band Corsage at the Pacific Coliseum in Vancouver.

"It was actually their last North American show, so we got to kind of bookend ... first show and last show."

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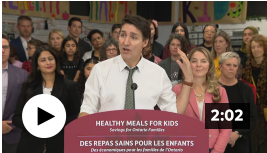
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