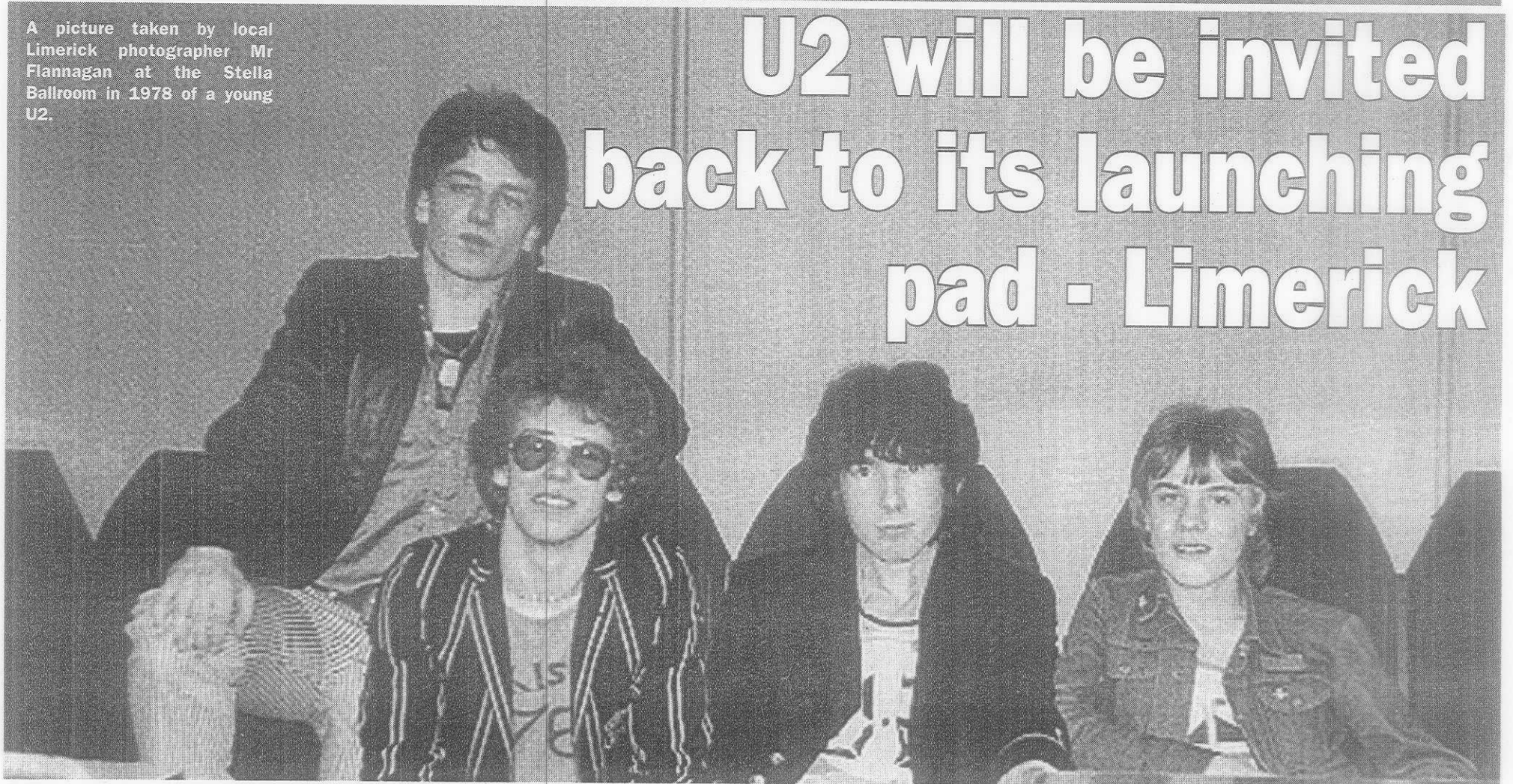


A picture taken by local Limerick photographer Mr Flannagan at the Stella Ballroom in 1978 of a young U2.



# U2 will be invited back to its launching pad - Limerick

**U2 was born in the Stella in Limerick that night when it performed under its new name for the first time in public and won the Limerick Civic Week "Pop 78" Band Competition, and went on to become an Irish phenomenon and the world's most successful band.**

## Marie Hobbins looks back on an historic night at the Stella Ballroom

PERHAPS you were one of the audience on that fateful night, 34 years ago, when a group of young Dublin musicians were victorious in a pop competition held in the Stella Ballroom, Shannon Street, Limerick.

That event, which netted the band a modest cash first prize and the opportunity to record a demo title, springboarded U2 on to the international stage, which they continue to dominate.

On behalf of Limerick Civic Trust, which last year erected a plaque on the Stella Ballroom commemorating its association with "Becoming U2," the Limerick Post is interested in triggering memories that many may

have of the night.

Whether you were actually fortunate enough to have been in the audience, or were working in any capacity in the Stella Ballroom on the night, or maybe that was the night when you were proposed to, or had your first baby or were just strolling past the Stella when you got caught up in the razzmatazz of the crowd going in or coming out - if you have a special memory of that night, whether you were at the gig or not, why not share it with us.

Anyone who was working at the railway station or in Cruises Hotel; or was driving a taxi that night and who may have memories of the first visit by U2 to Limerick - we would love to hear from you.

LIMERICK city was the catalyst that inspired a band to change its name from The Hype to U2.

When on a Saturday night of March 18, 1978, the group of teenage Dublin musicians, jumped on stage in the Stella Ballroom, not just Irish but international musical history was being made.

What Adam Clayton described as "the exact point of becoming U2" occurred in Limerick on March 18, 1978 when Limerick Civic Week held a pop band competition for the very first time, receiving 35 entries from all over Ireland, competing for the "Pop '78 Trophy, a cash prize of £500 and an opportunity from CBS to record a demo title.

The venue was the well known Stella Ballroom on Shannon Street and the judges were Billy Wall, RTE, Jackie Hayden, CBS Records, Paul O'Brien, President, Junior Chamber Limerick and the disc jockey, Mike "Rave" McNamara.

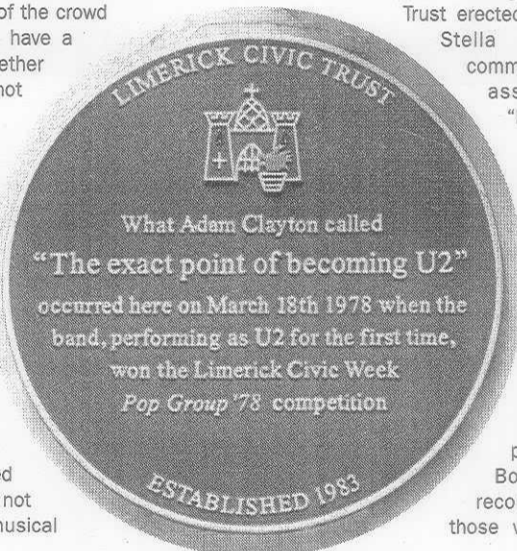
Recalling what was to be their life-changing night, The Edge says:

"Sometimes something goes off in the room. I could tell by everyone's face in the hall that we'd really connected," but according to Bono, while "the bands there could play in time and in tune with great confidence, all of which we couldn't pull off - you know, some bands have everything but it.

"We had nothing but it."  
U2 was born in the Stella in Limerick that night when it performed under its new name for the first time in public and won the Limerick Civic Week "Pop

78" Band Competition and went on to become an Irish phenomenon and the world's most successful band..

Last year, in recognition of the opportunity, that thanks to Limerick Civic Week, springboarded U2 into the global spotlight, Limerick Civic Trust erected a plaque on the Stella Ballroom in commemoration of its association with "becoming U2".



The event was attended by Bono's brother, Norman Heuston..

Commenting to the Limerick Post, James Ring, director of Limerick Civic Trust said the Trust will be producing a Memory Book of the recollections of all those who met with U2

during their historic first visit to Limerick.

The Civic Trust has already gathered a number of published memories of the fateful day from many of the key participants, such as competition judges Paul O'Brien and Jackie Hayden, the Bird family who were owners of the Stella and master of ceremonies, Michael McNamara.

"Together with the recollections which it now hopes to obtain from the general public, the Memory Book will be produced by the Civic Trust and presented to U2 along with an invitation for a return visit to Limerick".

In the book, U2 by U2, Adam, recalling the concert in Limerick, says it was held "in a big room with a big stage with PA and lights and all these various seasoned showband musicians doing their stuff," and we learn from Larry that "it was an early show, starting at six o'clock in the evening - the place was jammed and we watched our competition, not feeling confident". Still too young to get served in pubs, the boys watched "some kind of parade the next morning. "We watched from the balcony of the hotel (The George). We had to spend the day in Limerick because of the train schedules and spent the afternoon killing time at a local fairground.

"We had no idea how winning in Limerick would change our lives".

