

PZ77 – A Town, a Time, a Tribe

Compiled and narrated by Simon Parker
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Before beginning I confess that the world described in ‘PZ77 – A Town, a Time, Tribe’ is one which I was part of. I saw the Pistols play the Wints (though I was Brainiac singing in the London Inn, Redruth on the night The Ramones appeared – 2nd June 1977).

Simon Parker is a Newlyn punk. He has spent forty years (or so) honing his journalistic craft at the Western Morning News (editor of the late-lamented Living Cornwall). He is a social reformer, a writer, editor and publisher. He was the singer in a band, and he saw The Ramones at the Wints.

PZ77 is a wonderful collection of essays, e-mails, memories, philosophies, regrets, memorials, celebrations and a great piece of historical journalism. In its way it is a great contribution to our understanding of our time, as is Barclay Fox’s Journal or Carew’s Survey. It reminds me of Ronald Blythe’s ‘Akenfield’ and all those compendious encyclopedias of gritty American life and people collected by Studs Terkel.

Here is a tribe of friendships, forged in an era before computers and social media, before the cults of cynicism and ruthless individualism, when stars and punters shared common ground, when society was failing whilst people were exploring, growing, loving, caring and making music – always the music! Simon Parker has inspired a collective trawl of memories and has done an inspired job of editing all the bits into a coherent, entertaining, provocative and celebratory shout for Cornwall, for youth, for making the life you live, for Penzance, for art and, most of all for the comradely friendships forged through music – thank God for punk!

There is some great writing in PZ77, some heartfelt splashes of confession, many tributes and some tragic moments – much of the setting lies between Judi Peate’s Millhouse Café, John Adams’s ‘Wints’ (Winter Gardens) and Phil King’s ‘Gulval Mead’. There is wit and humour – ‘a tractor driver on the farm told me that his two favourite bands were the Sex Pistols and The Wurzels’. Even today, wherever they are, all of the tribe feel deeply part of Cornwall – not a badge to wear, but a sinew of belonging by which they define themselves and which opens inner doors to truths that, from time to time, need to be refreshed and experienced – and that is unique to PZ77 and also universal. I may have been there, but reading this, I feel that I’ve found out for the first time where I was – and it still is a good place.

Bert Biscoe

Truro –

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