ALAN McGEE

CREATION STORIES

RIOTS, RAVES AND RUNNING A LABEL

PAN BOOKS

PROLOGUE

When you're a drug addict there's no such thing as jet lag. For years I'd fly two or three times a month between London and Los Angeles. The party in London would end when I dragged myself away from Noel or Liam, Bobby or Throb, and poured myself into a taxi to Heathrow. Neck some Valium on the plane, get an hour or two's sleep, then back into the action. You get off the plane, get drugs, get pissed and the same party continues. And it is the same party. They've all blurred into one.

That night in 1994 I was out with Primal Scream, who were rehearsing in a room in Waterloo. I think Oasis had left town the night before. This was before their first album was out, and they had a ferocious appetite for the rock and roll lifestyle they knew was theirs now for the taking. Every time they arrived in London it was the start of a two-day bender. I had the flu that night – I should have been in bed. But I was taking coke with Throb Young. He racks out lines as long as your arm. Almost as thick, too. Just before my taxi arrived, I made the mistake of doing one.

I was taking my sister Susan with me on this trip. I was going to show her a good time in Los Angeles, introduce her

to my cool friends out there. It was going to be great fun. Creation Records was the most hedonistic good times rock and roll label in the world, and it was modelled in my own image.

In the taxi to Heathrow I began to feel unusual. I checked my pockets, looking for a Valium or a Temazepam. Shit, I'd run out. I took a deep breath. It didn't matter. I'd done this trip a hundred times before. Another deep breath. It would be fine.

It was the last time I would leave Britain for three years. It was the moment that everything changed.

1: GLASGOW

My father hasn't gone out of his way to help me much in life but he did give me one useful piece of advice when I was young: If someone tells you they're going to hit you, they're probably not going to. Don't worry about the ones who threaten you. It's probably all they'll do.

He was right about that. Even in Glasgow, in the violent 1970s, the mouthy dudes weren't the problem. It wouldn't be long before I'd become one of them myself. And that advice would stick in my mind years later when I was negotiating with the most powerful people in the music industry, people who were telling me they were going to take away everything I'd built up.

My father didn't give warnings. He gave me something else. From the day I left Glasgow I've never been scared of anyone, because I know what being scared really feels like.

I was born on 29 September 1960 in Redlands hospital, in the West End Road area of Glasgow. My father John McGee married my mother Barbara Barr in 1953. He was twenty years old; she was nineteen. They met when my mum was doing the books for the car mechanics where my dad worked as a panel-beater.

Both my parents were from working-class families. My grandpa on my mother's side, Jimmy Barr, worked in the shipyards in Govan, on the Clyde. I never met him; he died in 1953 from a heart attack. Members of my family tend to check out when they're in their fifties. A bit worrying for the fifty-two-year-old writing this book. But that's Scotland, the diet, the weather, the booze – I've put all that behind me. Grandpa Barr was, by all accounts, an abusive alcoholic. My mum says he made her and Gran Barr's lives a misery. From where I was standing, that was all too easy to believe. I've never met a more miserable woman than Gran Barr, and no wonder that after growing up with her my mother wasn't too happy herself. Gran Barr had been raised in one of the now notorious Quarrier's homes for orphans, founded in the nineteenth century by a Glaswegian shoemaker, William Quarrier. They were a byword for abuse. Her mother had died young of illness and then her father had been killed in the First World War. Gran Barr and her brother were sent to the Quarrier's home then. I didn't know much about this when I was a child and only found out about this later, when my father saw me putting money into an envelope to give to Quarrier's. '*Never* let your gran see that,' he told me. I never found out exactly what had happened to my gran in those homes. There was physical abuse; *that* I'm sure of. Gran Barr could be a vicious piece of work, but with a beginning like that, she probably didn't have much choice.

I never knew my dad's dad either. He was in the car trade, like my father, and died in his fifties before I was born. We

didn't see much of Gran Gee, as we called her. She was slightly demonized at home, for reasons kept from me, and didn't have much of a relationship with my dad. She died when I was fourteen. My dad had one brother, who passed away not too long ago. He'd been shot in the head in Cyprus during the Second World War. It didn't seem to hold him back much.

My father was a seriously handsome man, with dark Cary Grant hair and piercing blue eyes. As a wee child he was my hero. He was strong from his work as a panel-beater. In fact one of my earliest memories is of him lifting me out of bed and carrying me downstairs when the roof of our house caught fire because of some dodgy wiring in the attic. The firemen arrived and saved the day; the house survived. As I grew up, I saw less and less of him. He was always at work. There was his day job at Wiley's, then he'd come home, have a quick tea, then be off to do a 'homer' – a cash job to sneak past the tax man – or to go to the Masons.

It was sometimes hard to keep track of what my mum looked like. She changed regularly, her hair a different cut or colour from one month to the next. She kept herself well turned out and was very thin. She was a looker herself, but probably not in the same league as my dad, and it wound her up to see the attention he enjoyed from other women. She smoked constantly, especially when one of her moods came on.

And they came on a lot more when Gran Barr moved into the house. This was just after we moved from Govan Hill in Paisley to 36 Carmunnock Road in Mount Florida in 1963, just around the corner from Hampden Park, the national

football ground. Gran Barr had been burgled and was too scared now to stay in her house. With no brothers or sisters, my mum was the only one who could help, and so Gran came to live with us. The mood at home went rapidly downhill. I can imagine what a prison sentence it was to my parents, and how much they must have resented the sacrifice they had to make. That was when I was three years old, so Gran pretty much set the domestic tone for my whole childhood. I would live in this house till I was sixteen, when my dad made it impossible to stay there any longer. (We'll come to that later.)

My mum worked hard to make money as well as my dad. She worked wherever she could, in a sports shop as well as doing the books in the mechanics; she was a jack of all trades. She was the clever one in the relationship, but it wasn't in the days when it was possible for women to break through to a position of power. Not working-class women from Glasgow, anyway. I wish she'd been born twenty years later when she would have stood a chance to use her intelligence. She'd have found life much less frustrating. She argued all the time with my dad – she knew exactly how to wind him up.

Nevertheless, until I went to secondary school, I had quite a happy childhood.

I went to Mount Florida primary school 200 yards up the road. School was fun. My sister Laura had been born in 1963; too early for me to remember. To begin with she looked up to me, though our relationship soon became more competitive. I must still have been cute enough then not to annoy my parents, small enough for it to seem unreasonable for them

to give me a belt. I loved football and we lived five minutes' walk away from Hampden Park. Dad would take me there as a treat to watch Queen's Park or an international against England. Those England games were the most exciting things on earth. They were just mental: 150,000 people standing, singing and swaying twenty yards to one side, twenty yards to the other – the Hampden sway. It was seriously dangerous, exhilarating. My dad would have to hold on to me to stop me from getting trampled to death. He hated it. Later, I supported Rangers, which was further away – thirty minutes to the west, just south of the shipyards where my grandfather had worked. I went on my own from the age of eleven, and saw them every second Saturday.

You can't get away from sectarianism in Glasgow. I knew as a Rangers fan I was supposed to hate Celtic fans, just because they were Catholic. But I had a lot of friends who were Catholic – it never mattered for a second to me. I don't even believe in Christianity, let alone the Catholic or Protestant creed.

But having said all that, there was something about the tribalism of the rivalry that made for an unbeatable atmosphere. They were great matches. The roar in the stadium was ferocious. The Rangers fans would be busy beating each other up, never mind the Celtic fans. But I was used to it; it never felt scary to me.

It was Gran Barr who gave me my first taste of violence in the house. She'd whack with a slipper to start with, moving

up to her heels. They were big heavy things, and it gave my mum the idea too, so she started joining in.

The violence increased steadily from the time I was about nine. This was when my younger sister Susan was born. There just wasn't enough love in the house for it to be shared between three kids, and Laura and I were no longer a priority. Tempers frayed. There were a lot of us in the house now and we were on top of each other a lot of the time. My mum *was* a loving woman, but a frustrated woman. A busy woman too: she worked hard and as the woman in the house probably thought she needed to prioritize looking after the girls.

Gran Barr could take her shoe off in a split second and then I'd be on the floor, holding the lump that was growing on my head. She was a big woman. She had a strong swing for an old lady. You never knew what to expect from her. She was on all kinds of prescriptions and swallowed pills by the handful. Thyroid pills for certain but all kinds of others too – I didn't know what they did. My dad used to say if you shook her, she'd rattle. He did his best to keep away from her, and I suspect she was the reason he did so many 'homers' and became such an active Mason.

I assumed this was what life was like for everyone and I suspect for many people it was. Glasgow was a dismal place, an angry place. No one had any money where I was from and when people drank they took their frustrations out on whatever was nearest to them. And the older I got the more often that was me.

*

There was no choice about where you went after primary school, like there seems to be these days. King's Park Secondary it was, and that's where I met the boys who became the first incarnation of Primal Scream: Bobby Gillespie, Robert Young and Jim Beattie. I was a year above Gillespie who lived just round the corner from me. We're only nine months apart but he has definitely done a deal with the devil at some point; he looks twenty years younger than me, despite having caned it for years after I'd calmed down. Well, we've all done our deals with the devil, some more successfully than others. In the end, I didn't do too badly myself.

Bobby Gillespie is my oldest and best friend. We've known each other now for forty-one years. It's been an intense relationship. For some of those years we haven't been able to talk to each other at all, though in the end we always come back to each other. Certainly then, I couldn't have guessed he'd become the hippest rock star of his generation. He was just a normal lad, one of the pack, liked to blend in. Ran around the yard chasing a football, just like all of us.

There was something in the air in Mount Florida. As soon as we went up to secondary school the violence showed itself. I saw things no child should have seen. One day an older kid brought a hatchet in and buried it in someone's back in the playground. We presumed this was normal. The area wasn't terrible, not for Glasgow. But there were still knife fights in the playground and the occasional hatchet job.

I wasn't violent in those days at all. Robert Young from

Primal Scream, a few years younger, he liked a fight. He was small but really bolshie. We called him Throb later on. He was the heart-throb of the band. Even then, he may have got his confidence from his physical attributes. As Alex Ferguson said of Dion Dublin, you should see him in the showers, it's magnificent. Bobby was no fighter either, though he hung with guys who were. I'd only ever fight if I was forced into a corner. I wasn't soft – you had to be able to take a punch in my house, and I'd happily batter someone if they were going to insist. But fighting was not my bag: I was into Bowie.

I was becoming quite a music obsessive. I saw music as my salvation, it was that important to me. And straight away music and money were connected for me. I needed money to buy records, to take myself off to concerts, to keep some independence from my family. I started earning my own when I was eleven years old, shortly after starting secondary school. My pals were getting 50p pocket money a week so I asked my parents if I could have some too. I should have known the answer: there was no way they'd give me that. Well, they didn't *have* it to give me, they really didn't, they needed it all to feed us and pay the bills. I'll give credit to my dad in that respect: he didn't earn much and he had to work hard to get it but he brought home the money to raise three children. There was nothing left afterwards.

He was never going to give me pocket money, that was for certain. So I got a job with the *South Side News*, selling newspapers for 10p a copy on the streets. I got to keep 4p for every one I sold. That was okay, for a week, then I

realized if I turned up at five in the morning rather than six, the papers had been delivered and there was no one else around. So, with an hour's less sleep, I could just help myself to them for free. I'd take 200 copies, sell the lot and make £20 in a week. Twenty quid was a fortune in those days, and not just for a wee lad.

This is when it all started. The love of having money in my pocket. The thrill of making it. There was no time to sleep if you wanted to get rich.

The music that my parents played in the house was nearly all terrible. It has always amazed me that so many people of their generation went through the 1960s, young enough to get what was happening around them, but they chose to stay at home and listen to Tony Christie. That's one of my few memories of my mum and dad being happy together, having a drink on a Saturday night, playing 'Knock Three Times' and banging the floor instead of the ceiling when Tony asked if they wanted him. The answer is *no*, I don't. I couldn't understand how they could like this stuff when they were living in the middle of a musical revolution. Of course, if they'd been hip, it may have thrown me a different way, so I shouldn't complain. They tolerated the Beatles, because the London Symphony Orchestra had done a version of their songs. And actually, they loved Simon and Garfunkel, were always playing 'Bridge Over Troubled Water' and that wasn't so bad. But other than that, I got into music by myself. I spent my money in the record shop at Battlefield. It was one of those shops that sold everything, TVs,

stereos, but they had all the new records too. I'd be in there every week. Singles were only 50p, albums a few quid, but I only ever bought singles to start with. I'd go the library too and take out records then tape them at home. I got into the Beatles this way, taped both the red and blue singles compilations.

Glam rock was the first music that really got me going. This was 1971. I loved 'Get It On' by T. Rex. Then Slade, 'Coz I Luv You'. I bought both singles and played them all the time. My dad was very protective of his stereo so I bought myself a little Dansette mono record player with built-in speakers and this lasted me till I was sixteen. I'd never bought an album before I heard David Bowie. I thought albums were for grown-ups. After finding out about Bowie though, I went out and bought *Ziggy Stardust*. I still think it's one of the best ten albums ever made. I must have listened to it about two thousand times and I think this is when my dad decided there was something wrong with me. My room was covered in posters of him and he was all I talked about. He thought I was *in love* with Bowie. He was right. I *was* in love with him. I was obsessed.

I started going to rock concerts when I was about fourteen. I'd go to anything that was on at the Apollo. So I saw gigs by Queen, Santana, The Who, Alex Harvey, Lynyrd Skynyrd. I'd get crazily excited when the roadies just brought the amps on stage, there cheering them on at the front. So I'd been to loads of gigs on my own before I took Gillespie to his first ever gig. It was music that would make me and Bobby so close. I was fifteen, he was fourteen. He knocked on the door. 'Would you take me to Thin Lizzy?'

Would *you* take me to Thin Lizzy? I didn't really get it. I was thinking, Why don't you just go on your fucking own? I'd been going to gigs on my own for ages. It was one of the advantages of having parents who didn't care about me. They didn't give a fuck if I was in at midnight or seven o'clock. No one would tell me off on that level. They cared about what the girls were up to – they didn't want them getting reputations that would reflect badly on them – but they couldn't give two shits what I was doing. As long as the police weren't coming to the door – and they never did. I'd go and see the glam bands, on my own or with my mate Colin. I wasn't scared, but looking back, they were more dangerous than today's gigs. There was a header called General Jed who would just walk up to people and smack them in the face. You assumed it was normal and moved out of the way if you saw him coming.

I was doing other jobs by then. One was putting the jam into doughnuts in a bakery. It seemed to me then that Glaswegians ate a lot of doughnuts. Then on Saturdays I'd go round the houses, offering the leftovers from the bakers for sale. Anything left after that, I'd take home to my family.

By the time I was fourteen, I'd pretty much given up on school. I wasn't getting educated, unless a survival course in not getting your head kicked in counts for education. It was like that for most boys where I was from. Girls could show a bit more interest in learning than we were allowed to. If you were a boy and you showed interest, you were a swot and you were likely to get a kicking in the playground. If

you were lucky. You never knew what people were carrying around.

I thought teachers were wankers then. I hated the place and so anyone involved with it was automatically a wanker to me. I learned how to add up, but after that, I can't think of anything I was taught that I've found useful. I thought it was all rubbish. I was always dobbing school, playing Bowie and Led Zeppelin records round my (appropriately named) pal Dobbins's house. In those days no one cared much about where we were. The fewer people in a class, the fewer to create problems. School didn't give a fuck. My parents kidded on they cared but I don't think they really gave a fuck either. They didn't see much hope for me and formal education. They didn't seem to see much hope for me at all.

As I got older at secondary school I'd become more and more lonely, more depressed. Home was miserable. I'd become too old to get hit by my mum or Gran Barr. I wouldn't stand for it. But the violence from my dad had started, and it was much worse. My mum and gran had always been in control of themselves, and not that much stronger than me. My dad was a strong man, and he'd completely lose it.

Laura watched Dad punch and kick me on the stairs one day. I had to go to hospital and have stitches in my head. I can show you the scar today. 'Don't tell anyone how this happened,' he told me before we went into hospital.

There's a part of me that doesn't want to make too much of this. One of the ways to cope is by making light of it. It was only what was going on around the country at the time,

whether it was mates round the corner or Noel Gallagher in Burnage. It was a violent time – a drunken man's world – people were more accepting of knocking your kids about than they are now. There's been some progress, I guess.

But there's another part of me who knows what the violence did to me. I'm not talking physically, though when other people's dads hit them, they weren't ending up in hospital as far as I know. I'm talking more about the feeling I had of complete powerlessness and worthlessness. Wanting to run but having nowhere to go. It was a feeling I always had inside me but I could never explain what it was. It controlled me and I was running away from it as fast as I could, without understanding what it was, this feeling that made me so argumentative, hedonistic, self-destructive, provocative, and sometimes really nasty.

I was diagnosed as being clinically depressed when I was thirty-five, but I think then, at fifteen, was the first time I suffered majorly from it. It was the 1970s. I was in Glasgow. Of course it was undiagnosed. You'd never heard of depression at that time. But I knew that even in Glasgow it wasn't normal that I didn't leave the house once for the entire summer. It wasn't until I was thirty-five that I realized I had been clinically depressed for twenty years. No medication – except I supplied *a lot* of my own. I think it was the fact that I never confronted my depression which made me violent, argumentative, competitive to the point of being mental – probably all the reasons I made it in the music business.

My dad fucked me up you see, but you could say in quite a brilliant way – it formed my personality and led to the

success I had. In the end, there's not much you can be scared of that's worse than your own father trying to really hurt you.

Punk changed everything when I was sixteen. It was a wake-up call. I remember when I first heard 'God Save the Queen', sitting my O-levels, still living with my parents. It was the end of probably the most depressing period of my life. The music was life-changing for me. I rushed out to buy 'God Save the Queen' by the Sex Pistols, 'Go Buddy Go' by the Stranglers and 'Sheena Is a Punk Rocker' by the Ramones, all on the same day. I was like, *fuck, I'm in to this*.

My first punk gig was the Ramones supported by the Rezillos. The Rezillos were amazing. I went with a girl I had a crush on. My mum's pal's daughter Caroline. I was too innocent then to even think about trying it on. I had only just left school.

The first thing for me with punk wasn't the politics or even the attitude, though there was a lot about the attitude that appealed to my hatred of bogus authority at home and at school. But first of all it was about the simplicity of the music, the way a few chords could sound so good, the way a singer with swagger could make music as good as a technically brilliant vocalist. It made me think that here was something *I* could do. Maybe *I* can be in a band. Before that, there wasn't one thing I wanted I believed I could get, you see. I wasn't thinking about running a record company or making lots of money or anything like that. But when I heard those songs I thought, I can do this, I could play guitar in a band

like this. And maybe I don't have to turn out like my dad.

The music was so refreshing then. It was all Elton John and Rolls-Royces before that. And then you have Mick Jones arriving, saying he's never lived anywhere lower than the fourteenth floor of a tower block. And though I didn't live in a tower block, I thought *yes*, I understand *that*.

I wasn't surprised when I only got one O-level (in arithmetic). I'd never considered staying on for any more education and had always known that this would be the point in my life when I had to join the 'real world'. My parents thought I should become a tradesman. If I was really lucky, I might end up a taxi-driver, but they thought probably the best I could hope for was an electrician. So I got a job as an apprentice electrician and immediately hated it. From one set of bullies to another. They used to send me up on these moving scaffolding towers on wheels. I think they're illegal now – you had to climb up the outside of it. None of the men would do it. They'd say, you do it, you're light, but they only said that because they knew that anyone who climbed up on it stood a good chance of coming off it and dying. That or being in a wheelchair for life. I used to climb to the ceiling of a gymnasium, up a fifty-foot scaffolding, and then put in halogen lamps. Completely fucking bonkers. I wish I could say I got used to it, but each time it was terrifying.

I was only sixteen and surrounded by grown men, bullies a lot of them. They liked to do something nasty as an initiation for the new boys. Mine was that they pinned me down

and painted my bollocks with bright red paint. And actually, it was pretty funny. I could take a joke. Then they tried to do it again another day. A big guy from Castlemilk leading the attempt. That was no fucking laughing matter at all. I picked up a metal bar and started swinging it at his head, chased him round the warehouse we were working in. I nearly caught him a couple of times when I threw it at his head. Good job I missed. It probably would have killed him. Maybe just maimed him. But it kept flying that frustrating inch or two just over his head.

It was understood after that that I was a bit of a head-the-ball. On a short fuse, supposedly. They never tried to paint my balls again.

My dad had always had a battered old acoustic lying around. He'd pretended to my mum he could play guitar to impress her, obviously without ever giving a demonstration, because he couldn't play a fucking note. When I decided I was going to be in a band I started to play around on it, working out basslines. Then, when I became an apprentice electrician I bought myself a crap Japanese Stratocaster imitation with a terrible neck. I think it cost £70. I had one or two lessons but didn't like them.

My relationship with my dad had got worse now I'd discovered punk. He'd always suspected me of being gay since my obsession with Bowie (I was so in love with Bowie I wondered if I was gay *myself*), and now I'd started to wear eyeliner when I went out. I was beginning to look like a

Buzzcock. He couldn't understand how he had managed to produce a man so completely unlike himself. I understand that: I've no idea how a man like him produced me either.

I didn't have to even be awake to provoke him. He'd get in from the Masons pissed and angry and come looking for me. He woke me up one time, my hands pinned below my sheet, and gave me five rabbit punches to the face. It was a Tom and Jerry-style doing. My head bounced back and forward against his fists and the pillow with my hands trapped and him staring down at me, furious about – about fucking what I don't know. It sounds comical when I tell the story now, and it's easier to tell it that way, but it wasn't funny then. You can't stay somewhere where you get assaulted in your sleep. I knew I had to get out. The next day I went round to Bobby's and asked if I could stay there for a few days. His dad, who I've always looked up to, took me in. He didn't judge my father: he knew the old man was frustrated, financially strapped. But he agreed to put me up, and he was an example to me of what a dad could be. Bobby's family were pretty far ahead of their time: the only parents I knew who didn't batter their kids.

After that I found a bedsit in the West End of Glasgow. I had no money, just enough to pay the rent and eat, but it was enough. At least I was safe when I went to sleep at night.

I hated my job and it was only punk that gave me hope of a different life. I wasn't getting on too well with learning the guitar so I decided to buy myself a bass. I thought it might

be easier playing one string at a time. I bought myself a cheap cherry-red Gibson SG copy – a heavy metal bass, really, though a lot of punk bands used them too. Now I just had to find a band. There was a show on Radio Clyde I used to listen to, the Brian Ford show. This was the punk show and definitely the main thing I listened to on the radio. I listened to John Peel a bit too, but he seemed miles away from my life. I never thought I'd move to London then: Glasgow was still the world. On the show Brian Ford would read out adverts from bands looking for members and that's how I met Andrew Innes, who was looking for a bassist for his band the Drains. Even then, I thought, *What a shit name*. I think he was taking the piss. He's always been a satirical bastard.

The Drains was Innes on lead guitar and a posh guy on drums, Pete Buchanan. He was Innes's next door neighbour. From a private school. We bullied him for two or three months then kicked him out. We used to really wind each other up too, but we were tough little bastards and we could give as much as we got. Bobby would start coming round and hanging out with us on Friday nights in Andrew's bedroom. So putting those two together was the first of the many things I would do for Primal Scream, and they remain to this day the creative force of Primal Scream (now Throb's left the band). The three of us formed an imaginary band that never left that bedroom, called Captain Scarlet and the Mysterons. Me and Innes would drink beer and play Clash, the Sex Pistols, even Sham 69. We never had a drummer. We never played a gig. Andrew had a Les Paul copy in cherry red. Bobby would sing a bit and bang

some boxes but mostly roll around the floor like Iggy Pop. I'd be on the bed, pretending to be Glen Matlock. We wanted to be at a punk gig every Friday night and because we couldn't we put it on ourselves. We were the audience and the band.

Innes was a brilliant guitarist. He could play all the songs, everything by the Jam, everything by the Clash. He could play 'Freebird'. He was a twisted fuck too, even at sixteen. He knew just what to say to me to upset me. But I knew just what to say to him to upset him.

It was nothing serious: he'd call me a ginger cunt and I'd call him a speccy wee shite. Gillespie and I didn't argue at all at that stage. Our music tastes merged into each other.

It was Innes who taught me how to play my bass. He'd point out where to put my fingers. He's a real musician; I'm a blagger. He taught me to be a punk bass player. It was the same with the Clash: Mick Jones taught Paul Simonon. All the punk bass players were taught on the job. Before too long I could hold my own in a punk band. We got a good-looking singer in, Jack Riley, and changed the band's name from the Drains to Newspeak. (I'd just read *1984*.) This was the dream. It was what kept me hopeful in those days.

I chucked the electricians after six months. I just made tea and risked my neck changing light bulbs. I was learning fuck all. My dad was pissed off that I quit, but I didn't have to listen to him so much any more now I'd moved out. Luckily, in those days there were jobs to be had and I managed to get one working for British Rail. This was pretty boring, putting wage

packets together, but it wasn't unbearable and the people were a good laugh there. You didn't have to wear a tie, which suited the Buzzcocks-style Oxfam chic I was wearing in those days.

It was here I met Yvonne, my first wife. She was one of the supervisor's sisters, a couple of years younger than me. I met her at a work social event in the Pollokshields depot – she was selling cakes – and fancied her straight away but I didn't think I stood a chance of going out with her. She was beautiful, with dark Italian looks. A few months after I'd first met her, she came to work for British Rail too, and we became good friends. She had a boyfriend, so for nine months all we were was pals.

I turned eighteen in 1978. My father proudly gave me a form to fill in so I could join the Masons, like him. I was thinking, What the fuck, Dad? I'm a punk! Who ever heard of a punk joining the Masons? I enjoyed ripping up that form. That pissed him right off. And that pleased me enormously.

And then, incredibly, Yvonne and her boyfriend split up. I wondered if I'd ever have the courage to tell her how I felt. Somehow I managed to mumble it out. And incredibly she told me she liked me and kissed me and we started going out. She was so beautiful. I was walking around in a state of amazement. I was so happy! I had a job, a flat, a band, a girlfriend.

It was then that Andrew Innes told me we had to move to London.