

## Author Questions

For people who don't know you, how would you describe yourself?

*Dundee-born, family girl who's a bit of a homebody. Alternating between love and shame at the human race. Easy going, absent-minded, bit of a worrier, introverted, opinionated but not confrontational (one of the reasons why I'm a writer), swimmer, yoga-er, crochet-er, music-lover, film-lover, football fan, sometime geek, daughter, sister, wife, mother. Trying to do the right thing. Learning as I go.*

How would someone else describe you?

*Depends who you ask!*

We focus on music at Drone Publishing – are there any artists/musicians that have inspired or influenced your writing?

*I feel like I should name some incredibly obscure musician here to appear really cool, but the band that has had the most influence on my whole life is The Beatles. I properly discovered them when I was around 13 and became completely obsessed. In terms of writing, I think because music is such a big part of my life, it probably creeps into everything I do without me really realising it. I set my first novel in Virgin Megastore because I worked there myself.*

Who are you listening to right now?

*Right now I'm listening to Kurt Vile, as his latest single Pretty Pimpin is on repeat in my head. It's a bit of an earworm and I can't get enough of it at the moment. I'm really into the Roddy Hart show on Radio Scotland right now too, I end up with a list of new CDs to buy every week. Albums of note so far this year include new ones from Rachel Sermanni, Laurie Cameron, Iain Morrison, Courtney Barnett, Public Service Broadcasting, Nathaniel Rateliff & the Night Sweats, Laura Marling and Thomas Truax (Shine Brightly As You Can from this is one of my favourite songs this year).*

Are you a writer who can have music on in the background when you write? If so, who or what style of music/genre?

*It depends what I'm doing. If it's first drafts and I'm just scribbling then background music is fine. If I'm trying to edit and need concentration then I generally want quiet. It's better to listen to new music too - albums I've just got or don't know too well, otherwise I'll start singing and dancing and get distracted from the writing.*

Frank Zappa was famously disparaging in his opinions about people who wrote about music – Frank Zappa was rubbish isn't he?

*Well, as a huge music fan who has zero musical talent, he's probably right! Most writers harbour a secret desire to be a rock star, don't they? I have to confess though, I don't know an awful lot about Frank Zappa...*

No seriously, what is your take on writing about music or any art form?

*I like reading about things that interest me – be it music, films, books, TV, so I will seek out this kind of writing. When I was a teenager, I'd read Melody Maker and NME and Kerrang and books about the Beatles and believe everything I'd read – it was only when I got a bit older that I realised just because it's written down, doesn't mean it's true. I accept good and bad music writing. If it's good, it reminds you why you love music and having a collective spiritual experience is one of the joys about music. If it's bad, it's cathartic to have a rant. I worked in Virgin Megastore for five years – arguing about music and films was one of the best parts of the job!*

Can you tell us about some of your favourite music books/books about music?

*I was 15 when the Beatles Anthology was released and read that from cover to cover, which wasn't easy given the size of it. I think the music you listen to as a teenager is the music that really stays with you forever. I devoured loads of Beatles books as a teenager and can't remember them all now, a lot of the time I just enjoyed looking at the photographs of them. A Hard Days Write is one I like as I enjoy reading the stories behind the songs – I'm rubbish at remembering facts like how many number ones they had, trivia like that I find a bit dry and it doesn't stick in my head, it's the real life stories about the people that I enjoy. The first live band I ever saw was the Corries, my dad took me to see them, and I read Ronnie Browne's memoir this year which I enjoyed – it's almost like a stream of consciousness about his life. My in-laws bought me Bob Dylan – Lyrics for Christmas one year which is good to dip in and out of. I enjoyed Morrissey's Autobiography but I found a lot of humour in it that perhaps wasn't intended by the author... Then there's novels like High Fidelity, Espedair Street.*

What about your favourite books (of any kind), what are they and how would you rate your favourite music books alongside them?

*That's a hard question as there's just so many books that I love. As with music, I like so many different genres it's hard to compare them among themselves, let alone against music books. Growing up, I loved Enid Blyton (in particular the Famous Five and the Faraway Tree books), Roald Dahl, the 'Alex' quartet of books by Tessa Duder. I also loved the classics, so Little Women, the Railway Children etc. There was a James Dean biography called Boulevard of Broken Dreams that I read over and over as a teenager. I'm a big fan of Thomas Hardy, Robert Louis Stevenson, Stephen King, Jane Austen. I love Catcher in the Rye, Dracula, 1984, Harry Potter, The Diary of Anne Frank, Sunset Song. I could go on and on... My favourite book of all time is probably Watership Down.*

Traditional music writing is declining in numbers (like many traditional print options) even the NME is going free – any concerns about the future of music writing?

*No, I think as long as there is music, people will continue to write about it. The mediums may change but I think the writing will endure. Music, like all good art forms, has the ability to move you and I think it's that emotional tug that compels writers to keep writing about it.*

Any plans for any other music books in the future?

*I think music will always seep into my writing, regardless of whether or not music is a central theme of the book I'm working on. My second novel is not directly about music but it's named after a Frightened Rabbit song, music features in it and I listened to a lot of 40s music to get in the mood when working on the WW2 sections. If I had a time machine I'd go back to the 60s so maybe I'll write a book set then...*