

BRITISH ROCK ROUNDUP

There are plenty of books (and the occasional documentary) that make good music history guides for British Rock. Gillian G. Gaar explores this year's most interesting releases.



The death of David Bowie on January 10, 2016 has unsurprisingly led to the release of a number of new books about the man and his works. Dylan Jones takes the oral history approach in **"David Bowie: A Life"** (Crown Archetype), creating a diverse and highly subjective view of its subject. There are comments (most from Jones' interviews, some archival) by every key Bowie collaborator, with the exception of manager Tony Defries (he

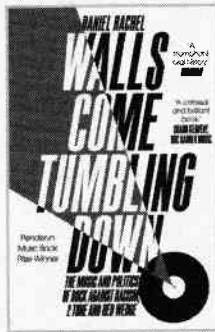
wanted \$360,000 to participate). Interviewees aren't afraid to be critical, pointing out Bowie's flaws as well as his strengths, though there's rather too much eulogizing at the end. An index would also have been helpful... **"Bowie: The Illustrated Story"** by Pat Gilbert (Voyageur Press) takes you through the Bowie story in an engaging fashion, with much to look at along the way. And happily, unlike some bios, it keeps the focus more on Bowie's work than his private life... Every David Bowie book mentions his star turn in the film **"The Man Who Fell to Earth,"** but the making of that sci-fi classic is the sole focus of Susan Compo's **"Earthbound"** (Jawbone Books). Never before has the story been told in such detail, delving into such matters as to why Bowie didn't end up doing the soundtrack, and a scene-by-scene breakdown of the film's locations... **"Mick Ronson: The Spider with the Platinum Hair"** (Music Press Books) is a detailed look at the life of Bowie's sidekick through his Ziggy years, as written by Weird & Gilly, editors of the Bowie fanzine **"Sons of the Silent Age."** First published in 2003, it's been updated for this edition, and fans of Ronno will be especially impressed by the extensive discography... **"Beside Bowie: The Mick Ronson Story"** (MVD Entertainment Group) focuses mostly on Ronson's

Bowie years, though the post-Bowie period is covered as well. But there's not enough footage of Ronson in action; the wealth of interviews with family, close friends, and colleagues, and Ronson himself makes this largely a static movie of talking heads...

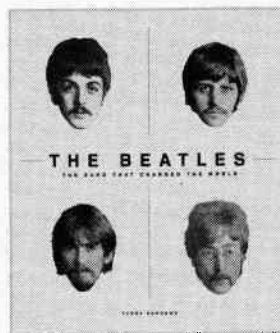
"The Who on The Who" and **"The Clash on The Clash"** (both from Chicago Review Press and edited by Sean Egan) are great collections of (mostly) previously published interviews, the majority of which were



published before the internet era, making them harder to find in a standard search. The Who book opens with a 1966 piece from **"The Observer Colour Magazine,"** one of the first serious pieces on the group, and also includes Keith Moon's last interviews. The Clash, unlike other musicians, were always willing to discuss issues with the press, and their book featured unpublished transcripts from Egan's own interviews with the groups' members... Tony Mc Gartland's revised edition of **"Buzzcocks: The Complete History"** (Music Press Books) brings the legendary punk band's story fully up to date. It's more of a reference book, as many of the listings are pretty bare bones (sample: "Nov 17th Cincinnati, OH, Bogart's), though some

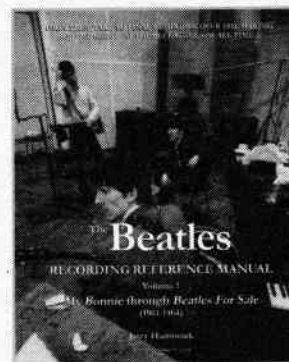


have more details. Introductory passages sum up each time period, and there's an extensive discography... Daniel Rachel **"Walls Come Tumbling Down"** (Picador) is a fascinating oral history that examines how political activism in the U.K. inspired the creation of Rock Against Racism, the 2 Tone record label, and the Red Wedge movement that united musicians with the Labour Party. The 100-plus interviewees give you a range of perspectives, and it's an especially insightful read for Americans who aren't as familiar with the deep connections between British musicians and British politics... In **"Psychedelic Celluloid"** (Oldcastle Books), Simon Matthews serves up summaries of what he defines as "U.K. Pop films," movies released from 1965 to 1974, which incorporate U.K. pop acts and/or "anything with a specifically 'youth' angle." Along with the obvious picks (**"Help!," "Bedazzled,"**), it's fun to read about lesser-known films (the swinging London fantasy **"Smashing Time,"** the crime caper **"Only When I Larf," "Deep End,"**



which starred Paul McCartney's ex, Jane Asher)... Terry Burrows' **"The Beatles: The Band That Changed the World"** (Carlton Books) is a large format, coffee table style book, with a general overview of The Beatles' story. He repeats a few well-worn myths that have since been disproved (there was no bombing raid on Liverpool the night John Lennon was born), but there are a number of lesser known photographs

and memorabilia... **"The Beatles' Landmarks in Liverpool"** by Daniel K. Longman (Amberley Publishing) has interesting information, and a nice selection of before-and-after pictures. But with only 26 landmarks cited, it's a pretty slim offering, and the maps are too small to be of much use (though out of print, Ron Jones' **"The Beatles' Liverpool: The Complete Guide"** is more comprehensive and user friendly... Jerry Hammack's



"The Beatles Recording Reference Manual Vol. 1" (Gear Fab Books Ltd.) dissects each Beatles recording from **"My Bonnie"** to **"Honey Don't"** in forensic detail; what gear was used, number of takes, overdubs, mixing, etc. And yes, more volumes are on the way... prior to 2017, the Who had played most, but not all of **"Tommy"** in concert. Then they resurrected the entire work for two Teenage Cancer Trust benefit shows this past March

and April, with the April gig now available in **"Tommy: Live at the Royal Albert Hall"** (Eagle Vision). The powerhouse performance is followed by a seven song set of Who classics (a full review can be read on page 40 of this issue). **GM**