

***Autumn of Love: how the swinging sixties and the counter-culture came to Portsmouth.* By Dave Allen. Bury: Mayhill, 2017. 294 pp. ISBN 9781905597758.**

Dave Allen is a man on a mission. A long time musician, more recent academic and 60s' survivor, in this book Allen seeks to do two things: first to make the case for Portsmouth as an important site for popular music and, secondly, to reclaim the 1960s from its detractors. In both cases he succeeds admirably.

This is a very good book and one which should find its place on to any reading list which examines popular music and locality. It shows Portsmouth not only to have its own important musical traditions but also to be linked to both national and international trends. For example, the links which Allen has made with Country Joe MacDonald are a highlight towards the end of the book and illustrate how Portsmouth's local scene interacts with one of the Woodstock festival's key performers in perhaps unexpected ways.

The focus of Allen's book is his beloved home town of Portsmouth, which he describes as being Britain's only island city (p. 14), and which is often known by its vernacular name of Pompey. Allen outlines its history and its place within both popular culture and media accounts. In emphasizing Portsmouth's role, Allen seeks to challenge dominant narratives of the 1960s which tend to associate the key experiences of popular music during the decade with major cities such as London, San Francisco and New York. He concedes that his account is both highly personal – this is his story and 'essentially celebratory' (p. 4), being 'a celebration of a time and a place that meant a great deal to many people... and continues to resonate' (p. 11).

This does not mean that Allen's account lacks a critical edge. One of the best parts of the book is his wonderful demolition of right wing critics of the 60s (pp. 24-25) where he invites them to consider whether they really wish to live a world where – as in Britain in the 1950s – male homosexuality and abortion were illegal, wives were frequently discriminated against in divorce cases, and theatres subject to censorship from the Lord Chamberlain. In Allen's celebrations the 60s emerge as a decade of liberation – and rightly so.

Allen also challenges Dominic Sandbrook's claim that "change came rather slowly to provincial towns" (cited p.27) and illustrates vividly that places such as Portsmouth experienced the 1960s in both exciting and fast-paced ways. Inevitably Portsmouth was both part of, and reacted to broader trends. Its experience was simultaneously unique and universal, exceptional and routine. In this, he suggests, Portsmouth is hardly likely to have been unique (p. 252) and so his history can be read as one which seeks to decenter the analysis of the UK's experience of the 1960s and its music way from London and towards what are often patronizingly labelled "the provinces". Allen also disputes Sandbrook's claim that participation in "swinging London" required wealth, noting that the scene was relatively open to anyone willing to work hard to acquire the requisite style.

Importantly Allen makes his case for the importance of Portsmouth through live music. While Pompey bands did make records (including Allen's band, Harlem Speakeasy) and some local musicians achieved fame (including Paul Jones of Manfred Mann), what shines through is the importance of local venues for the making of musical cultures. Venues and clubs such as the Rendezvous, Birdcage, Brave New World, Savoy, Indigo Vat, and Guildhall were all key sites for live popular music practice and here Allen's history mixes the story of local bands with visits by acts which were either (inter)nationally famous or would become so. This is a story of private initiatives - such as the numerous clubs – mixed with public provision such as the municipal Guildhall and the city's Polytechnic. In the majority of cases love of the music came first and Allen shows how people strove to make a truly "live nation", rather than a corporate one.

It is important to note here that Portsmouth again illustrates the rich history of popular music which emerges when a move is made away from the charts and the selling of records to grassroots venues and the business and experience of live music. Such histories do, of course, overlap and interact but the latter can offer a

more comprehensive picture of popular music history with the coming and going of venues illustrating the complex history of pop entrepreneurship. Allen is also good on stagecraft, noting how acts began to experiment with the use of lighting and the impact that this had on audience experiences.

He also illustrates the variety of genres such as jazz and folk which helped to make up Portsmouth's popular music culture. The key role of pubs as sites for the live version of such music and its attendant clubs is also apparent throughout. Allen notes the relative importance of subcultures such as mods, beatniks, hippies and skinheads mixing both (inter)national and local commentaries, as well as noting the importance of radio and the rise of festivals, something which was particularly important for Portsmouth due to its proximity to the Isle of Wight. Subcultural practices such as the consumption of recreational drugs (in which Allen indulged) are related in a matter-of-fact way that belies much of the contemporary press coverage which Allen relates.

Allen was an active musician in the 1960s (and continues to play as a 'reasonably successful... semi-professional local musician' – p. 256) and his experiences of trying to find work – or to "make it" – feature throughout. He relates internal band squabbles and personal disillusionment in ways that evoke universal themes for musicians, but which are filtered through a Pompey lens. Thus when another of Allen's bands – Rosemary – breaks up, he is able to find work labouring in the city's seaside parks, an uniquely local option. Although he does not explain his methodology - the book is not "academic" in that sense - quotes from local scenesters, many Allen's personal friends, feature throughout and add a great deal of colour.

Personally I could have done without Allen's eulogies to Buddhism which come later in the book, although that may be a reflection of both my Marxism and age. But it's not helped by a naff chapter title – Spirit in The Sky. Elsewhere Allen engages in critiques of commentators such as Cohn and Hewison and while these are not always systematic, they are always engaging and overall this is a very welcome addition to the literature on local music scenes. It's a good read and never less than stimulating. Its success is built on the fact that Allen never lets local become parochial. He is keenly aware of broader national and international trends and links and does a good job of explaining their local impact. This is a story of interaction, not simple reception, for not only was pop put in to Pompey but, as Allen shows, Pompey had its input in to pop. Thus this is not simply a history of Portsmouth pop, but a history of pop itself – something which should be of interest to all readers of this journal.

Martin Cloonan  
University of Turku, Finland  
martin.cloonan@utu.fi