



ISSUE  
23

BROUGHT TO YOU BY  
**THE SOCIAL**   **WHITE  
RABBIT**

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The spirit and resourcefulness of a community comes under real pressure in testing times. When things are easy, everyone's happy to turn up at the party, get on the decks, buy the beers, and make sure the lights are switched off at the end of the night. But we've found ourselves in distinctly uneasy times.

We are governed by a rudderless elite of disaster capitalists who care nothing for the culture we are determined to protect and nurture through this collaborative website. The most voluble narrative of the past six months has been death and suffering; but just because we appear to be trapped in a cycle of entropy doesn't mean we have to accept the decline.

The contributors to The Social Gathering over the past six months have given me cause for optimism in the darkest of moments that the True Believers will not be crushed by negativity, by greed, fear, lies and the sheer bloody awfulness of the situation we find ourselves in. The first White Rabbit books arrived in April just as the shops and most of the infrastructure of society started to shut down. For two terrifying weeks the 'BUY' button on amazon disappeared for every book listed at amazon, with the possible exception of Hilary Mantel's new Tudor epic, which somehow found itself in the priority lines alongside pasta, toilet paper and facemasks. Since then we have regrouped and reinvented ourselves. The Social have offered us, at White Rabbit, a home and a platform just as they have for artists, musicians, writers and fans of all those things for two decades now. We are grateful to have this place to shout about all the things we love in a world where art, music and literature are clinging on by gossamer threads.

And so now we've reached issue #23 of The Social Gathering weekly broadsheet it's time to draw breath and look to the future for more new beginnings. I am reminded of an auction I once held at the bar for PalFest, the Palestinian Festival of Literature. As I presented an early copy of 2023 by Justified Ancients of



Mu Mu as the next prize of the night, I passed around a hat for someone in the audience to pull out the raffle ticket. Of course, almost inevitably, out came #23. When I called Jimmy Cauty the following day to express my excitement about the cosmic serendipity of this occurrence, he was non-plussed. Of course that would happen. How could it not happen? Especially at a place like The Social, where magic is alive. And that's only true because we believe in magic.

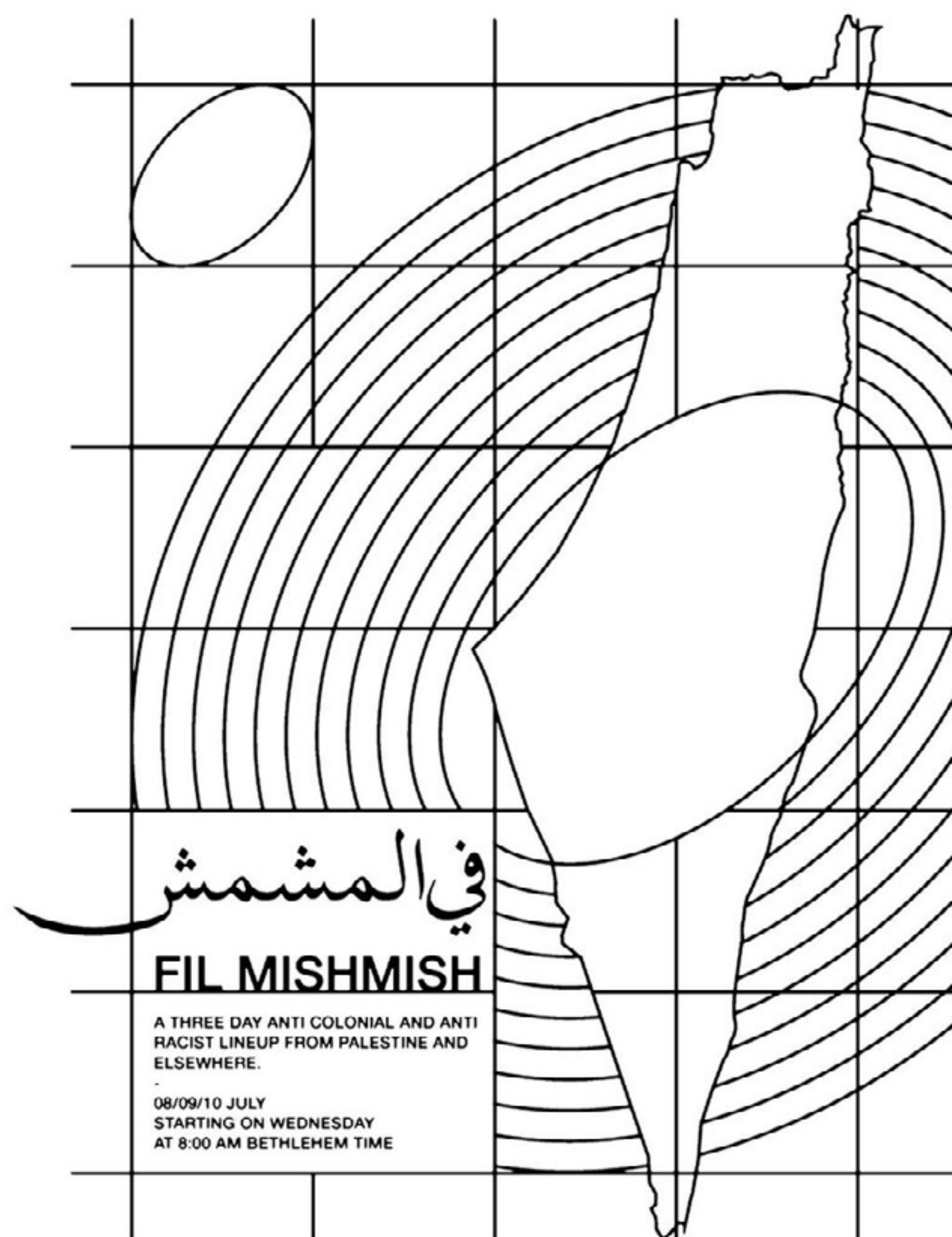
There are good times ahead because we continue to invest in the things we love. And we have our readers and many contributors to thank for that. I never thought I would find myself in a position where a virtual bar is perhaps the biggest comfort and source of refuge in my life but here we are. Take a moment if you can to look back at some of the writing and playlists on this site. And don't stop believing.

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## RADIO AL-HARA: WHEN APRICOTS BLOOM

LIAM INSCOE-JONES

*Apricot trees are slow and temperamental: they reject the cold and, for their first five years, bear no fruit at all. “Fil Mishmish” is an Arabic expression which means “when apricots bloom”, and it was the name of Palestinian radio station Radio Al-Hara’s 72 hour protest against colonialism, racism, and a new era of West Bank annexation announced by Benjamin Netanyahu’s government in May. The message was simple: Palestine will be taken, when apricots bloom.*



We love Radio Al-Hara, and we love these pieces by **Liam Inscoe-Jones** exploring and celebrating the Bethlehem-based station

[Read Liam's latest here](#)



# LIFE BEYOND THE NEUTRAL ZONE #7

LIAS SAUDI

**Our latest piece from [Lias Saoudi](#) sees the Fat White Family frontman head to Norway for a month...**

Around the time I started writing these posts I also started writing a collection of personal essays about various periods in my life down through the years, in a way these posts were kind of the bi-product of that process, but also a way of confronting a general anxiety I have about publishing anything. When I envisage myself attempting a drift from music into the written word, I can't help but think of Russell Crowe's '40000 Grunts', or a Sauvage-soaked Johnny Depp stepping up to deliver a few licks with the Rolling Stones; is there anything more tragic, more exposing of the attention fixated inflammation of the ego than the artist who, in one foul swoop, fails entirely to grasp the limits of their abilities and wanders in false confidence from one medium to another, only to defile a practice he has practically no understanding of? I've always maintained that the job of writing lyrics carries with it a far greater risk of humiliation than that of arranging the music it sits on top of; you



can't make a prick of yourself with a bass line quite like you can with a couplet. Attempting to pen a sort of autobiographical fiction leaves all that in the shadows. The fact that you can pour thousands upon thousands of words out onto the page and without even thinking about it be constantly maintaining the same crummy architecture of protective delusion you started out with is horrifying to say the least, but then that's exactly why I feel like doing it.

**Unless what you're doing fills you with a certain quota of existential dread, it's probably not worth doing at all.**

[\*Read in full here\*](#)



# THE FIRST OF MAY

ANNIE NIGHTINGALE

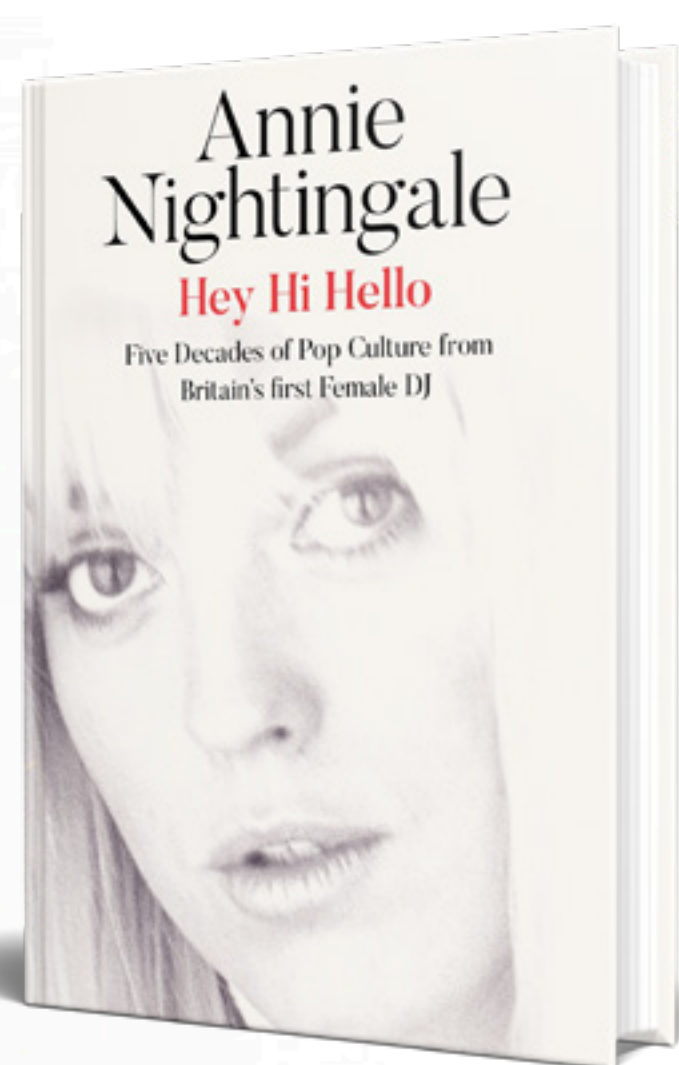
Earlier this week, September 3<sup>rd</sup> 2020 to be precise, was perhaps the most demented day in British publishing history with over 650 titles released. I doubt there were many titles from figures as righteous and influential as **Annie Nightingale**, the First Lady of Radio One, acid house pioneer, broadcasting legend of five decades. **Hey Hi Hello** is her story and it is, of course, extraordinary. We are thrilled to share this extract from the book; the events of which take place in our very own bar. We hope to see Annie down there soon but for now we raise a virtual glass to the Doyenne of British Broadcasting, Annie Avril Nightingale CBE.

It's quite difficult to come up with a really never-been-done-before location that's central enough for everyone to get the tube home from afterwards. Sometimes the solution is staring you in the face. It was then. It was called the Social, a friendly, lozenge-shaped bar, ground floor at street level, with a corresponding-shaped DJ and dance area in the windowless basement below. The lighting in the basement is of such softly glowing subtlety and trickery that you can you never tell if it's morning, noon or night. Deceptively seductive for a long, long night of musical merriment.

I already knew it well. Still have the original metal membership tag on a key ring. The Social was an offshoot project of the Heavenly record label. The bar, looking like a small shopfront, was/is situated in a side street just off Great Portland Street. Technically in 'Noho', the north side of Oxford Street. Or more poshly known as Fitzrovia. Or more accurately known as the heart of the rag trade district. A stone's throw from two tube stations.

And as was in those days, but a pebble-chucking (oops, not a good analogy given what was going to happen) distance down the street from Radio 1's base.

[Read the extract in full here latest here](#)



**Hey Hi Hello** is out now, published by White Rabbit  
[Order a signed copy from Rough Trade here](#)



# TEN YEARS IN ELECTRIC EDEN...

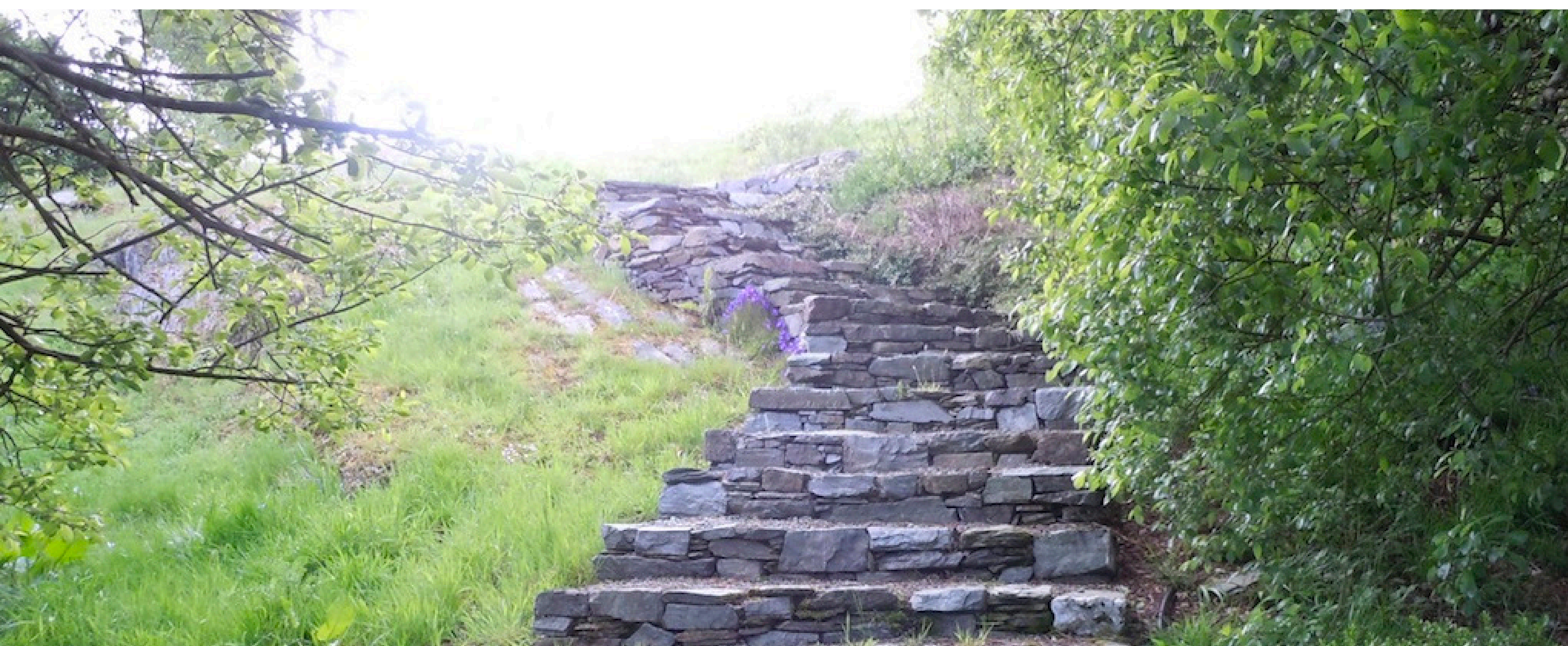
## PARTS 2 & 3

ROB YOUNG

**Rob Young** continues his look back on ten years of one of the most acclaimed and cherished music titles of the 21st century literary canon: **Electric Eden**.

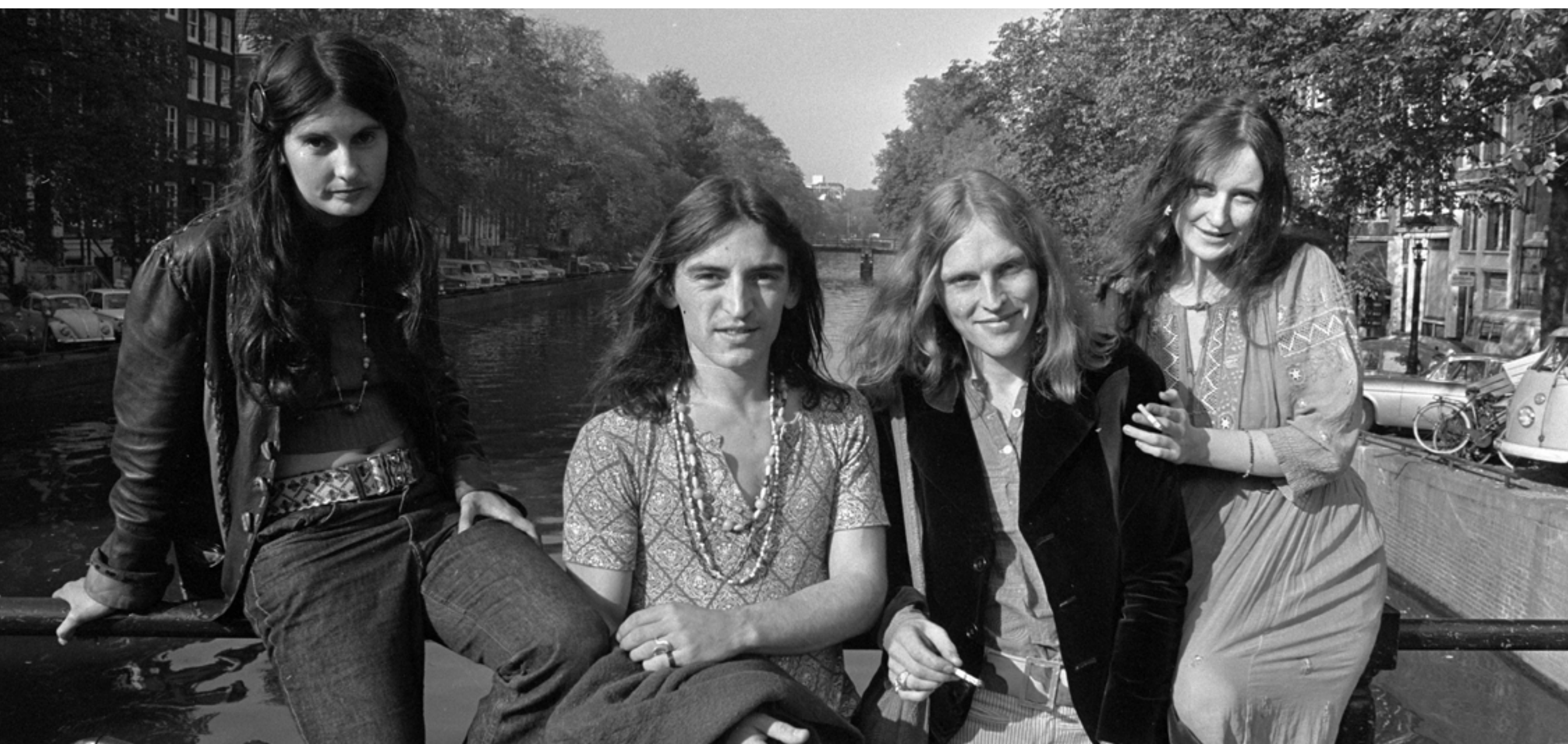
*The book's point of departure – William Morris – snuck up on me after I discovered his 1890 novel *News from Nowhere*, which you could call the first work of English science fiction. When I discovered that Morris's socialist salon was attended by the young composers Ralph Vaughan Williams and Gustav Holst (who were both avid collectors of rural folk music), and that his Hammersmith garden had been the site of an early Victorian experiment in high voltage electricity, I felt some great machinery clicking into gear. The gates of Electric Eden creaked open.*

[Read Part 2 here \(and catch up on Part 1\)](#)



*I know I flummoxed some readers by including the likes of Aphex Twin, Boards of Canada, David Sylvian and the Ghost Box label in a book they believed was about folk music. I can only reiterate: for me folk is a process and a pool of inspiration that many have drawn from, and notions of landscape, memory, nostalgia and the uncanny can be expressed in other forms than acoustic songwriting.*

[And find Part 3 here](#)

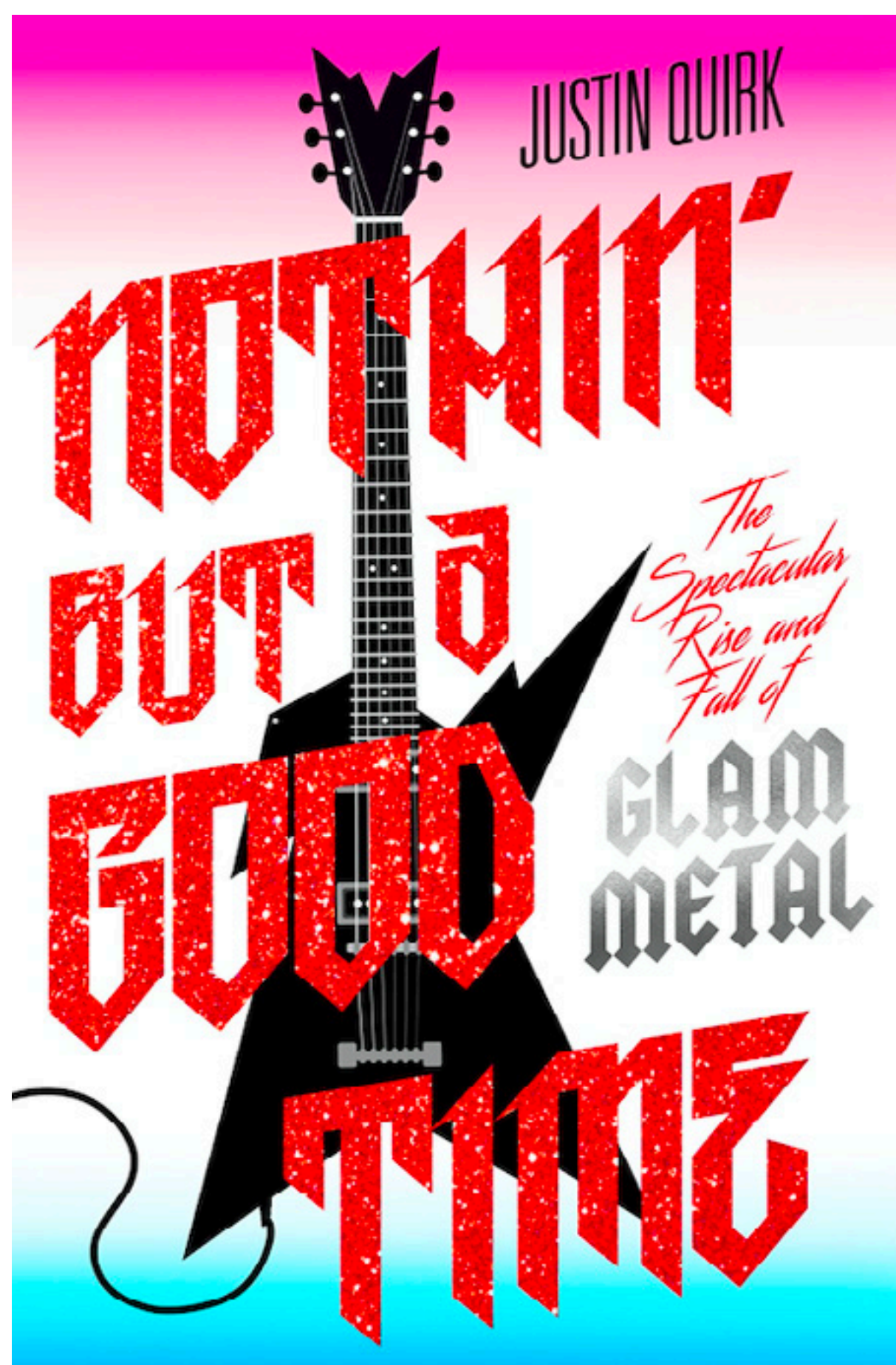




# NOTHIN' BUT A GOOD TIME

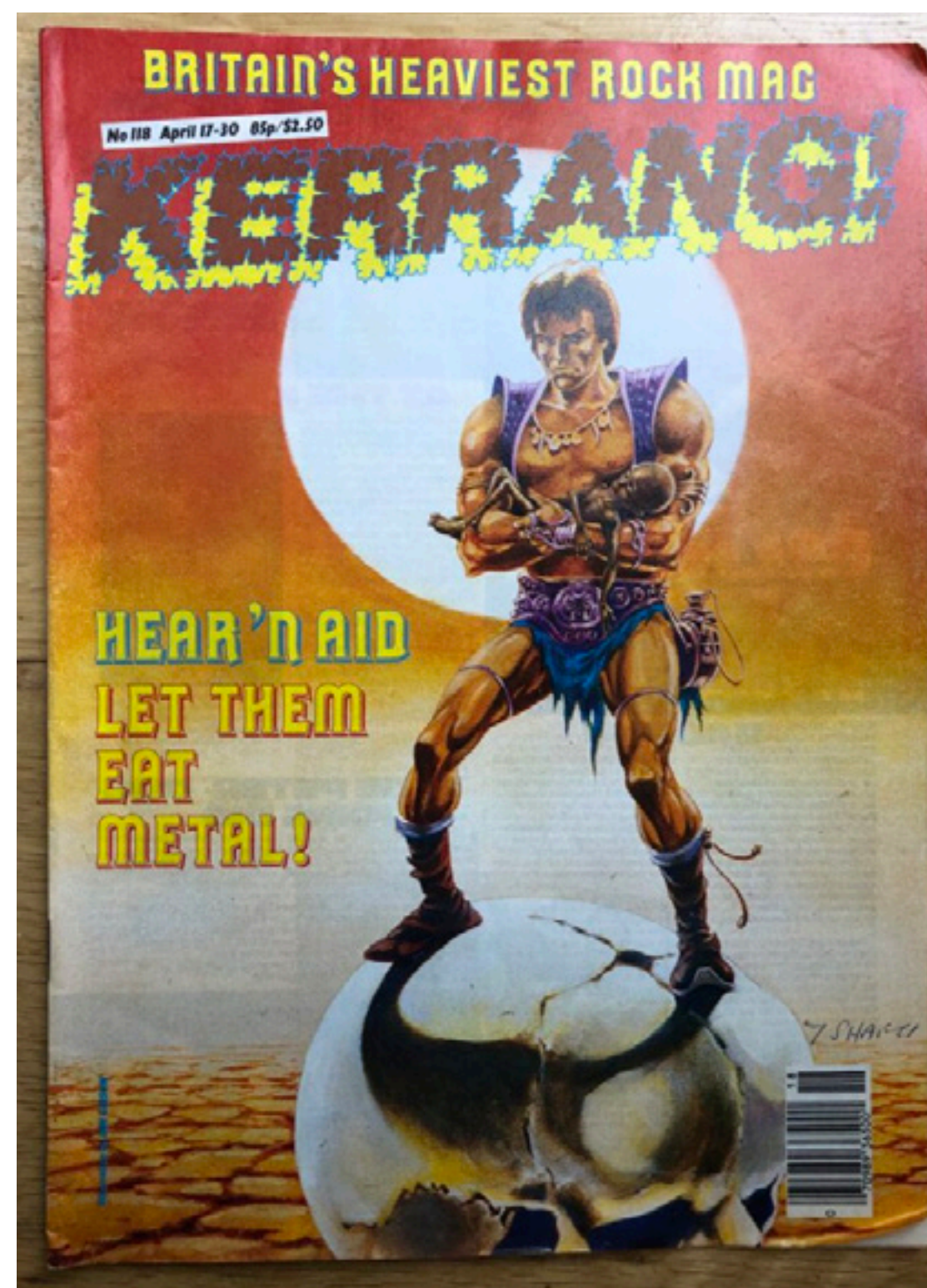
JUSTIN QUIRK

Justin Quirk's newly published book *Nothin' But A Good Time* aims to reposition things by giving glam metal some long overdue respect. Named after the 1988 single by Poison, it documents the history of that often ridiculous metal scene but where many would sneer at the excesses and daftnesses of glam metal, Justin Quirk's brilliant book is an unrepentant love letter to the music and the men behind it (let's face it, they are mainly men).



As the Social Gathering reaches for the hairspray, we asked Justin what made him decide to celebrate one of the most (unfairly) maligned genres of recent times...

I was about 11 or 12 ('87-'88). I'd been into pop music and trying to amass my own records from a really young age – maybe 6 or 7 – but I definitely went full metal around that point. A load of things dovetailed. I started learning the guitar – buying magazines like *Guitar World* you were exposed to a load of artists you weren't going to find in *Smash Hits* or on Capital Radio. And there was a 12 month period where 'Hysteria', 'Appetite For Destruction', Poison's 'Open Up And Say....Aah!' and Aerosmith's 'Permanent Vacation' all came out in quick succession. I was in the perfect place for this stuff at just the right time. The other important thing to remember – and something I touch on a lot in the book – is that this stuff was \*way\* bigger commercially than people remember. In terms of sales, it was completely mainstream. It's what built MTV; Kerrang! was selling in huge numbers. There's a week I saw while doing my research in, I think, 1987 where 'The Joshua Tree' is Number 1, but pretty much every other album in the Billboard Top Ten is a glam metal album. These bands were showing up on Top of The Pops. For all the outsider trappings, it was pop music, really.

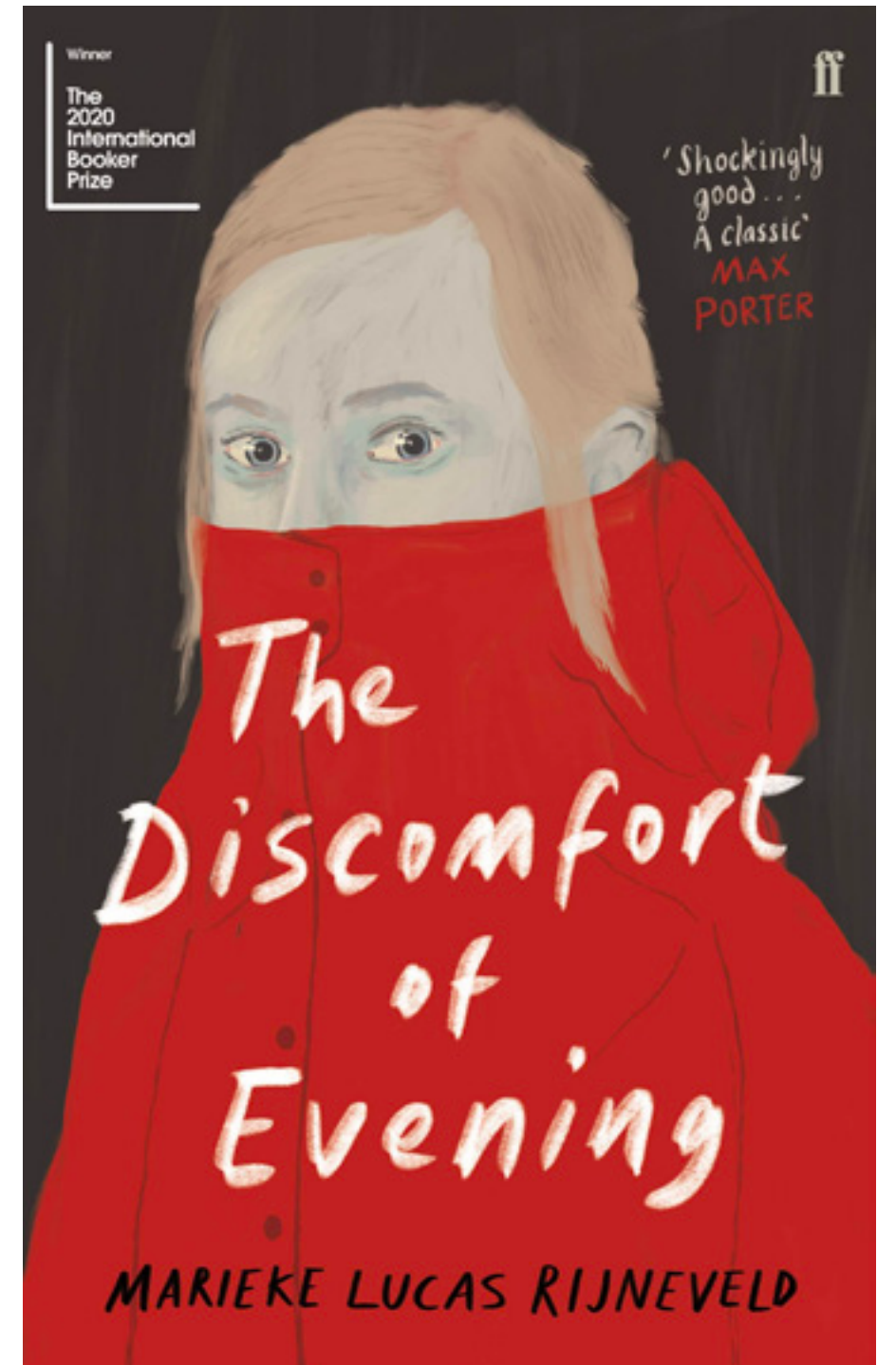


[\*Read the full interview with Justin\*](#)



# THIS WEEK HAS BEEN POWERED ON BY...

Sean Johnston's ALFOS Broadcast #9 / Annie Nightingale / Werner Herzog's *Into the Void* / The History of Rome podcast / All The Fall Albums: 2000-2010 / The Quietus' subscription service / Shirley Collins' *Heart's Ease* / Fitzcaraldo's online sale / Marike Lucas Rijneveld's *The Discomfort of Evening* winning the Booker / Si Señor The Hairy Grill / Marc Jones' Endless Summer illustrations / Ultra Mono / the pub / *I Hate Suzie* / *Fair Warning* by Van Halen / Vision of Sound podcast / large cream teas / big crate of Vocation (thanks Carlos) / the Eddie Chacon album and Andrew Male's piece about him in the *Guardian* / bongs / *Hysteria* by Def Leppard / Lost & Grounded Running With Sceptres / Getting it done / Ham egg and chips / Canals / Vegan breakfast with extra black pudding / Thinking about actual events / Barrafinna with Sophie Green / Hugo the St Bernard / Massive grey heron / Burger van tea / Landing craft / The Social staff zoom



# AND FINALLY...

After a pandemic and a lockdown and a spring that sometimes felt like summer and a summer that too often felt like autumn, it seems fair to say it's been a strange year. Twenty three weeks ago, The Social adapted in the only way it knew how –



by starting this Social Gathering. The name itself was a reaction to the idea of social distancing and it's as then untested mental health impacts. Who knows how we'll all emerge from this, apart from fatter off a month of cheap meals. Heading into actual autumn, we were beyond chuffed to hear some very positive news about The Social (Little Portland Street). We'll fill in much more about that in the coming weeks. In the meantime, here's a glass raised to all of our contributors, to Tom who puts this together every week and to all of you guys reading. We owe you a pint, when things aren't weird anymore.

*The Social Gathering Broadsheet is brought to you with love from Lee Brackstone, Carl Gosling, Tom Noble & Robin Turner.*