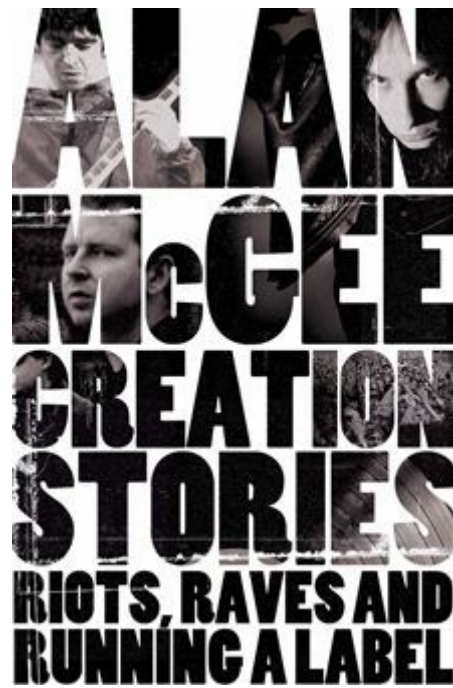




Creation Stories: Riots, Raves and Running A Label

Alan McGee

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Alan McGee's role in shaping British culture over the past thirty years is hard to overstate. As the founder of Creation Records he brought us the music that defined an era. A charismatic Glaswegian who partied just as hard as any of the bands on his notoriously dissolute label, he became a star himself.

In

Creation Stories he tells his story in depth for the first time, from leaving school at sixteen to setting up the Living Room club in London, which showcased many emerging indie bands, from managing the Jesus and Mary Chain to co-founding Creation when he was only twenty-three.

He then discovered dance and acid house, decamping to Manchester and hanging out at the Hacienda, and took Creation into the big time with Primal Scream's *Screamadelica*. His drug-induced breakdown, when it came was dramatic. But as he climbed back to sobriety, he signed Oasis, becoming one of the figureheads of Britpop. He sold the label to Sony to stave off bankruptcy and eventually left in 1999 but has continued to be in an influential figure in the music industry.

Creation Stories: Riots, Raves and Running A Label Details

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Nigeyb says

As I read Alan McGee's autobiography I realised just how much I really loved so much of the music released by Creation Records: the Jesus and Mary Chain, Ride, Primal Scream, Super Furry Animals, My Bloody Valentine, Oasis, Ed Ball, Kevin Rowland, and so on. A lot of these artists owe whatever they achieved to the vision and passion of Alan McGee. He has quite a tale to tell too. Complete self reinvention that starts with an ordinary, tough Glaswegian 60s/70s upbringing complete with a violent and abusive father to hanging out with Tony Blair at 10 Downing Street.

This being a rock 'n' roll tome, it has an extraordinary amount of debauchery, drugs, madness, and for most of the participants - including Alan McGee - a breakdown or rehab. Alan's was more spectacular than most and it ultimately resulted in a drink and drugs free recovery. Some books of this type pull their punches but not this one. There are some great stories of Creation's outlaw heyday.

Alan's post-Creation life is also covered, however this is less compelling, but still interesting, in particular his short-lived tenure managing The Libertines (the dysfunctional relationship between Carl Barat and Pete Doherty puts the battling Gallagher brothers completely into the shade).

If you like the music, and you're interesting in the post-punk independent UK music scene, then you will find much to enjoy in Creation Stories: Riots, Raves and Running a Label.

Paul Oneill says

Most people will buy this looking for some

Insights into the debauchery of the late 80's and 90's. There are stories a plenty and it's one of those if you have a spare day you could easily read this in one sitting and come away feeling slightly better for doing so. McGee is underrated for what He achieves in popular British music culture. Definitely put on your list if you want some stories about primal scream, oasis or others!

Nicholas Why says

As expected from a record label boss, there's plenty of name dropping in this book. Though pivotal to the music scene, the man cannot write to save his life. How many times can u dig hearing he was off his head on drugs when with his new favourite band? I was bored. I love Creation Records & most of the bands under that label. Alan McGee the writer? Not so much.

Nathan says

As someone who loves the music industry as much as I do, some of the books I have read about the subject

have bored me to tears. This was one of them.

The bands that McGee is involved in are some of my favourite bands, yet he couldn't seem to grab my attention and after two weeks I have decided to give it up as a bad job.

Kimmo Sinivuori says

Like most rock 'n' roll memoirs, Alan McGee's Creation Stories should not be reviewed on its literary merits but rather on the tall tales and amusing anecdotes that are a plenty.

There is nothing wrong per se with the way McGee writes but he would have benefitted from an editor. For example, McGee spends way too much space to reference his drug abuse. The reader gets the message first time but when he keeps coming back to it time and again it gets embarrassing. Taking lot of drugs and drinking heavily is not very difficult.

That aside, it was a pleasure to read about the Jesus and Mary Chain and the way McGee manipulated the British press to make the Reid brothers notorious during the mid 80's. I would have liked to read more about the Television Personalities and McGee's relationship with Dan Treacy but enjoyed the vignettes about Felt's Lawrence.

All in all a pleasurable read but certainly leaves room for more 1980's indie memoirs.

Ben Baker says

Drugs are good. Rock and roll is good. Bobby Gillespie is my pal. Drugs are bad. Money cant buy you happiness. (repeat)

Paul Gelsthorpe says

The Weatherprophets, Felt, My Bloody Valentine, Super Furry Animals. These are my favourite Creation bands. I also really liked 2 or 3 of the Primal Scream records.

Unfortunately, whilst you have to respect Alan McGee for playing the music industry on his own terms and bringing this talented but not obviously commercial acts to the public's attention, this book is incredibly boring.

Drugs, drugs, drugs, business, business, schmooz, schmooz, schmooz. Oasis. Yawn.

If you want my advice, stick to the records, the entire career of Oasis excluded.

Yes, I even liked the first Glasvegas album too.

Unfortunately, this is probably the most repetitive, boring book about rock n roll I've ever read. There is little substance on the artists or Creation's guiding principles as a label. It's more of a drug diary of the late 80's and early 90's and as such is grindingly tedious.

As a book, avoid, but do get yourself some albums on Creation, they've put out some brilliant stuff down the years, particularly pre-1994.

Jesús says

Creation Records ha formado parte mi vida y de mi formación cultural desde antes incluso de que supiera que existía Creation Records ni de que tuviera una formación cultural de la que preocuparme. Por eso me lancé como loco a comprar en Amazon este libro en cuanto vi las primeras reseñas en la prensa británica, tan dada a exagerarlo todo con tanta pasión, con la idea de empaparme y conocer mejor los detalles de una época, un sello y unos discos a través de los cuales, en serio, puedo trazar una línea autobiográfica y hacerlos míos. El título del libro, como siempre, esconde mucho más de lo que parece: es difícil no fijarse en esa gigantesca leyenda que ocupa toda la portada y que dice 'Alan McGee. Creation Stories. Riots, raves and running a label'. Marca una jerarquía clarísima en los asuntos que trata:

1)"Alan McGee". El capo que se ponía hasta las cejas en fiestas, con algunos de los grupos más "peligrosos" de la época, se va convirtiendo a medida que pasan las páginas en una diva calva con claros síntomas de 'attentionwhorismo'. Y, en serio, sus batallitas son lo peor entre mucha, mucha paja de líos familiares, amorosos, sus problemas con las drogas, sus viajes transatlánticos, sus salidas de tono con personalidades y medios de comunicación, alguna pelea, la preocupación por la imagen que cree que todos tienen de él como escocés de acento y modales poco delicados. Poco a poco, McGee aparece dibujado como un tipo que va perdiendo interés en la música y de pertenecer al mundo de rock'n'roll en el papel que sea (con su propia banda, con su propio sello, ejerciendo de manager) e incluso va perdiendo el interés en sus propios grupos: para cuando pilla a Super Furry Animals, que él considera la última gran banda de Creation, allá por 1996, ya reconoce que apenas tiene nada que ver en los asuntos del sello. Lo que vendría después sería cuesta abajo.

2)"Creation Stories". Aquí debería estar lo bueno. En el backstage, en las negociaciones, en las relaciones que cualquier sello establece con sus grupos. La mirada de McGee hacia ellos suele ser terriblemente condescendiente, del tipo yo-lo-sabía-pero-no-me-escuchasteis, o bien del todo triunfalista (del tipo sois-lo-que-sois-gracias-a-mí), aunque durante esos años la cosa bascula entre una dictadura y la complicidad mutua, como un Tony Soprano que sabe cuidar de los suyos y sabe cuándo tiene que atar en corto o soltar las riendas para que los grupos no terminen frustrados. Depende de quién seas, claro: no es lo mismo ser Primal Scream, un grupo con el que en todo momento se establece una relación de igual a igual (McGee y Bobby Gillespie fueron juntos al cole), que Ride (creo que es de ellos de los que llega a decir algo así como que "es raro que tuvieran éxito cuando todos sus miembros eran tan feos") o incluso My Bloody Valentine, a los que parece que tiene que soportar como se soporta a un familiar loco. El libro es abundante en lo que quiere, en anécdotas con las bandas grandes, aunque casi siempre centradas en los escándalos, las drogas y en resaltar que, por sus orígenes, McGee se ha sentido siempre mejor entre macarras que entre "genios" como Kevin Shields. Por cierto, aunque personaje cretinesco, McGee fue un genio en muchos aspectos, uno de ellos fue manejando a la prensa, a la que sabía contar buenas historias (aunque no fueran del todo ciertas) y con la que ha terminado ganándose una imagen bien merecida como cretino. Con todo, se aprecia que de vez en cuando reconozca sus propios errores.

3) "Riots, raves and running a label". Bueno: "riots" hay aquí pocas, quizá más en la época de J&MC, cuando el grupo conseguía que su público destrozara los locales y todo el mundo terminara en el hospital con algo roto. Eso mola. Las "raves" de aquí son las que se pegó McGee durante su época más flipada, en la que viajaba a menudo a Manchester, carentes de interés musical, más allá del yo-fui-quien-abrí-la-mente-de-

Primal-Scream-a-las-raves y de lo que supuso en ese contexto un disco como ‘Screamadelica’, que supo conjugar rock y música de baile. El resto, el “running a label”, se resume, en los primeros años, en los sucesivos amagos de quiebra y de posterior recuperación económica, casi siempre debido a golpes de suerte (ya se sabe: grupos que venden mucho ayudan a que los que no venden tanto puedan editar sus trabajos) y, en los últimos tiempos, en un intento desesperado por llegar a un acuerdo con una major a la que vender Creation. A veces, como lector, dudo de si no fue esa la intención inicial de McGee: especular con la música, con las bandas (como lo hizo a la hora de negociar derechos y licencias en Estados Unidos, por ejemplo) y de inflar y especular con el valor de su propio sello para su posterior venta. “¡Ya soy multimillonarios!”, grita McGee en un momento dado, triunfal.

Durante la lectura, trufé el libro con subrayados con la idea de hacer un post largo para el blog solo con las palabras de McGee, que fueran ellas las que lo describieran como personaje, algo que ahora me parece un tremendo coñazo. Me cansé de subrayar frases en las que hablaba de todo lo que se drogaba y de lo que sufría su cuerpo con ello. Me cansé de subrayar frases en las que hablaba del dinero y que iba a convertirse en multimillonario. Uno tiene sus límites: el mío está en leer sus anodinas anécdotas con Tony Blair. He de confesar que no acabé este libro: al 65%, la historia de Creation echó el cierre. Atrás quedó un acuerdo millonario con Sony. Su último disco fue uno de mis discos favoritos de todos los tiempos, ‘XTRMTR’. Lo que vino después, según lo he hojeado, fue un nuevo sello, Poptones, una nueva época, el siglo XXI, y una nueva superbanda en la que centrarse, The Libertines, lo dejo para cuando recupere algo las ganas. Es casi la mitad del libro.

Pero, eh: ha habido cosas importantes que he hecho durante estas páginas. He descubierto o profundizado en grupos como The House of Love o Felt, que resulta que no están tan alejados de mis gustos ochenteros (de la rama Cocteau Twins). He recuperado discos de shoegaze que aún no tenía y me he enterado de por qué la trayectoria de Ride fue tan errática. Y me ha servido para escuchar después de algunos años el primer disco de Oasis, que justifica por si solo la existencia y la estupidez y el devenir y la decadencia de los hermanos Gallagher. Adoro cómo suena ese disco.

Y he elegido una cita que creo que podría resumir el libro y el ego de McGee y resumir también su labor en Creation durante sus años de vida:

“I’d always love Malcolm [McLaren]. I’d even tried to ‘be’ him for a while when I was managing the Jesus and Mary Chain. We’d met first in 1996 when we’d done an interview together por ‘Punch’ and I pulverized him in it. I was a right cunt. I said if I’d had the Sex Pistols they’d still be going, I’d have sold 60 millions records. He couldn’t really answer back about that, because I had the biggest group in the world by then in Oasis.

Of course, to be fair, with the Sex Pistols he changed culture and I never did. Unless you count inventing Shoegazing”.

Steve Parcell says

A real mixed bag this book.

The chapter about the Libertines and Babyshambles was excellent and a real insight in to the toxic relationships between the main two guys in The Libertines.

The chapters about Alan growing up were rather harrowing and provide an explanation to his addictive personality as an adult.

However other chapters appeared merely to be name dropping for the sake of it and stopped the book being given 4 or 5 stars.

Brian says

Recommended by a friend but could only make it half way through before giving up. Very drug centered with McGee always sneaking in how hard he is.

very disappointed

Ewout says

Alan sounds like a dick and doesn't go much further than repeatedly saying how he prefers the business side over the music side (edgy as fuck) and how much drugs he used to do. Pure masturbation, the stories aren't worth the ego trip.

BookwormDH says

An excellent insight into the shenanigans of Creation Records been created!

Very enjoyable indeed!

Rog Harrison says

Not sure why I read stuff like this as the usual deal is that the "author" recounts stories into a tape recorder which the ghost writer, in this case Luke Brown, turns into a book. I get irritated by the stuff that's clearly wrong. As early as page 9 McGee recounts how his parents were fans of Tony Christie and sang along with his "Knock three times" which in fact was by Tony Orlando and Dawn. From then on I doubted the accuracy of any of the stories. I did not think I had any records with which McGee had been involved as I never liked Oasis and have never even heard any records by Ride or My Bloody Valentine but surprisingly I do have some music he released on popstones after Creation finished. It's actually an entertaining read and McGee seems to acknowledge that he was not a nice guy. Not sure how much I believe though!

Roger Mosedale says

A cracking tale, hilarious and at times touching. It's not often I finish a book in a couple of days, but found this genuinely hard to put down. What a life he's had so far!

Ben says

Enjoyed this one a lot. Creation is my favorite record label of all-time and I was 20 and living in England when Psychocandy came out; the perfect age and time to catch the JAMC bug. I remember skipping a morning lecture at the Univ. of Essex, where I was studying, to take a bus into town and buy the album on the day it was released. But as great as Alan's stories are about JAMC, Primal Scream, and House of Love among others, what grabbed me were the candid accounts of his rough childhood in Glasgow and his battles with drug addiction. I have been sober for 16 months now and found those sections of the book to be helpful to me on a personal level, like I wasn't alone in what I am going through.
