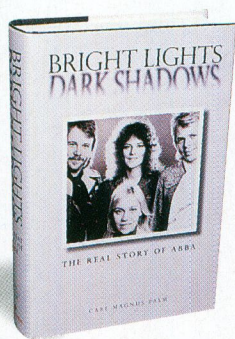


The Whispering Years

Bob Harris
BBC WORLDWIDE, £16.99

This memoir from the murmuring man begins with a Harris family incident: it was Bob's policeman dad who arrested PJ Proby when he split his trousers onstage at the Northampton ABC. The Harris prose style is uncomplicated but this only increases the pleasure when he quotes from his reports for Keele University's student mag ("Arthur Brown reached an all-time high in erectile music..."). By the late '70s it's easy to see why Harris became a post-punk joke. Worse, the book's latterday sections overdo it on self-analysis and digressions on "an impossible-to-train Labrador-cross bought for me by Mike Read". ★★

Roy Wilkinson



Bright Lights Dark Shadows

The Real Story Of Abba
Carl Magnus Palm
OMNIBUS, £19.99

At the height of their success, the two blokes from Abba were given an audience with their idol Brian Wilson. However, the corpulent genius groaned but one word at them: "huh?" It's a symbolic meeting in an extraordinary book – the cognoscenti's reaction to Abba has usually been a bemused "huh?" So Palm makes a case for Abba being the musical story of the 20th century, following their origins as cod-folkies through to success, divorce and litigation. It can be an oddly humourless trek, but after reading this Dancing Queen will never sound the same again. ★★★★★

John Mullen

HAVE YOU READ ?

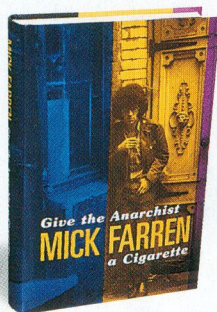
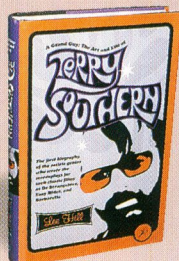
A Grand Guy

The Life And Art Of Terry Southern

Lee Hill
BLOOMSBURY, £25

More than just the beatnik wit who wrote Dr Strangelove and Easy Rider, the late Terry Southern greased the wheels of pop culture's post-war boom. From knocking about with Stanley Kubrick and William Burroughs to appearing on the cover of Sgt Pepper, he had the ear of major players in every art form, all the while gathering material for his novels and scabrous screenplays. This is an affectionate snapshot, although it never quite conveys the fullness of Southern's extraordinarily well-timed existence. ★★★

Gareth Grundy



Give The Anarchist A Cigarette

Mick Farren
Jonathan Cape, £16.99

Billeted in a '60s London bedsit where girls were forbidden, Mick Farren rebels, grows an Afro and scores a blow job round the back of the Camden Roundhouse. Author, rock critic and frontman with proto-punk band The Deviants, Farren's autobiography covers an era of vintage rock and social unrest. Caught up in police raids and the odd riot, Farren seems to place himself near, if not quite in the eye of the hurricane. He has/had a monstrous ego, but pop culture junkies will find much to enjoy in this rollicking account of – quite literally – sex, drugs and rock n'roll. ★★★★★

Mark Blake

Far-Reaching

How a gentle folkie changed modern music.



"Aren't Walker's smokey bacon just the best?"

daughter (taken from Mitchell's Chelsea Morning), and create the hippy-chick look occasionally "rocked" by the erstwhile Mrs Gallagher.

In fairness, ephemeral points like these are a rarity. This is a book that seeks to decisively shine light on Mitchell's artistic importance; and, thanks to O'Brien's capable writing and seemingly endless research, it impressively succeeds. In particular, the chapters about her decisive arrival – between 1969 and 1970 – are a joy, confidently placing her within the context of the '60s counterculture and its relationship with mainstream America. On occasion, in fact, the text masters its themes to the point that it teeters on the brink of social history.

In keeping with all that, the book frequently alights on an all too familiar subject: Mitchell's recurrent clashes with cloth-headed sexism, particularly pronounced during the first phase of her progress. "Joni Mitchell is 90 per cent Virgin,"

read a tag-line on an early record company ad, before the copywriter sketched out her first album in terms of a long-delayed female orgasm, finally brought on by some big-hearted male hippy.

Groovy times, eh? ★★★★★

John Harris

Joni Mitchell

Shadows And Light: The Definitive Biography

Karen O'Brien
VIRGIN, £18.99

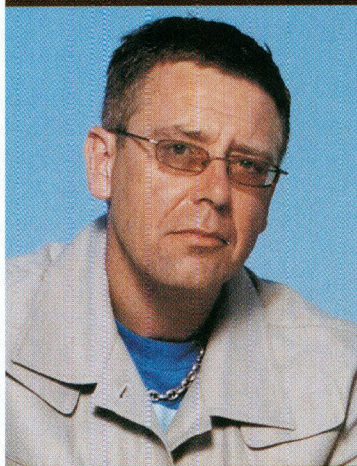
IN HER INTRODUCTION alone, Karen O'Brien manages an admirable feat, dropping references to Friedrich Nietzsche, Bob Dylan, Hillary and Bill Clinton and Meg

Mathews within mere pages of each other. The common thread, it transpires, is the sheer reach of the artist in question: rooted in the high-falutin' world of coffee house bohemia, for sure, but such a modern commonplace that she could give a future president the name for his



TOURBUS READING

What rock stars take into the smallest room.



Adam Clayton (U2)

Harry Potter And The Goblet Of Fire

JK Rowling
BLOOMSBURY, £6.99

"It's the latest one – the big fat one – and it's taking me ages to read. It's just perfect for reading at the end of the night in some godforsaken hotel somewhere – two or three pages and you're fast asleep. I brought all of the Harry Potter books with me because I know I can lose the ability to read when I'm touring. I just found they were great to actually pick up instead of flicking on the TV at two o'clock in the morning."

