

The Last Mad Surge of Youth

Mark Hodgkinson, Pomona, £7.99

We follow main character Barratt as, inspired by the punk movement, he forms a band with school friends. The group of ordinary northern lads sing about "their lives, their mams and dads, the streets they came from, the crap jobs they've had, everything." It can be cringingly nostalgic ("we were all poets") but what is charming is the painful innocence of the characters.

With the DIY ethos came the idea that the young could change the world. However, once swept into the limelight the characters fall further and further into the mainstream media trap, sacrificing the ideals that made them unique. The author, himself a guitarist in several bands as a youth, supporting The Stone Roses and Pulp, offers a level headed and insightful view of



the sleazy side of the music industry. Barratt ends up a middle aged, self-obsessed, alcoholic filling the void created by his lack of impact on the world. His devoted fans got a job at the council, married and deserted him. A gripping read with plenty of twists. Essential reading for fame hungry bands. JE