

Sorry saga to shock all rebels



*Marianne Faithfull As Tears
Go By* by Mark Hodkinson
(Omnibus, £14.95)

by VAL
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IN 1979 I discovered Marianne Faithfull. Her impressive *Broken English* album brought me out in goose-pimples.

The trained mezzo-soprano voice (which bleated a drippy, off-key hit of the 1960s called *As Tears Go By*) had become a gravelly, nicotine-scorched moan into which was distilled a lifetime's hell-raising and despair. Her raunchy song about jealousy, *Why D'ya Do It*, was a little masterpiece.

Having read Mark Hodkinson's biography, I am amazed that anyone can have survived a life of such spectacular squalor and self-indulgence. It is astonishing that she came through, tough as old boots, to produce an album of such extraordinary artistic achievement. Hats off to her!

Hodkinson, who was still in nappies in the Sixties, details the life and times of an intelligent, posh, convent school-educated beauty who quit home to hang out with rock stars and pop parasites in the so-called *Swinging Sixties*.

She then fell in with Mick Jagger and went off the rails. Hungry for fame (and who isn't at 18) she was manipulated by creepy entrepreneurs and achieved modest hit-parade success.

Ditching husband and baby son, she turned to drugs, slept with three Rolling Stones and got herself on the front pages. Stoned daft, she was the hacks' dream.

Her contradictory, often fabricated utterances made fab copy and whipped up fury in the breast of 'Disgusted' of Tunbridge Wells.

In fact, looking back, you can see that Faithfull (her real name, incidentally) simply behaved like one of those silly little girls who try to shock

adults by flashing their knickers.

Hodkinson spares us no details of Faithfull's horrific decline into heroin addiction. At her lowest point she took to falling face-down into her food. Friends would scrape curry from her hair.

Surprisingly, Jagger emerges as a stalwart mate, dropping in to wish her luck before a show, maintaining contact with her long-suffering mum (for whom he bought a house) and supporting her through her successful drug rehabilitation programme.

And as Hodkinson reminds us (unjustly in my view): 'Faithfull is seen in some quarters as a hopeless dilettante moving effortlessly through a career propped up by a failed relationship with Jagger.'

But how must it feel to have

Daily Mail

someone you've never met focusing upon your misspent youth? How must a person react, 25 years on, to see the to-curling banalities they once bumbled plus the embarrassing newspaper reports all rehashed and stuck between hard covers?

I suppose this is the price of fame, but if I were Faithfull I'd feel like smacking Hodkinson in the mouth. In fact, if you're reading this, Marianne, I suggest you brace yourself, grab hold of the rest of your life and tell Hodkinson, in your aristocratic cut-glass tones, exactly where to put his intrusive, scissors-and-paste job.

That said, this book must not be dismissed. It serves a vitally important purpose. It is a terrifying modern cautionary tale and will certainly scare the daylight out of any pop-obsessed youngster who still thinks that doing drugs is a bit of a lark. Read it, young rebels, and be warned.