

"I want to start sleeping in the same bed every night. People don't realise that's the sort of thing you miss" is one of the sentiments Mick Hucknall states in Mark Hodgkinson's fully illustrated biography *Simply Red* (Omnibus, £12.95). The book tells Mick's already well documented rags-to-riches great Northern story, from his curious involvement in Manchester's punk scene to the zillion selling *Stars* album. Pop writer Hodgkinson has taken a slightly different approach than the warts-and-all flavour of Mick Middles' book *Red Mick*, and Robin and Rob McGiven's *Simply Mick*. Where those authors



detailed sometimes painfully honest, sometimes bitter personal accounts of those who had known, those who had hated, and those who had hung out with Mick, *Simply Red* is a more sensitive (I won't say 'sycophantic'), but sympathetic analysis. I am not a fan of Mick, to be honest, and find tales of his self-proclaimed 'conquests' of one or even two - what was the word he used? Oh, yeah, 'tarts' - kind of scary. Eugh! He's not an attractive man by all accounts, although this book does paint a healthier picture of him than others, so perhaps it is the money, the fame and the glitz which draws the women. I don't know. Certainly, Hodgkinson holds back no punches when it comes to Mick's mum: painted in full, reverberating Technicolor, her dirty washing is hung out, ironed, and doused in the mud again. Between the lines, if not in them, there is a hint at Mick's arrogant belief in his own talent, his intolerance of anything or anyone he felt was not up to his idea of scratch, and the incredible, vice-like closeness between himself and buddy/manager Elliot Rashman. "I'm not white enough for a lot of stations because I sound too black," Mick says. The twit. It is when Mick makes these inane statements that he seems most ridiculous, and credit that you may wish to afford him teeters on being swallowed. A veritable encyclopaedia of Red Mick data from the first song, to the first band, to the first success, the *whining*, the women, and the songs, the aggression, the vanity, the ambition, and the talent, it's all here. All good and hopelessly committed Reddies should purchase a copy. It's glossy, it's got juicy facts, it's not half bad - if you're a fan.

Nayaba Agbedo