

chronological study plots how stubborn ambition and a ferociously self-protective shell sustained the band until their music shaped up, and how it still surrounds them today.

The troublesome chapter on the ousting of drummer Shaun Charman, despite obvious bad feeling among everyone involved, is actually unsensational and pretty standard band-history fare. Charman is quoted extensively, and the author gives equal weight to the former band member's famous temper as to Gedge's apparent flirting with his girlfriend. Not exactly Rolling Stones territory.

Press excerpts are used less liberally than is usual in these projects, and are integrated intelligently into the text. Without being bitchy, it is astounding to note how *A Rival Music Weekly* (clue: not *Sounds*) not only rubbished 'George Best' – easily one of the Top Ten albums of the '80s – but accused the group of bandwagon-hopping on their Ukrainian sessions, a bold but hardly fashionable or profitable exercise. Talk about missing the point.

Hodkinson is clearly a friend and fan of the band, but remains objective and carefully debunks the myth of four cheeky pop chappies. He rarely speculates about deep significance within the music, perhaps warned off by Gedge – "A lot of pop music is cheapened by musicians badly trying to explain what their songs mean" – but skilfully dissects the contradictions of remaining an indie band on a major label.

His unsurprising conclusion is that *The Wedding Present* are "a lesson in honesty and hard graft" who "have produced several great records". Obvious perhaps, but arrived at through solid journalistic research and an avoidance of the superficial clichés which clog up rock-biogs.

Stephen Dalton



Close to the Gedge

## WEDDING FESTIVAL

**THE WEDDING PRESENT – THANK YER, VERY GLAD**  
**Mark Hodkinson (Omnibus**  
**£7.95)**

WHAT WAS all the controversy about? Beats me. Four months after *The Wedding Present* removed their official stamp of approval from Hodkinson's book, along comes that rare breed of band biography which actually reflects its subject admirably: straightforward, unpretentious, intelligent and – just occasionally – a bit boring.

But only boring if you disagree with the author that Gedge and Co possess a "delightful ordinariness" which provides "the perfect antidote to the bombast favoured by the likes of Bono and Jim Kerr". Indeed, and to all those dullards who still require their rock heroes to have regular animal sex on water beds full of heroin.

Hodkinson's style flows freely and unobtrusively, as blunt and

direct as any *Wedding Present* book should be but as detailed as all decent biogs must be. Dipping into Gedge's childhood, we discover a shy and bookish swot who flirted with Communism at an early age by attempting to abolish the head boy and girl at his school. Anarchy!

David emerges as far more of a fashion victim – with the emphasis very much on victim – than Weddoes devotees might expect. From his David Cassidy look in the early '70s, he progressed to become a major Genesis fan at the height of punk and an uncomfortable goth in the early '80s. Hodkinson has the photos to prove it, and they are excellent throughout.

"When David first started he was totally crap," reveals ex-girlfriend Debbie Kaye generously, "he couldn't sing and he couldn't write songs." Maybe so, but Hodkinson's loosely