

TOO CLOSE TO THE GEDGE?



PICTURE: EMILY ANDERSON

RUMOURS OF a rift between The Wedding Present and the writer of their "authorised" biography *Thank Yer Very Glad* first broke in the *NME* news pages two weeks ago and were immediately denied both by the book's publishers Omnibus and by several people within the band's orbit. Now, to clarify the situation, Wedding Present members Peter Solowka and David Gedge have come out with their side of the story while author Mark Hodgkinson denies his account is "too near the bone" for the Weddoes' frontman.

"It could hardly be any other way considering Gedge's incredible honesty and his willingness to co-operate," says Mark. "The main objections appear to be my interpretations of incidents."

Mark has been a friend of the Weddoes since 1985, when he worked for North Manchester's *Middleton Guardian*. While he remains friendly with the group, he has always been ambivalent about gaining an "official" seal of approval.

"Quite often they're just sops when they're authorised," he asserts. "How can a writer pick his way through something as personal and complex as a pop group and hope to placate all parties?"

So there were objections to quotes from David's old flames?

"If David Gedge is going to give me the phone numbers of his ex-girlfriends . . . it's inevitable that I would find out certain things," sighs Mark. "Sadly there are no three-in-a-bed romps but it has the depth such an important band warrants and such loyal fans deserve."

Guitarist Peter Solowka agrees there is nothing controversial in the book but simply objects to the whole concept of a biography, comparing it to a "Wedding Present wall calendar".

"It's just not a very interesting thing to be associated with," he claims. "It's something you can't escape from when you get a reasonable amount of success, but you don't have to fully embrace it just because it's there . . . this is not the definitive history of The Wedding Present, it is a story."

David Gedge remembers trying to dissuade Mark on the grounds that it was too early in the band's history for such a project. His objections too are on grounds of inaccuracy rather than any muck-raking revelations.

"I think time was against him, and as a result it's not really an accurate representation of the group or our ideals," claims David. "But with The Wedding Present you're not going to find loads of scandalous and shocking revelations anyway. I think Mark's got a habit of writing in a tabloid way, which is all headlines . . . but when you get down to it there's not much that is very satisfying to read."

Harsh words, considering Mark has attempted to transcend the quick-turnover, cut-and-paste constructions of his genre. So, a storm in a teacup or an *Unforgettable Fire* in Salman Rushdie's back garden? Check for yourselves in July, when the book comes out.