

THE WEDDING PRESENT – THANK YER, VERY GLAD

Mark Hodgkinson

(Omnibus Press)

FOR MANY, a biography of The Wedding Present must seem as attractive a prospect as being force-fed cloth caps. These champions of the ordinary hardly lend themselves to pages of sensational prose. But their downbeat non-image has served as a useful smokescreen, for Mark Hodgkinson's competently written 90-odd pages prove that every band has a story to tell.

In The Wedding Present's case it's how an apparently careless and amiable bunch of lads, busting with self-deprecating banter, are in fact a hard-working, fiendishly committed business operation.

A scrutiny of David Gedge's early years shows a strict working class upbringing which instilled impeccable manners and the virtue of diligent study at school – qualities soon to become ingrained within the fabric of his music. The Wedding Present belied the early "shambling" misnomer by simply working their way out of the indie ghetto.

Without a doubt the no-frills realism of both band and book will reinforce deep rooted prejudices. But at least the one skeleton in The Wedding Present's cupboard – the sacking of original drummer Shaun Charman – is fully dusted down with frank quotes from both sides. It's revealed to be a rather shoddy affair, prompted at least in part by Gedge's romantic designs on Charman's girlfriend during a European tour.

Such vaguely sordid titbits will serve to banish the good-time guys illusion still harboured by Weddoo freaks already reeling from the band's recent adoption of darker rock dynamics. And Gedge in particular is obviously a far more complex character than he cares to admit. Yet it's indicative of the leaner, fitter rock beast lurking within a band who until a year ago seemed in grave danger of assuming the dreaded English Pop Institution mantle that throttled The Smiths.

Few bands are smart enough to survive the Brit indie fans' suffocating embrace but *Thank Yer, Very Glad* lends more weight to the thesis that The Wedding Present have the brassneck to do just that.

Keith Cameron