

Edinburgh International Book Festival – Stuart David and Ian Rankin



Belle and Sebastian, Scotland's best-loved indie band, was founded by Stuart Murdoch and bass player Stuart David, recording albums such as *Tigermilk*. David left the band in 2000 to focus on side project Looper and his writing. Serendipitously he won a place in Ian Rankin's novel, *A Question of Blood*. Discussing new biography, *In the All-Night Café*, David and Rankin filled the time with anecdotes of first gigs in bedrooms, S&M dungeons and an exclusive track listen. Expectedly wearing a striped t-shirt we could sense the Glasgow band before any words were uttered.

Admitting to influences such as Tom Waits, The Waterboys (who were in fact playing the capital this very evening), Bob Dylan and with Glen Campbell's Rhinestone Cowboy being the first track that inspired his love for music, it was not surprised with Let it Beatbox. A section of this event incorporated an exclusive first listen of the track which from what we could gather was worked on by Murdoch, David and Alistair, who was the motivator for Belle & Sebastian's existence. Avant-garde and lengthy, Ian commented on this as "more is more" giving David a wayward indent at the demands upon their aficionados.

Filling the void with stories of Belle & Sebastian's instigation, first gig in a house party bedroom and his departure for band project Looper in 2000 David was clearly at the crux of the formation of one of Glasgow's musical highlights. The small crowd number, kept low perhaps by The Waterboys gig ten minutes' walk away, ensured its intimacy which was idyllic for any Glasgow music fan in this crowd

urging to feel partial to the scene. Palpable in humour and nostalgia, David was able to excite the music fans in the room with a fond storytelling of Alistair, his S&M dungeon, Peacock Johnson, who received a confusing mention in one of Rankin's novels, and all else in between.

Satirically he informed the audience that Alastair actually left the band (that was to lead on to be Belle & Sebastian) to become famous and that Stuart Murdoch romantically spend the entire rehearsal time once writing a valentines card. He humoured the enthusiasts with a story about an audition with a drummer where the drummer did not turn up to the flat that his audition was being held, his own. The gig at Stones in Edinburgh also got a mention, as it pre-empted their signing to Jeepster; no-one turned up except David's partner, Karn. Jeepster were however keen to sign them. *Tigermilk* involved tutors from Beatbox, music course for the unemployed, Alan Rankine (of the Associates) but as Murdoch was suffering from fatigue syndrome at the time a lot of the sections of the album were recorded individually. He did not have the momentum to bring everyone together, so for most of the offset the band were not actually working collectively. Yarns such as this hooked the crowd's interest, as it was obvious that he has a storytelling capability, one which enthuses interest in this memoir.

Highlighting the Looper retrospective, perhaps more writing and the biography it was left vague where David's focus will lie next but one thing becomes blatant from this event; whether it is music or writing David will undeniably always be lurking away in the backdrop of Glasgow's creative scene, enough to make him somewhat of an enigma that folks will want to read about.

In the All-Night Cafe, by **Stuart David** is published by Little, Brown and is available from bookshops and online.