

Edinburgh International Book Festival 2016 – Brix Smith Start ***



Photo by Ameila Troubridge

Brix Smith Start walked into the Baillie Gifford tent in Charlotte Square, in her ripped black jeans and leather jacket, reminding the audience that this girl has some rock and roll stories to share. This goes as far back as her father's non-acceptance of her. With the release of her book, *The Rise, the Fall and the Rise*, earlier this year, the tent was filled with The Fall fans, and Brix fans, as she welcomes them inviting them into intimate tales of her life.

Smith Start exclaimed, "punk music was my saviour," with her favourite track being the *Guns of Brixton* by The Clash, which resulted in her name, Brix. She was not keen on being the name on her birth certificate, "Laura, the girl whose father did not love her." She also informed her fans that key characters in the music industry such as Andrew Weatherall were keen to see her write her tale, and along with the inspiring Viv Albertine biography, she was determined to do so.

Her insight began with The Fall as she informed us that when she came across them she could tell nothing about the band from the album cover. As the festival fireworks went off she exclaimed, "now that's Mark Smith coming to get me" hinting at the animosity between the two of them now. Going back to the days of when she first joined The Fall, she mentioned that she played three tracks to Mark, who was so impressed with her song-writing that he decided to bring her in on the spot. She has no regrets of being in The Fall; "by leaving Bennington I

felt like this was my destiny to go with the band. I am really grateful to having worked with Mark E Smith and we were great song writing partners.”

As this book is about love, dark things and coming through dark things (*The Rise, The Fall and The Rise*) her evening is not without mention of those dark things, albeit skimmed over. She outlined that Mark E Smith had left her for another woman and in actual fact moved north to live in Edinburgh, which was the catalyst for her downward spiral with eating disorders and depression.

She read a couple of extracts from her book, the first being a distinctly dark experience in Disneyland. After reading about the lucid experience of her favourite Disney ride, she exclaimed, “The duality of safety and danger has never been so vivid.” She then gave us an insight into life with Nigel Kennedy, “I went after men that were very similar to my father. And Mark and Nigel were not that dissimilar.” They were friends with the Linekers (Gary and Michelle), and her second extract was a howlingly funny story about the 1990 World Cup and watching Gary having bodily functioning issues.

And of course she hinted at her recent rise. Three people she loved said “You should really play guitar again” as she had washed her hands of that period. “I picked up the guitar in the comfort of my own house as I was still broken,” she said and once she did that was it. “It was like a piece of my soul was missing and I did not realise it until I picked up that guitar.” She has since then been signed, for two records.

She is playing Edinburgh’s Sneaky Petes in October.