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‘Andrew Stafford, Pig City: From The Saints to Savage Garden, Second revised edition’

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Andrew Stafford, *Pig City: From The Saints to Savage Garden*, 2nd revised edition (University of Queensland Press, 2024), 384pp. Paperback. A\$34.99. ISBN: 978-0-7022-6879-3.

As a lover of music and an historian by training I jumped at the chance to review this second, revised edition of this classic book and I was not disappointed. Having also visited Brisbane for the first time some years ago now and definitely picking up on the fact that the city had experienced some significant changes, I was fascinated to hear more about its history.

Stafford traces the history of the lively Brisbane music scene from the 1970s to the present. A significant portion of this period was when authoritarian and some would even say dictator Queensland National Party Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen was in power (1968-1987). Stafford acknowledges that much of the music produced in the city during his premiership was certainly a reaction to repression in numerous ways that Brisbanites experienced at the hands of Bjelke-Petersen or the Brisbane Police (hence the main title of the book: *Pig City*, as this refers to the Police) but there were also other factors at play. Stafford quite rightly does not want to give Bjelke-Petersen all the credit for the success of such rock bands as The Saints (included in the sub-title of the book) established in 1973, when Brisbane was very much still considered a country town rather than a State capital. In many ways The Saints were Brisbane's first internationally successful band, especially in the United Kingdom (UK). Although this was more a necessity as the band did not have much initial success at home. They moved to the UK as the punk scene was much more advanced there at the time.

The book is divided into three parts chronologically and within these it primarily explores the history of major bands, including Powderfinger (an Australian band that I first came across when I lived in the country in the early 2000s) formed in 1989; and Savage Garden set up in 1993 (a band that I fell in love with immediately when I was living in the UK and that affection continued when the lead vocalist Darren Hayes went solo). However, the book also looks at the growth of local music festivals in Brisbane, such as the famous Livid Festival, where many local bands raised their profiles in the city. And Stafford points out that the local festival has now also been exported to Sydney and Melbourne, Brisbane's larger and more international sister cities (Although Brisbane is most definitely catching up with them, interestingly fueled in part by a significant migration of New South Welshman and Victorians to the city). Stafford does quite rightly though lament the increasing gentrification of the city. In particular the pulling down of landmarks (many of which hosted the early gigs of some of its most famous bands) to make space for ever more luxury apartments. So, the exponential growth of the city has certainly not come without its costs.

One of the greatest strengths of the book is the rich primary material that Stafford draws on, primarily from interviews he carried out with music artists that he discusses. This truly makes the book come to life, rather than it just being a rather abstract academic study of the history of musical bands in Brisbane. But Stafford also provides very important historical context to his surveys of those music bands. This includes a brilliant line about Pauline Hanson in 1996: 'Carrying more chips on her padded shoulders than she ever sold in her famous shop...' (p. 299). This is just but one

example of Stafford's clever and engaging prose which grips you from the set-go. It makes what is a very fascinating book an absolute joy to read.

Pig City is most certainly an excellent history of the music bands that emerged in Brisbane since the 1970s. However, it is also more than that: it is a wonderful history of Brisbane, Queensland, and even Australia during this period. And through its focus on especially Brisbane music bands that were successful internationally it also reflects on how Australia projected itself on the international stage. It covers such topical subjects as reconciliation with First Nations in Australia. It is a wonderful example of cultural and social history at its best. The book also includes a playlist for anyone interested in hearing some of the classic songs the book discusses. I wholeheartedly recommend the book to readers, both specialists and general readers alike.

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