

# Off The Record

**I, Tina**  
by Tina Turner, with Kurt Loder  
(Viking, \$29.95)

Anna Mae Bullock, 20 years of age and well pregnant with her second child, is in hospital suffering from hepatitis. However, because a record she has recently cut with her mentor and sometime lover Ike Turner is getting local airplay, she sneaks out of hospital and goes on a tour of one night stands with his band. Such behaviour is called ... what? Stupidity? Dedication? Or maybe just arrant fear of the bandleader? It's the probable combination of all three that makes so much of this autobiography so intriguing.

Whether she likes to admit it or not, it is Tina's relationship with Ike that dominates this book. Although only occupying 18 of her nearly 50 years, the relationship takes up over half the narrative — and provides nearly all the story's fascination.

Most of the broad outline is well known due to the enormous press coverage Tina has received in the last couple of years — Ike's vicious beatings, his sadistic intimidation, the increasingly deranged behaviour as he sank into cocaine addiction. Nonetheless, the steady accumulation of detail provided here render the story engrossingly fresh. *I, Tina* is, for much of its length, a graphic case study of domestic violence in a rock and roll setting.

Tina's candour is extensive and ranges across such topics as her abortion and her decision to play in South Africa. Musically, the book is most interesting for its images of the lifestyle of a hardworking, regionally successful 60s club band, and for the chapter on the recording of 'River Deep, Mountain High' with Phil Spector (Ike never went near it).

The book's style largely consists of stitching together first person reminiscences from about 30 individuals. While this may allow the personal tone(s) to come through, it can also be irritating for its inhibition of narrative continuity. Nonetheless, one extraordinary personality shines through and, if her epilogue is rather cloying, Tina

Turner can only be admired for emerging triumphant after a life of such sustained and arduous struggle.

**Peter Thomson**

**Good Morning Blues: the Autobiography of Count Basie**  
(as told to Albert Murray)  
(Heinemann, \$39.95)

A good biography will interest you even in someone you'd previously ignored. Ross Russell's *Bird Lives* did that for me with Charlie Parker. Unfortunately Count Basie's autobiography is not good. He states in the preface that he intends to keep silent about any potentially scandalous or scurrilous details of his private life. Well it must have been a wild one because he doesn't tell us a damn thing about it. Nor do we learn much of interest about the important members of his band. Great musicians like Lester Young or Jo Jones appear as little more than jarring sidemen.

Admittedly there is some moderately absorbing detail about Basie's early years as an itinerant piano player. But once he becomes established — by the outset of the 40s — the book becomes little more than a padded out discography coupled with an itinerary of his gigs. And it's 388 pages long! If you want to learn the important stuff about Count Basie, the place to start is the MCA Best of double album.

**Peter Thomson**

**You'll Never Be Sixteen Again**  
by Peter Everett  
(Heinemann, \$23.95)

From the teddy boy to Geldof, three-and-a-half decades of nostalgia go to press. Peter Everett tells a blisteringly honest tale of changes in the pop-rock scene and the British teenager. Brilliant pics, bolstered by all nature of period and fact, allow the author a few home truths:

"The blatancy with which 80s pop stars cultivated their images, and their readiness to dismiss any suggestion that they might be 'about' anything more profound

than an eye-catching appearance wedded to an ear-catching tune, was either refreshing or depressing according to one's expectation of pop music." (Oh, what a circus!)

Heavy? Nah — the most readable account of years past and reasons for being I've seen in yonks. Pick it up, put it down, pick it up ...

**Barry Caitcheon**

**Rock Wives**  
by Victoria Balfour  
(Virgin Books)

Subtitled "The hard lives and good times of the wives, girlfriends and groupies of rock and roll," *Rock Wives* basically consists of a sequence of separate interviews with 17 women and one man. As the chapter order follows musical chronology the book begins with the once-teenage bride of Jerry Lee Lewis and the former striptease companion of Little Richard, while finishing up with Mrs Dee Dee Ramone and Mr Cyndi Lauper.

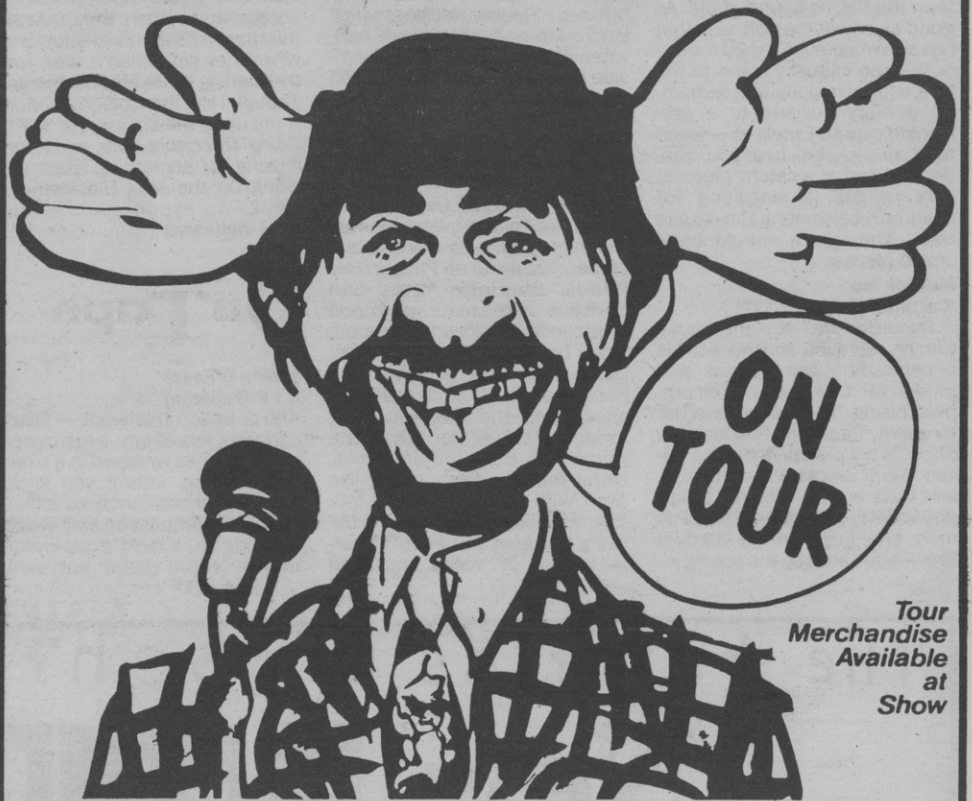
The author never attempts any overview or conclusion to the book, despite so many of the stories recounting how rock's second class citizens have coped with their partners' egotism, neuroses and various addictions. But then the women are a mixed lot too, from Claudette Robinson in a quietly stable relationship of more than 25 years, to Monika Danneman, who spent less than two months with Jimi Hendrix and has since turned herself into a permanent cult authority.

*Rock Wives* is fun to read but it has decided limitations. For example all the photos are present day ones when so many stories cry out for shots from way back when. More significantly, the interviews never seem challenging and the author rarely presents any alternative viewpoint. (Would you accept Anita Pallenberg's claim that her relationship with Keith Richards was "always basically down to earth"? ) Consequently any dirt that we get is only what these women want us to know. But overall there's enough here for a semi-juicy read and, on occasion, we do get the benefit of some hard won wisdom. Just be prepared for something closer to the *Women's Weekly* than to *Rock & Roll Babylon*.

**Peter Thomson**

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