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Posted on 15 April 2019 By Dominic Sandbrook

## [Read] ? The Great British Dream Factory ? Weplayit.co

I have been reading this book on and off since Christmas I cannot pretend I read every word as I concentrated on those sections that were of particular interest to me And there

were plenty I knew nothing about Tony Iommi and how he created heavy metal with Black Sabbath The piece on J Arthur Rank amazingly from Hull was good, and the fact that 1946 was the only year the UK did better box office at the cinema than the USA Then there was Chris Blackwell, forming Island Records at 21, and sections on Tom Brown's Schooldays, Billy Bunter, Jennings and Biggles, all from my childhood Also Harry Potter, James Bond, Coronation Street and a great pieces on Catherine Cookson and Agatha Christie The bits on science fiction were interesting, I always loved the start of The Day of the Triffids when a man walks alone from his hospital bed, and H G Wells War of the Worlds I always regret not being allowed to watch Quatermass on TV when I was eight years old. And lastly I loved the sections on The Prisoner, Elton John, Andrew Lloyd Webber and finally Billy Elliott The writer of the film Lee Hall never expected to write the musical alongside his idol Elton John. Reading the first few pages was a kind of sinking into a warm bath on a freezing night Even if most of the time I felt Sandbrook was stating the bleeding obvious, that it is often most conservative pop culture that is the most successful in terms of range and profit, therefore we are all conservative then we like to think, pop culture is the ultimate testament to the cult of personlaity and John Lennon was a bit of a dick But I loved the writing and disagreed and wanted to debate with enough of it that I was happy to stay in the tub I am still not exactly sure how all four segments sit together, but I did not care It's a bloody good book of popular culture of the last 60 years I am not going to argue that class has all but disappeared, but, Western Society, now defines itself on it's pop culture rather than occupation and class I know I define myself by the books I read and the movies that I watch than anything else Though Sandbrook laments the growth of the Self Help and we are all snow flake culture as do I art cannot exist without it, and I love my Hammer Horror Vincent Price collections and perfectly themed bookcases to wish it any other way This I think is the main theme Sandbrook keeps coming back to, the lose of community and the rise of the individual with the Beatles, Dr Who, Dickens, H.G Wells, James Bond things now we cannot live without There always has been Specials in a society, that used to be lucky few born into the aristocracy, now its those lucky enough get a big break I know it is not as simple as that the people who Sandbrook discusses were and are enormously talented Even Lloyd Webber and even Catherine Cookson Like Nora Roberts I have never understood Cookson I got a book of her's for a birthday, the main character married her rapiest Wait what Though I still don't understand the 50 shades of grey thing At least with Webber I was obsessed with Cats, infact I think I could still sing memories 5 notes off key. But that is the best thing about this book Sandbrook is a fan just like everything else He is a Paul man not a John man, loves Doctory who, puts up with Harry Potter Which is the greatest problem with writing the history of pop culture, it will always end up personal Even if I agreed with a lot of critisms leveled at Rowling it made me want to read Potter again I first read Harry Potter in my first year of University, I was living in a university dorm away from home and having a tough year Potter was meant to be what my university experience was meant to be and I latched

on like a leech The Beatles songs on my phone tend to be John, Help, Hide Your Love Away, Norwegian Wood Elenor Rigby, even though I love the song, was taken off to make room for the music from Goblin Even though I know John was self obsessed, and well a bit of a dick I am still drawn to his music All this to explain, as a child of the Empire, I have always been attracted to all things British I swear the coronation street theme was the sound track to my childhood It was constantly on growing up In fact last time I visited home, 7.30 sharp there it was In fact my mother always said I was born an hour late and she had to miss Coro I grew up in New Zealand, yet there is a generation who related to a Northern working class neighbourhood After all New Zealand was constructed in the old country s image That is why I loved the book, even if I might have added in different elements, it was fun to debate with Sanbrook for awhile In fact I look forward to doing it again. [Read] ? The Great British Dream Factory ? Britain S Empire Has Gone Our Manufacturing Base Is A Shadow Of Its Former Self The Royal Navy Has Been Reduced To A Skeleton In Military, Diplomatic And Economic Terms, We No Longer Matter As We Once Did And Yet There Is Still One Area In Which We Can Legitimately Claim Superpower Status Our Popular Culture It Is Extraordinary To Think That One British Writer, J K Rowling, Has Sold Than Million Books That Doctor Who Is Watched In Almost Every Developed Country In The World That James Bond Has Been The Central Character In The Longest Running Film Series In History That The Lord Of The Rings Is The Second Best Selling Novel Ever Written Behind Only A Tale Of Two Cities That The Beatles Are Still The Best Selling Musical Group Of All Time And That Only Shakespeare And The Bible Have Sold Books Than Agatha Christie To Put It Simply, No Country On Earth, Relative To Its Size, Has Contributed To The Modern Imagination This Is A Book About The Success And The Meaning Of Britain S Modern Popular Culture, From Bond And The Beatles To Heavy Metal And Coronation Street, From The Angry Young Men To Harry Potter, From Damien Hirst To The X Factor I m not at my best right now thanks to a respiratory virus, so found this book intermittently heavy going It s a history of Britain s cultural impact on the world, told through a series of case studies, including the Beatles, Catherine Cookson, and Doctor Who Inevitably, the appeal of each is coloured both by the writer and reader s respective opinion of them Thus I was most interested in the chapters on Agatha Christie having devoured most of her books when I was 12 , novels about country houses although there were no especially memorable insights there , and science fiction well, H G Wells and John Wyndham I had less interest in detailed analysis of Coronation Street never watched , Tom Brown s Schooldays never read , and Grand Theft Auto never played This is not to say that I don t care about aspects of pop culture unless they already interest me it s interesting to examine what has significant popular impact However, I found the analysis here rather superficial, so it wasn t much fun to read unless something I actually cared about was under discussion For instance, James Bond is obviously examined in some detail, without any new insights Yes, he harks back to an Imperial Britain that no longer existed once he became popular He s a male power

fantasy on an individual and national level, that is not a groundbreaking concept. The main thesis of the book is that Britain is mired in nostalgia, which is being commoditised by the cultural and arts sector of the economy. Our popular culture is pervaded with fear of the present and future, leading to an idealisation of the past. This theme is covered in a much incisive and acerbic fashion by Owen Hatherley in *The Ministry of Nostalgia*. There is a lot of fascinating class stuff involved, which *The Great British Dream Factory* only touches on anecdotally. That is why I didn't enjoy the book, I think it is too anecdotal and all those factoids didn't seem to add up to a huge amount for a 650 page book.

In recent years Dominic Sandbrook has established himself as one of the leading historians of Britain during the 1970s and 1980s. He has published several huge and comprehensive books that detailed the politics of the period and Britain's fluctuating international relations. One of the great strengths of those books has, however, lain in the detailed context that he weaves by exploring the prevailing social and cultural trends. He has that happy knack of being able to address complex and challenging ideas in a readily accessible manner. In this latest book, he looks closely at British cultural development from the end of the Second World War up until the end of the twentieth century, considering how domestic tastes in art, fashion, literature and music have changed, and also the impact that British culture has had upon the rest of the world. He also draws an illuminating comparison between the boom in British cultural dominance around the world and the demise of the huge manufacturing base that had seen Britain as one of the leading industrial exporters. There is scarcely a facet of British life that escapes Sandbrook's scrutiny, and he is not afraid to court controversy by criticising so-called national treasures. John Lennon, seemingly canonised by dint of dying young at the hands of an assassin, emerges with his reputation sullied after an intriguing analysis of the song *Imagine*, whose exalted ideals Lennon himself failed to espouse. While conceding his musical talent, and his valuable cultural legacy, Sandbrook exposes Lennon as a hypocritical, selfish, materialistic monomaniac.

He also looks in detail at the most successful novelists over the period, with lengthy consideration of some writers often sneered at by the literary establishment. One such was Catherine Cookson, who sold hundreds of millions of books, and is generally categorised as a writer of romance novels. In fact most of her books have a gritty reality, reflecting her own bleak upbringing through a childhood and youth of immense deprivation, both financial and emotional. Ian Fleming, meanwhile, brought product placement to a previously unparalleled pitch with his James Bond books, though Sandbrook suggests that he always felt he was struggling in the shadow of his older brother Peter, who wrote travel books that were feted by the literati. Meanwhile, the novelist who racked up the greatest volume of sales of all reckoned to be around two billion books was Agatha Christie. Like J.R.R. Tolkien, her writing reflected the devastating impact on her family of the first World War, and Sandbrook demonstrates that, far from writing just about the upper class, as claimed by many of her literary detractors, most of her characters inhabit almost exclusively the middle or lower classes. All in all, this

is an entertaining and informative book, and represents a fine companion volume to his previous history books. If war is akin to revolution and if a new post war identity was curated from the ashes, then we have some serious issues to tackle, for GB before WW2 was Great because it was a real superpower in the world, controlling the destiny of 1/3rd of the world resources, and so we have to consider what post war Britain has managed to attain with the new identity. Because it's only natural that a post war Britain still has illusions of grandeur. Dominic explains the emergence of a British identity based on its traditions and its history, the death of its working class filled with a dream of making it big in London, its most popular books based on the same traditional formula, its sports club slowly losing its quality players managers with the death of the working class. Dreams are good, critical for progress, but they are dreams in the end. With Brexit around the corner, the prospects for fulfilling the dream look very bleak to me. A survey of British popular culture in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, focusing on the careers of selected cultural entrepreneurs, and the production and consumption of cultural products television programmes, music, novels, etc. Though some of these would only be familiar to UK inhabitants Coronation Street, Sandbrook is interested in cultural products that the UK has managed to sell to the rest of the world as somehow emblematic of Britishness though he's not particularly interested in the international consumers who serve to measure this success. His case studies include The Beatles focusing on Lennon, who gets a kicking as a self-involved narcissist, Doctor Who, The Avengers, Elton John, James Bond, Andrew Lloyd Webber, the English country house as a story setting, etc. He's better as a historian than as a critic indeed, he seems to pride himself on having nothing much intelligent to say about these texts as texts rather than as indices for broader social developments and ideas. Toilet reading at best. This is one to dip in to. There is no coherent structure that holds these essays together. You will find yourself skimming huge chunks of banal commentary on the subjective opinions of Sandbrook's muddled mind. His complete all-out mission to discredit John Lennon is pitiful and anecdotal at best. Footnotes here are nothing than scribbles on Sandbrook's actual feet. Why he has such a huge chip on his shoulder regarding John Lennon makes no sense. In fact there isn't just a chip on his shoulder, there's a whole fish and chip dinner residing there. He is being contrarian for the sake of attention, this is at best a gimmick and a poor one. In the light of this I must reassess his previous books that I've read. The man has lost his mojo. Bottom line, keep it in the bathroom also handy if you run out of toilet paper. I thought that this book would be brilliant. I thought that it would be a treasure for the lovers of ALL THINGS BRITISH, like yours truly. Yeeees not quite next time I'll take a moment to think again. I gave up at 40% annoyed and frustrated to the high heavens. I don't know what the writer wanted to achieve. Was it a book about the history of British culture? Was it a chance to reminisce of the golden days? Was it simply to make fun, no, to ridicule the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, Heavy Metal, J.K Rowling, the Queen the band, not the sovereign who seems to be the only one escaping his critic talons. Whatever his intentions

were, he produced an utter failure Chapters packed with information unrelated to his themes, although I failed to see what the themes were Poor attempts to appear light hearted and full of humour Sarcasm with a good dose of unashamed elitism towards the cultural offerings that A were not to his liking, or B that were the products of other countries Verbose style used to support his personal opinions, like prejudices really Downright racist comments over the origins of John Lennon or Mick Jagger or the members of Black Sabbath, sexist remarks regarding J.K Rowling and other women artists These are not the elements that should consist an adequate book about the British culture The part of the world that helped in shaping so many images in so many expressions of Art deserves a much better account than this poorly executed, chauvinistic, full of prejudices creation. I have always enjoyed Dominick Sandbrook s books and was looking forward to reading this, his latest Subtitled, The Strange History of our National Imagination, it is an examination of British culture Or, as the author puts it, the shared culture of the English speaking world Put simply, it describes the way that, after the Industrial Revolution, the country gradually stopped being a success in exporting manufactured goods, but gradually became successful in cultural exports television, music, the arts and literature I suspect though, that some of us in England would question whether much of what we make is produced for the American market, rather than our own, especially in terms of television drama Obviously, though, it has always been the case that British artists have longed to be a success in the States, which is so financially lucrative the Beatles, I want to hold your hand, was written with the American market in mind and drama s such as, Downton Abbey, while popular in the UK were obviously set in a past that appeals to US audiences and confirms their tourist board picture of the country. The book begins with the opening ceremony of the 2012 Olympics I recall, along with the author, how media expectations were low and many were taken by surprise at the success of a ceremony which showed the country s rural and industrial heritage, as well as nods to comedy and homages to music and literature What is interesting is how well known so many of those featured would be recognised around the world and it is the popular that the author centres on So, he tends to ignore the highbrow no Bloomsbury Set , but Catherine Cookson, James Bond and Elton John all feature highly. As always, Sandbrook s style is very readable He looks at the country from Workshop of the World to Cultural Superpower by examining the birth of Heavy Metal seamlessly linking Black Sabbath to the Industrial Revolution and comparing Hollywood movie moguls to the British equivalent , J Arthur Rank committed Methodist and the father of British cinema Along the way, he considers why the States in particular was so attracted to certain films or television shows, so looks in depth at Rank s assault on Hollywood with Henry V for example, or why The Avengers eventually proved so popular. Although this book obviously cannot cover everything, this book ranges from fashion, with Mary Quant, through advertising, the strange success of British designed computer games, country houses, school stories, Charles Dickens, Dr Who, soap operas, Ealing comedies, Andrew Lloyd

Webber musicals, Agatha Christie, Tolkien, H.G Wells and It is, though, in his examination of music that Sandbrook has caused most controversy From punk rock to glam rock, through heavy metal and the giants of the Rolling Stones and the Beatles, Sandbrook looks at the huge success of British popular music Of course, you cannot discuss British popular music without the Beatles and here, I will immediately say, they are my favourite group of all time and I have read literally hundreds of books about them The Beatles kick started the British Invasion, which led to other groups assaulting the American charts with such success and, rightly, the author gives a lot of time to both them and the Stones as the most important bands in the Sixties Much of his time on the Stones is spent on the drugs bust at Redlands and his musings on the various country houses of each band member However, with the Beatles there is quite a lot of Lennon bashing Usually, it is Paul who seems to be targeted in such books, but this is a bit of a role reversal and much of what is written seems both a little churlish and fails to understand Lennon s character The Beatles never said they were anything other than ambitious and all the members were open even in early interviews about their wish to make money Paul happily says that he and John sat down to write a swimming pool, and makes no secret of their desire to be successful Both Paul and John were ferociously ambitious and John always took the band seriously, even in the very early days demanding commitment and ousting even good friends if he felt they were not adding anything to the band indeed, when Paul s father forced him into a job, a worried Lennon threatened to throw him out too, unless he gave it up and attended lunchtime sessions at the Cavern hanging around the gates where Paul attempted to earn a wage and doing all he could to draw his chosen partner back on side If you are a Beatles fan then you might wish to skip the section on Lennon if not, then you have been warned that much of it is unfair and unnecessary and most of the criticisms of Lennon he would openly accept in his own lifetime Overall, I did enjoy this book, although much of it read as a rather indulgent exercise on self congratulation I did not always get the sense of why so much of British popular culture has been so successful around the world, just that it was As such, this was a rather mixed bag of tricks, but it was very readable and I learnt much especially about the early days of British cinema that I did not know before.

**DOMINIC SANDBROOK**

**THE  
GREAT BRITISH  
DREAM  
FACTORY**

*THE*  
**STRANGE HISTORY  
OF  
OUR NATIONAL  
IMAGINATION**



## New Post

Fire Bringer  
Into the Wild  
The Cricket in Times Square  
A Bear Called Paddington  
The Amazing Maurice and His Educated Rodents  
The Last Unicorn  
Just So Stories  
Wild Magic  
The Rescuers  
Bambi  
The Sight  
Three Bags Full  
Time Cat  
Lirael  
The Story of Doctor Dolittle

## Recent Post

Charlotte's Web  
Watership Down  
The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe  
Animal Farm  
Winnie-the-Pooh  
Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH  
The Golden Compass  
The Wind in the Willows  
Redwall  
The Wonderful Wizard of Oz  
Alice's Adventures in Wonderland & Through the Looking-Glass  
The Jungle Book  
The Velveteen Rabbit

Stuart Little

Bunnacula

The Phantom Tollbooth

Black Beauty

The Tale of Despereaux

The 101 Dalmatians

James and the Giant Peach

Fantastic Mr. Fox

The Mouse and the Motorcycle

The Chronicles of Narnia

The Tale of Peter Rabbit

The Trumpet of the Swan

The Little Prince

Fire Bringer