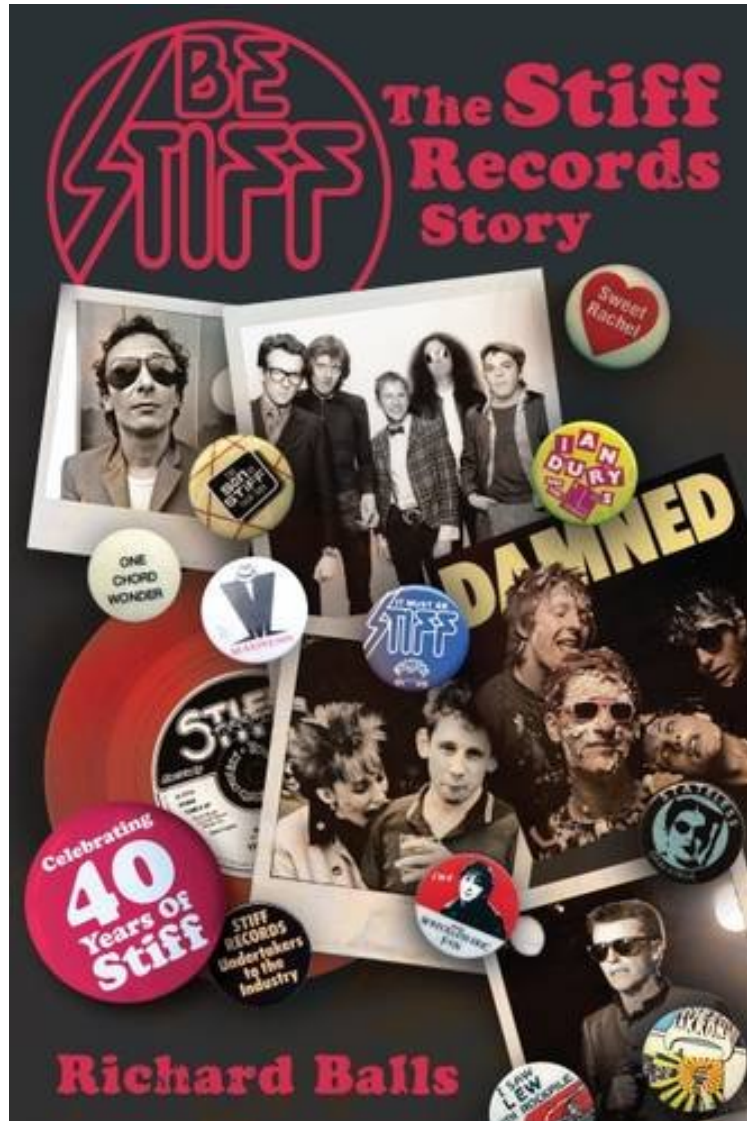


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## Be Stiff: The Stiff Records Story

*Richard Balls*

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**Richard Balls : Be Stiff: The Stiff Records Story** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Be Stiff: The Stiff Records Story:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. BE STIFF !By Cousin BobbyI can dig it.Ive read numerous books over the years on indie record labels but this is the first Ive readthat is solely on Stiff Records.Besides the usual on the start up and early history we get a lot of pre- Stiff records background,the personalities behind the label and the numerous musicians .Its nice to read about Wreckless Eric, Kirsty MacColl, Jona Lewie among others for a change instead of the usualfocus on Elvis Costello, Madness and Nick Lowe. The author hit on what drew me to Stiff- in the

80's I heard "Brilliant Mind" off the "Some Kind Of Wonderful" soundtrack and it sounded like an American indie band so I went researching into the band and then later the label. High recommended! 10 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A very good read indeed. By Dave Cremer A very good read indeed. Richard's Ian Dury biog was also a very enjoyable book, and this book is a must for anyone who loved the music that Stiff Records unleashed onto the nation in '76/'77. I am still the proud owner of BUY1 with "Plug Copy" stamped on the label. Stiff was a label as important as Chess and Motown in my opinion, and this book is an excellent reminder of their importance in the scheme of things. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Thorough Run Through. By James Mowat At the forefront of indie, Stiff Records gets a great account in this history of. A real sense of time and place comes through and I was often back and forth to YouTube to remind or discover the many acts covered. Well researched and written up.

Dave Robinson was once a roadie to Jimi Hendrix. He also managed Brinsley Schwarz and was behind their ill-fated publicity stunt when he flew journalists to New York to see their gig at the Fillmore East. By 1974, he was managing the Hope Anchor pub in Islington. Jake Riviera had been road manager for Chilli Willi And The Red Hot Peppers and later Dr Feelgood. In 1976, this maverick pair were to launch Stiff Records, supposedly on the back of a 400 loan from Lee Brilleaux of the Feelgoods. In fact, they never cashed the check. The genius of Stiff was to take old pub rockers that they knew and turn them into new wave stars. Ian Dury, Elvis Costello and Nick Lowe were all going nowhere until they were signed the label and reinvented. For a while, the major labels didn't know how to respond to Stiff, particularly their brilliant marketing coloured vinyl, different coloured sleeves for the completest market and their slogans, such as "If It Aint Stiff, It Aint Worth a fuck". Riviera left the label in 1977 to form Radar Records and took Costello and Lowe with him. The label signed quirky acts such as Wreckless Eric, Devo, Rachel Sweet, Lene Lovich and more. Many of them were sent on package tours reminiscent of the Larry Parnes tours in the 1960s. They also launched Stiff America to no little success. Robinson signed Madness and The Pogues to the label before it went bankrupt in 1986. However, it re-launched in 2006 under new management and is still going strong. Richard Balls has interviewed over 50 artists and Stiff staff to tell a story that is long overdue. Shane MacGowan, Lene Lovich, Chas Smash, Wreckless Eric and more tell what it was like to work for the world's most outrageous record label. Tony Judge, who runs the Be Stiff website has provided lots of rare photos along with badges and memorabilia to make this a celebration of a great record label. Balls' other book on the life of Ian Dury sold a hefty 30,000 copies, so he has a following.

About the Author Richard Balls wrote Sex Drugs Rock 'n' Roll: The Life of Ian Dury for Omnibus in 2000. It sold over 30,000 copies and is still selling today. Richard is a publicity manager for Norwich City Council and lives in the city with his wife and two daughters. He is a passionate fan of Norwich City FC. He is the cousin of Ed Balls, Labour's Shadow Chancellor Of The Exchequer. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. As ever with Stiff, money was tight. Jake did his sums and reckoned their prestigious date with Television would just about cover their trip to Los Angeles. But the artfully edgy New York band fronted by the charismatic Tom Verlaine, refused to have Stiff's increasingly infamous punks on their bill. The snub was a bitter blow. Rat says: We went to see them and I remember Jake throwing a lot of abuse. Show us your tits! I think that is what he shouted. The tragic thing about it actually was that we really liked Television and Little Johnny Jewel was what everybody really talked about. That was the first punk single or one of them. They were something else and they gave punk an absolute musical credibility. But their attitude was so punk, because it was completely out there, with Little Johnny Jewel specifically. There is some good stuff on Marque Moon, but the kind of griminess that Richard Hell put on it just wasn't there. It was like freeform jazz that made sense and it was kind of intellectual. And I was really pleased. Okay, I'm in a punk band and everyone's saying punk bands are three chords. But these guys are really accomplished and you could put them on any stage anywhere. So when they said, You can't do it, we were actually quite gutted. I know we got a bit spiteful about it. But that was one of the reasons we were a bit spiteful because we thought they'd be on our side. I doubt they'd even heard us. I think it was more our reputation preceding us and Tom Verlaine saying, I'm not having a fucking freak show going on before me.