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WORKS · NOT NECESSARILY · CULTURE, TECHNOLOGY
AND CREATIVITY · FROM LIMELIGHT TO SATELLITE · AUDIO

PROFESSIONAL FOULS

TEXT: DOUG AUBREY

Post Modernism, 'Panic Culture', the reported 'death' of everything from the Avante Garde to rock n' roll. Such is the thrill of leaving the 20th Century. By way of a contrast, it also brings a 'renaissance' and rekindled interest in (of all things) Football. Suddenly, intellectual premier leaguers, popular culture's 'new wave' of First Division 'Mediaristocrats' and artist's in any division can admit that they love the people's game.

Football: a culture generally anathema to the guardians of high art, elitist academics and many that spout radical views (yet often retain inherently class based values) has now become the subject of everything from arts magazine features, to relevant source material for the much name dropped Jean Baudrillard. The 'cult of the popular' as it now exists in Great Britain Ltd's Media Apparatus and specifically in a popular culture highlight such as football, is no longer a spectator sport, watched by a predominantly male (heterosexual) audience, but a media spectacle (and still dominated by heterosexual males). A spectacle which, in true Baudrillardian fashion, we now find ourselves participating in: either consciously or unconsciously.

HEYSEL/HILLSBOROUGH/BRADFORD: AN ATROCITY EXHIBITION

"Stadiums are built as monuments to a city or country and serve the aims of representation. They are rituals that confirm a city. Their other functions - such as use for political rallies - reinforces this. At the same time, they seek to contain the crowd. In extreme cases they can become prisons. That was the case during the over throw of Allende in Chile and continues to be the case in soccer stadiums in Britain, where - because of the fear of autonomous noise and loss of social control - stadiums become prisons for hooligan gangs. The walls of a stadium insure that a fee will be paid for entrance but also create the illusion of the city or state as separate and bounded . . . It's boundaries are accepted by fans because, unlike the rest of daily life, they allow for ritualistic and sacred space where the populace can create itself as a group. Only as a mob invading the city do fans emerge united. The crowd accepts its role as representative of the populace in a perverse way and collectively makes its appearance as outsiders to the city . . ."

Rod Dubey (From 'Indecent Acts in Public Places')

Switching on late, to any one of three matches on British Television during the eighties and you would find yourself confronted not with a game of football, but:

- A Soccer War between Liverpool and Juventus fans in a neglected and decaying stadium, result: 42 fatalities.
- A wooden, pre 2nd World War stand burning, the occupants, lucky enough to escape, running and emerging, in some instances like human



MEDIA

CASUALTIES

torches from the inferno out onto the pitch, result: 56 dead.
- Liverpool supporters drowning in the open air in a crush of bodies at Sheffield's Hillsborough ground, one Saturday afternoon and spilling out into the goal mouth, result : 95 dead.

Perverse, or convenient?. In every instance, the television cameras were there to bear witness to these events live and in the end provided not only a 'scoop' but also vital, undisputed evidence for the largely ignored Taylor Report (commissioned after the Bradford Fire and Hillsborough disaster), which attempted to address the real problems that those of us that have ever been inside a football ground encounter. It seems easy for semi-detached 'experts' who represent the best (vested?) interests of the game to call for 'national service' and 'capital punishment' for the hooligans (supposedly) responsible for the events listed. Or, indeed, for politicians to call for increased state surveillance and further infringement upon our bodies and liberties through ID card schemes and electronic tagging, yet still parsimoniously defend the neglect by many Football clubs of their number one assets - The Fans.

Unfortunately, football (like most pop music), now seems to be first and foremost about the controlled and sponsored spectacle. More about a 'product delivered to a consumer by a sponsor', in most cases more interested in their own commercial and economic status and returns, than the elements that make up the real game and for whom it still has a *genuine* cultural meaning. Football, alcohol and violence are all

part of that culture - a fact that the Taylor Report however, did not really get a grasp of:

"I know of no other sport or establishment in a civilised country in which it is necessary to keep those attending from attacking each other' (the Taylor Report) but apart from suggesting that further specific offences be created and that electronic tagging be introduced, he fails to grasp what hooliganism is about or to put forward any new solutions, preferring instead to take the moral high ground. Few people in authority seem to realize that violence is a release of pent up frustration and hooliganism is also a good laugh to those involved . . ."

Richard Turner (from 'In Your Blood')

Those of us brought up in a culture of Puma Football boots, kickabouts in parks and council housing estates, Subbuteo, collecting ESSO World cup coins and supporting forth division teams, in the affluent third of the country, find ourselves after the events of the eighties, shocked into a kind of post - atrocity 'soccer panic'. The reality is that a genuine working class experience, has turned into a Corporate controlled video nasty and moved into the realms of 'Hyper- Realism', where we have witnessed events, that wouldn't be out of place in a JG Ballard novel.

In an age when Satellite Technology not only delivers the viewer to an advertiser and politician alike, it is perhaps revealing that fans







Pub Team by Peter Thomas 1990

can still suffer and be held responsible for such atrocities, while the Media Apparatus more generally refuses to acknowledge or accept that it too has an associated share of the moral and ethical responsibility for such events.

Amid the carnage of the three scenarios: Heysel, Hillsborough, Bradford, you couldn't help but feel that somewhere, someone was making money and perhaps realize who the real culprits are for bringing the much maligned people's game into so much disrepute.

THE LION RAMPANT & THE COSTA RICA COMPLEX

In 'Hampden Babylon' **Stuart Cosgrove** (Late Show Presenter and St Johnstone FC fan) dishes the dirt on Scottish Football, culling from back copies of popular Scottish newspapers scandal about Scotland's professional footballing casualties.

Or does it? The scandal he supplies doesn't really tell us anything that we didn't already guess (or read in the tabloids) and indeed confirms many popular preconceptions (myths?) about footballers, which is maybe an aim of the book. Inferring that they aren't always the brightest of boys, that the talent that lies in the 'magic' at their feet is quickly replaced by an obsession with what hangs between their legs. Like their loyal fans, it also appears that a key element to many footballer's career is alcohol and the ability to drink and 'rammie' with the best in the kebab shops and more 'exclusive' night clubs of a city like Glasgow. By attempting to sensationalize such exploits, Cosgrove perhaps misses the point that what makes football and hooliganism so appealing to disenfranchised youths, also appeals to their 'Saturday heroes'. In short: an Adrenalin drive and the fact that half the battle is always against yourself, as George Best proved on the Terry Wogan show.

The real highlight of Hampden Babylon, lies not so much in the Kenneth Anger inspired attempt to dish up dirt, especially when sex, drugs, lager, blood and rock n roll are all party to the Media icons lifestyle (in real terms, the ex player Justin Fashnau's 'coming out' was probably more revealing about football, sexuality and it's obsession with body/fluids, than anything in Babylon), but in it's more implicit statement on Scotland as a nation, still seemingly more interested in 'gubbing' the English than articulating its Scottish (and European) identity.

In a (Labour) controlled country, essentially ruled by a (Conservative) dinner party elite in Edinburgh, it's a pity that more attention wasn't being paid to the state of the national stadium and the chants, dissent, energy, inbred protest and bigotry of the terraces, rather than to scandal in the gutter press, or the lyrical and romantic whimsy of affluent soft soul pop bands and 'Scottish Exports' like Deacon Blue.

THE FALL OF THE CASUAL & THE RISE OF THE PITBULL

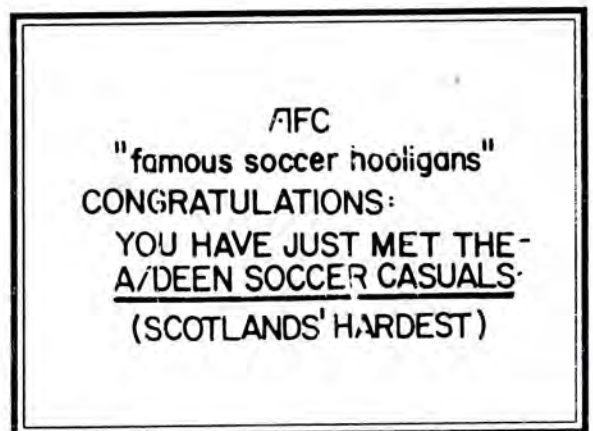
If the Eighties saw the death of 'cloth cap Socialism' and the birth

of its designer variant, along with the rise of the much maligned 'Yuppie', it also saw the end of the Skinhead/Bootboy and birth of the 'Casual' in football culture.

In Scotland, aside from the ongoing sectarian feuding of Celtic and Rangers, other supporters emerged in the course of the decade to challenge the 'Old Firm's' drunken domination on and off the terraces. These new hooligans, seldom wore club colours, but instead dressed in stylish sports wear and 'casuals' (often with the same 'labels' as their image conscious yuppie counterparts such as Armani, Fila, Taccini or Ellesse) and often left their 'firms' business cards on their battered victims.

During the Eighties, pride of place was taken by the Aberdeen Soccer Casuals (A.S.C). As Scotland's most successful club in the first 6 years of the decade, Aberdeen FC and their Soccer Casuals boasted 'away wins' in all of Scotland's major cities, both on the pitch and in the streets of Glasgow, Perth, Motherwell, Dundee and Edinburgh alike. What typified this and similar groups, such as West Ham's 'Inter City Firm' (I.C.F.) was their 'relative' affluence (oil rich Aberdeen Companies and The London Dockland Development Corporation, being the sources of employment and high wages, for the Aberdeen and West Ham Casual respectively) which - like their equally competitive, style obsessed yuppie counterparts - gave them the means to be able to travel widely to games in Britain and Europe alike.

'Bloody Casuals' by Jay Allan is a personal account of the activity of the A.S.C during the eighties. It's style is very much in keeping with the 'Skinhead' and 'Suedehead' novels of the seventies, with Allan describing in detail his adventures in Britain and Europe, leading up to a short prison sentence in 1986, for his part in a conspiracy to 'ambush' Motherwell's 'Saturday Service Crew' in Aberdeen. Allan provides a unique, non sociologist/non media pundit's view of life on the terraces (and possibly a hard edged commentary on eighties working class youth), before inevitably answering the simple question: WHY?



Casual calling card



Photo by Ross Sinclair

"Being a casual, is great fun but as most people are against us what can they do to stop it? Well there is no doubt that the lack of involvement of the fans with the clubs in Britain is a factor In Britain the fiction writers on the back page of the local papers is all you have to keep you going from one Saturday to the next . . . There is no doubt that organized hooliganism is partly the fans way of getting involved in the goings on, of getting noticed and sharing the headlines with the heroes. A big story in the press about your mob is a real boost to any casual . . . If you have made the papers you have had some kind of success."

Jay Allan 'Bloody Casuals'

The antecedents of the Casuals can be found in youth cults like the skinheads of the seventies, the Mods of the sixties and the first generation Teddy Boys (as portrayed by Richard Attenborough in the film version of Graham Greene's 'Brighton Rock') in the post war period. Other examples can be plotted back further, though all share the same fundamental facts: that clothing 'style', street fighting and what is more generally portrayed in the media as 'hooliganism' in this country are all very much a part of the working class experience, provoked also perhaps now by the fact that:

"It really shouldn't surprise anybody that so many of the youth today find fun in violence. All our lives we have had the glories of the World Wars and the Vietnam War and even intergalactic war bombed at us by some of the greatest talents in the world. Films, magazines, comics and of course TV glorify battle . . . Try to think how many films are aimed at youth where the hero has to kill someone or batter someone somewhere along the line . . . Violence is drummed in and drummed in and it becomes so strong my stomach tightens up with excitement just writing this. How many heroes are gentle, mellow and peace loving?"

Jay Allan 'Bloody Casuals'

The recent swift demise of the hooli/idealism apparent in Acid Culture (with it's casual and footballing allegiances), into one of burned out brains, drug vendettas and gun laws, along with the rise to notoriety of the Pitbull and Baddog are all possible symptoms of the shape of things to come. But also it is symptomatic of a culture, which condemns what it calls 'Casual' cults, neuteres and even calls for the mass destruction of fighting dogs, yet continues to sanction the 'blood sports' of the aristocracy, for reasons of 'Tradition'. Equally, those in more 'privileged' positions (who wouldn't even be considered as hooligans) continue to be able to indulge and get the same 'casual' buzz and adrenalin thrill, that Jay Allan refers to as being 'better than sex', in everything from paragliding, to skiing and more recently in 'survival courses' and 'Paintball War games'.

PROTEST, FOLK & 'PUNK' FOOTBALL

"Not extrinsic to soccer, violence against authority has always been a basic part of the game. The peasant precursor to soccer was the folk football played in villages throughout Europe. Without codified rules, it was a game with many

variations. Characteristically though, it was a raucous festival whenever it was played, going on for a day and ending in drunken revelry Since anyone could join in, there was no distinction between fans and players Thus, the authority of the officials and the rules of football (devised at private schools) that made the game legally acceptable (tellingly known as laws) can be seen as an extension of the laws and authority of the state. An attack on one, therefore, is an actual, rather than symbolic, attack on the other"

Rod Dubey (Indecent Acts in Public Places)

In Glasgow's East End a Sunday afternoon spectacle is the mass game. Played on concrete or shale pitches, it usually involves 30-40 males, dressed in a multitude of different colours (reflecting the usual Celtic/Rangers allegiances but also the 'styles' of Barcelona and Inter Milan among others) and wearing expensive cross train sports shoes, playing a game which resembles, to the passing anthropologist, something similar to the game as it existed in the 19th century: Folk football.

Elsewhere in the city and in housing estates, concrete and tin ghettos world-wide, gangs of both male and female players can be seen kicking a ball around, acting out their fantasies and pretending to be their local stars, adapting the 'laws' of the 20th Century game to suit their particular circumstance and environment and playing often in matches without duration. Examples of changes to the laws of the controlled game, include the 'rush goalie': When two teams are unevenly matched, the goalkeeper effectively becomes an out field player or 'sweeper keeper', resulting in high scoring games, with players soon losing count of the goals scored (which become less and less important as games continue). While the use of concrete walls allows for rebounds instead of throw-ins and redefines a pitch in relation to available space. To it's credit, a city like Glasgow has realized the importance of the street/folk game and is probably one of the few places where you're never very far away from a 'scratch' pitch of sorts (or motorway, for that matter).

'Indecent Acts in Public Places' by Rod Dubey, explores the roots of insolence and sedition in football, looking at how the game and it's associated culture emerged, making the point that in considering football hooliganism as separate from the game as it is played in stadiums is missing the point. In the containment and control of the game (and it's appropriation by media/corporate wealth) he sees that:

"Those critics who argue to reduce soccer violence (are) people who have missed the point of soccer's development as a spectator sport. They do not see that two distinct games have sprung from folk football: the sanctioned game on the field and the unsanctioned game in the stands. As representatives of law and order they seek to protect the former and destroy the latter. By doing so, they become a contributing factor to more violence, since it is a violence essentially directed at the state"

He suggests, that the game itself, along with other sports (such as baseball) at first banned by the Church and state because of their



threat to 'order', were then organized, controlled (with their own laws) and contained on pitches and eventually in stadiums, before finally as is the case in the current era, appropriated as 'spectacle' within the Global media network. This, at the same time as further disenfranchising those playing the unsanctioned game on the terraces: 'Not surprisingly, a working class youth often sees soccer hooliganism as an initial means of effecting change . . .' (Rod Dubey)

Just as 'fucking mental' and potentially subversive, is the support that a team like Hamburg's St Pauli can attract, where Anarchists, Squatters and a large female following 'every bit as fanatical as the male supporters' (Richard Turner) follow a team, whose players are reported to join in protests over issues ranging from the need for better housing, to anti-fascist demonstrations. In Glasgow meanwhile, several Celtic players have - reportedly in the past - dared to speak out against the poll tax and deprivation in the city's East End where the club have traditionally been based.

Perhaps however the real heartbeat of 'folk/punk' football, lies in the support attracted by hard working, but often not very good Scottish 2nd and English 3rd/4th division or junior league teams. Mostly located in the smaller and neglected towns and suburbs of Britain, the game on the field is often secondary to the one on the terraces (if there are any). In his short, sharp book, 'In Your Blood', Richard Turner has produced a genuine fan's view of the game generally, but as witnessed from the terraces of Stockport County (nr Manchester). It shows a passion and a genuine concern for the game as part of a 'folk/punk' culture and touches on both it's positive and negative aspects, based on the premise that football (just like art or hairdressing) 'is a way of life for many people, one that is well worth defending against incompetent management, spiteful government legislation, greedy developers and media hysteria . . .'

It stands on the virtually empty terraces of polemical football writing as both an individualistic voice against the detached observations of 'Greavsie', Jimmy Hill and other 'experts', and like the BBC's Video Diary from Italia 90', reveals much about who *really* understands and cares about the state of the game. Itself a belated highlight from Italia 90', the Video diary '**On the March With Bobby's Army**' features an England fan's (Kevin Allen's) own record and comment on his trip to the World Cup and captures it on a high street video format, something closer to what a real fan experiences. In the course of exposing how little that politicians, officials and the 'professional' media circus alike really care for football fans, the programme also proved that, in terms of media representation, anyone *could* potentially make engaging and relevant television - if they could get access to it.

'In Your Blood' and 'On the March with Bobby's Army' both tackle and confront the discrimination of the terraces head on, highlighting the symptoms (such as sexism and racism) and possible antidotes to

soccer's ills (aside from those created by eating crap pies and drinking cold Bovril), while bringing to light football's more genuine voices of dissent. Such voices are equally as vocal in a stream of fanzines across Europe, where 'the message from virtually all these magazines, so varied in quality and allegiance, is clear. It is that football belongs not to television, to an elitist clutch of clubs, to rapacious agents or sensation hungry tabloids, or to the shareholders and sponsors, but to the people who's pounds and partisanship sustain the sport . . .' (Richard Turner)

Prominent among such fanzines at the moment are 'When Saturday Comes' which recently celebrated it's 50th issue and Scotland's very own 'The Absolute Game', both of which offer an alternative perspective on the game and footballing culture generally. More specifically, the current club fanzine of the year 'Brian Moore's Head Looks Uncannily Like London Planetarium' is named after a famous English football commentator and supports fourth division English league side Gillingham.

All these fanzines are an attempt to do for football what independent record labels and their xeroxed equivalents did for music (and in the case of the Video Diary for Television). In short reclaim the game, the culture and the 'art' of football for those disenfranchised by a privileged minority of sponsors and media experts (both young and old), who sit in air-conditioned, glass-insulated, drinks cabinet equipped executive boxes and TV studios: people detached from, yet controlling events both on the pitch and TV screen alike. Maybe it's time they realized: that Football really is a game of two halves . . .

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Indecent Acts in Public Places, Sports, Insolence and Sedition, by Rod Dubey (Chariari)

Bloody Casuals: Diary of a Football Hooligan by Jay Allan (northern books from Famedram)

'On the March With Bobby's Army' - Kevin Allen BBC2 Video Diary
When Saturday Comes (Football Fanzine) Available from all good Newsagents

The 'Rainham End', Gillingham F.C. & 'Brian Moore's Head' (Gillingham Football Club Fanzine) available, price 50p from 11 Watts Avenue, Gillingham, Kent ME1 1RX.

'Travels in Hyper Reality' by Umberto Eco

The Folk Football of Glasgow

The Football Supporters Association