



## **I Know This Much: From Soho to Spandau**

*Gary Kemp*

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## **I Know This Much: From Soho to Spandau** Gary Kemp

I Know This Much – by Gary Kemp, Spandau Ballet's prime mover – is simply the freshest, most exciting and best-written memoir to arrive for years.

Gary's story begins in North London, where the Kemp family rented a home with no bathrooms and chickens in the yard. After a couple of failed attempts to kill his brother Martin, his parents gave him a guitar for Christmas.

From schoolyard battles between the Bowie Boys and the Prog Rockers to Mrs Kemp's firm insistence on net curtains, from acting for the Children's Film Foundation to manning a fruit and veg stall on Saturdays, Gary brilliantly evokes an upbringing full of love, creativity and optimism.

As the Thatcher years begin, Gary's account of the outrageous London club scene centred around the Blitz and Billy's is just sizzling. Out of this glamorous mayhem of kilt-wearing mascara'd peacocks would emerge Spandau Ballet - the band that would define the era, and hold high the victorious standard of the New Romantics.

Gary's thrilling journey with Spandau Ballet would see them record worldwide hits such as True, Gold and Through the Barricades, play the biggest stadiums in the world, and take to the stage in togas when their luggage gets lost in flight. Stallions, supermodels and dwarves would be hired for video shoots, and through it all, Gary records the wonderful friendships, and the slowly-building tensions that would eventually see five old friends facing each other in court.

I Know This Much tells the story of Spandau Ballet, but it's far more than a book about being in a band. Whether it's meeting Ronnie Kray before filming The Krays, sketching out the fashions and subcultures of the day, or hanging out with Princess Diana, this book offers a story on every page. And all the more so because it's all written – brilliantly – by Gary himself.

## **I Know This Much: From Soho to Spandau Details**

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# From Reader Review I Know This Much: From Soho to Spandau for online ebook

## Grace says

This was quite a refreshing biography. I wasn't sure that I would like it but while I admired the honesty felt that it could have gone a little deeper in some aspects.

It charts the story of Gary Kemp from his humble beginnings in Islington to his rise to Popstardom with Spandau Ballet. It is a must for fans of either their music or the scene from that era.

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## Trevor says

A great read if you're into your 80's music or just a general nostalgia freak.

It's very well written and is a great insight into one of the bands who started the New Romantic era.

I never knew Gary was married to Sadie Frost either!

If there is one criticism about it, the chapter on the court case totally glosses over it all and basically starts and finishes with him in court then winning. It would have been nice if he'd gone into a little more detail about the reasons for the court case and everybody's thoughts on it.

Overall though, great book :)

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## Nigeyb says

As a denizen of both Billys and Blitz (early New Romantic nightclubs), albeit one of the least fashionable of the regulars, and clearly visible in a number of scenes from Spandau Ballet's televised "20th Century Box" appearance at the Scala cinema in 1980, I was interested in reading Gary's book.

Whilst reading the book I also watched *"Soul Boys of the Western World"*, the 2014 documentary about Spandau Ballet directed by George Hencken. And, just to put all my cards on the table, I really liked a lot of their music up until "Chant No. 1 (We Don't Need This Pressure On)" however have significantly less time for what came later. Indeed the "Soul Boys of the Western World" documentary reinforces just how quickly the band became anodyne and bland once they were established in the mainstream, and Gary's book reinforces his commitment to competing with Duran Duran and outselling them and other "rivals". Out and out commerciality rarely equates to great art and so it was with latter day Spandau Ballet.

Spandau's explicit commerciality also feeds into the book's weaker aspects: celebrity culture and name dropping. There's a section around halfway which describes tours and recording sessions after the success of "True" that is nothing short of tedious.

What redeems this book is Gary's honesty about his own insecurities - he continually thinks he will be found

out as a fraud - and also his touching descriptions of the importance of his family. The early chapters about his upbringing in Islington are brilliant and the final section that describes the deaths of his beloved parents are incredibly touching. I also really enjoyed his description of researching and making "The Krays" film.

Overall I found this book an unexpected pleasure.

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### **Sarah Anderson says**

This book is amazing. It helps if your a spandau fan but not totally necessary. You can tell it has been wrote by a creative person. The descriptions make you feel your there, living every moment with him. A good read and highly recommended.

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### **Jevron McCrory says**

I really enjoyed this book!

Up front, I have to admit, I'm more of a Duran Duran fan than Spandau Ballet (sorry Gary!) but in this exceptionally put together biography, Gary Kemp displays his sensitive, educated, honest, aggressive and extremely talented sides equally.

With a beautiful use of metaphors and simile, Spandau Ballet's songwriter shows why their hit songs were no mere tricks. Mr Kemp has an exemplary way with words (poetic while always aware of the looming pretension) and as he spins his tale, from working class Islington kid to middle class New Romantic/pop star, you are sucked along for the elegant, all consuming, overwhelming and often frustrating ride.

I knew nothing about Spandau Ballet going in, other than they made incredibly beautiful songs, and I actually sought this book out because of Gary's utterly affecting turn as Ronnie Kray in one of my favourite gangster films, Peter Medak's unforgiving 1990 biopic, The Krays. Being a musician myself, I totally related to the frustrations of songwriting and the eternal anxiety of what others might think of your outpourings.

Gary Kemp's book isn't a self congratulatory pat on the back. It's a testament to a band, style, genre, decade, decadence and self belief that echoes through our modern world though few hear it's timbre.

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### **Rachel says**

I checked this book out on the supermarket shelves and also heard him talk on a Radio 4 programme, so I was interested in advance.

It's interesting and well written. Some of the personal stuff has been glossed over in certain cases, probably necessarily re. the band getting back together recently. He gives a great sense of his family as he clearly adored his parents, and of course he was in the band with his brother. Probably at its best in evocation of the early days of the Blitz club and New Romantics.

Worth a punt if you grew up in the 80's and want a nostalgia shot.

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## **petewilliams says**

### **Loved this**

Couldn't put this book down, nearly cried at the death of his parents. only complaint was his description of his split from his first wife was little more than one sentence

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## **Kirsty says**

Before I read this book I'd heard people say how well-written it was. If I'm honest, I took that with a pinch of salt, assuming that the reviews were a little biased. I was completely wrong. This is a superbly well-written autobiography. The vivid descriptions and use of verb tenses really transport you into the moments Gary Kemp describes, so you feel as though you are there with him. This isn't just a book about a pop band; it's also an historical document, describing a time and place that just doesn't exist anymore. It's also a very honest book - he talks candidly about the pressures of being the sole songwriter and the paranoia that that brought with it, as well as the part he played in the problems in Spandau's history. It would have been easy for him to blame others, but if anything he puts the blame squarely on himself. The chapter about his parents' deaths, written with heartbreaking honesty, is also truly moving. An exquisite book.

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## **Charming Language says**

For those of you loosely in the Gen X cohort, this book will bring back memories and fully sate your desire for gossip about the likes of Culture Club, Wham and others born of the androgynous, post-punk era of coiffed and heavily made-up protest that was 1980s London. But even if you're not into the '80s, any biography offers a certain insight into the human condition and Kemp's reflections on births, deaths and relationships are as evocative as his passionate prose about music.

OK, I need to speed this review up, so here is my list of favourite snapshots from this colourful story.

1. Kemp and his equally famous brother Martin grew up with loving, working-class parents in a two room flat in central London. When I say two rooms, I mean two rooms: with a Roald Dahl-esque double bed in the living room and a bathroom shared between three families. It's hard to imagine upwardly-mobile Islington in these terms if you visit its gentrified quarters nowadays.
2. The Kemp boys were successful kids despite their humble beginnings: Gary was a child actor, heading off to the local drama school with the women who would go on to make *Birds of a Feather* and starring in critically-acclaimed British films, while Martin was a hot shot footballer up until Spandau got off the ground. Gary and Martin would later famously star in *The Krays*, and Kemp describes a fascinating, if sinister, research trip to Broadmoor – Britain's high security prison for criminal nutcases.
3. If you're a child of the '80s, Band-Aid and Live Aid are your 'where were you when...' moments. Kemp brings to life all the bitchy, drug-induced, competitive shenanigans that underwrote this great event in pop charity history. I love that Sting had his driver drop him off around the corner as it wasn't seemly to be dropped at the door of a charity gig in a car worth several thousand Ethiopian meals; a rookie mistake made by Spandau and Duran whose hungover rush to the studio from an all-night German drinking session could only have happened with the help of private jets and chauffeurs.

4. You'll never guess who Kemp dated? Patsy Kensit and Sadie Frost! Seriously, those women seem to have made celebrity marriage a competitive sport, listing everyone from Liam Gallagher to Jude Law amongst their ex's. For Kemp, though, Kensit was merely a crush, whilst Frost was a marriage and is the mother to his eldest son. She provided him with a wild side when he was in a melancholy lull and he gives more pages to their whirlwind romance than he does to the meeting of his later, longer-term partner. Frost is the painted mystery girl in the video for Gold (whom I'd never noticed, being too distracted by Tony Hadley and his dapper suit). She was also in Bram Stoker's Dracula (which I love) and was 'the girl' in Pulp's Common People video (love, love, LOVE!) I have a lot of reasons to want to come back as Sadie Frost in some future time-warped incarnation.

5. Kemp is famously the writer of the bulk of Spandau songs and by cleverly hanging onto royalty rights, the likes of True will probably keep him in ski trips for a long time to come. He is a darn good writer of autobiographical vignettes too. A typical descriptive phrase: "I'd been forced into a lug of a cigarette in the loos at Ally Pally ice rink by some predatory girls with red knees. I watched cross-eyed as the thick, grey smoke left my mouth like a serpent and they laughed with dry mouths at my inability to take it in. Real boys who had girlfriends smoked very seriously." Nice description of adolescent angst, Gaz.

6. Kemp did his fair share of partying in the heady days of pop stardom, but there is a refreshing absence of addiction in this story. No rehab, no crises and a clear headed ability to comment on the toll those things took on his fellow musos. His biggest stressor seems to have been managing the legalities and interpersonal equilibrium of the band – an inevitable roller coaster for a group of lads who have lived in each other's deep, designer pockets since the school yard.

7. Kemp's respect for his parents is equally remarkable. They supported him unequivocally throughout his life – from sending him off on tour with boil-in-the-bag dinners to making floor space available to the waifs and strays of the London club scene. They are the people he always returns to, no matter how many millions he has in the bank, and it's their shoulders he seeks when a crisis happens. It's the kind of relationship I can only hope to emulate with my own kids. His description of their deaths is moving and romantic – how lucky he was to be near them when it happened rather than gallivanting in pop star land.

I couldn't put this down once I got stuck in, and I couldn't wait to download a Best Of album once I'd finished. As Bob Geldof states on the cover blurb, with characteristic candour, : 'Great bloke, great band, great book'.

A full review of this book can be read at [Http://thischarmingmum.com](http://thischarmingmum.com)

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### **Claire Birks says**

Interesting for us 80's freaks but got a bit boring - a lot of reasons being cited for not doing as well as their Brummy counterparts. All about the songs,deals and albums nothing really juicy!!

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### **Derek Holmes says**

An excellent, informative biography about a wonderfully creative period in British musical history, written by one of it's key players, Gary Kemp, the songwriting force behind Spandau Ballet, one of my favourite bands of this period, the soundtrack of my youth.

Much has been discussed recently about how five friends formed a band, found tremendous success, then had a spectacular and very public fall out amongst themselves. This is Gary's version of events and he pulls

no punches on his own errors of judgement that led to the infamous court case at the close of the 90's. The final chapters detailing the bands slow healing process and the re forging of friendships, while at the same time dealing with the death of Gary and Martn's parents was deeply moving and very well written. A must read for anybody interested in this era and this great, great band.

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## **Eric says**

Gary writes in a way that allows me to feel his compassion, his regret and his love. Beyond the band and the 80's, he writes of the importance of strong family relationships.

For example, his "muse" gives him a book. (p.169) *"She gave me a gift. I wanted to tell my two rivals but kept it a secret between us. It was a book. I read it as though she were reading it to me. It slipped beneath my skin and the words bubbled up inside, percolating through me.*

*I would send it back in a song."*

Tony's voice was so strong that his producer made him sing lying down during a recording session. Still too strong, so he covered him with a Turkish rug. (p. 156)

Gary states that the quest for being accepted among entertainers is a fruitless endeavor (p. 232) *"Unfortunately, this world has inner sanctums within inner sanctums, and threading your way through the temple of celebrity while holding on to your trousers of self-respect is nigh impossible.*

He considers Through the Barricades the "best piece of music we would ever make." (p. 243) He had a difficult time letting the band take it. He had created it and wanted to control every aspect. Finally, he walked around town while Tony sang. *"Tony gave the most incredible vocal he'd ever sung, and claimed the song not only for himself, but for the whole band."*

The creative process is tricky. You know what it can be in your head, but the unveiling is difficult. (p. 173) *In my head is how it could sound with the band playing, but as it's impossible to relay with just one instrument and a voice, I attempted to describe it. . . it's always the same experience: as if I were summoning the courage to tell someone for the first time that I loved them, desperately hoping that they felt the same way too."*

Regarding Gary's son, Finlay, he writes (p. 294). *"... building a one-to-one relationship gives me more joy than anything I've done before."*

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## **Sarah Blyther says**

Not a fan of spandau but was given the book and decided to give it a go and I loved it. Very well written and a great insight into Gary's interesting life and thoughts.

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## **David Russell says**

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Loved this book couldn't put it down I own a copy of soul boys of the western world and this leads you up to it

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**Jill Jacques says**

Ahh Gary,taking us back,good stuff or should I say GOLD!

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