



# Seasons in the Sun: The Battle for Britain, 1974-1979

*Dominic Sandbrook*

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In the early 1970s, Britain seemed to be tottering on the brink of the abyss. Under Edward Heath, the optimism of the '60s had become a distant memory. Now the headlines were dominated by strikes and blackouts, unemployment and inflation. As the world looked on in horrified fascination, Britain seemed to be tearing itself apart. And yet, amid the gloom, glittered a creativity and cultural dynamism that would influence our lives long after the nightmarish '70s had been forgotten.

Dominic Sandbrook has recreated the gaudy, schizophrenic atmosphere of the early '70s: the world of Enoch Powell and Tony Benn, David Bowie and Brian Clough, Germaine Greer and Mary Whitehouse. An age when the unions were on the march and the socialist revolution seemed at hand, but also when feminism, permissiveness, pornography and environmentalism were transforming the lives of millions. It was an age of miners' strikes, tower blocks, and IRA atrocities, but it also gave us celebrity footballers and high-street curry houses, organic foods and package holidays, gay rights and glam rock. For those who remember the days when you could buy a new colour television but power cuts stopped you from watching it, this book could hardly be more vivid. It is the perfect guide to a luridly colourful '70s landscape that shaped our present from the financial boardroom to the suburban bedroom.

In *Seasons in the Sun*, Dominic Sandbrook explores the bitter, turbulent world of Britain in the late 1970s, the years that brought punk to prominence and Margaret Thatcher to power. With inflation mounting, rubbish in the streets, bombs going off across London, and the economy in meltdown, the days of national greatness seemed a fading memory. Across the Western world, Britain was mocked as the "Sick Man of Europe", a byword for decline and self-destruction. In 1976 alone, race riots disrupted the Notting Hill Carnival, the retirement of Prime Minister Harold Wilson was overshadowed by allegations of corruption, the Sex Pistols made their shocking debut on national television, and Britain had to go cap in hand to the IMF.

Yet as *Seasons in the Sun* shows, there was more to late 1970s Britain than strikes and shortages. From rock music and television sitcoms to the novels of Martin Amis and the birth of the first home computers, this was a society caught between old and new: nostalgic for what had been lost, but already looking forward to a new and very different political and social order.

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