

Poetry evening at St Donat's

Self-control of a poet walking a tightrope

FROM beat poets to punk poets, from William Burroughs we have arrived at John Cooper Clarke who appeared with Lol Coxhill as part of the Cardiff Literature Festival at St Donat's on Saturday evening.

On one level Clarke is too glib an entertainer, his naughty words an easy laugh for inebriated youth. Indeed, one wonders what meeting of minds there can be between a punk vision and a largely neatly dressed, clean-cut audience.

Perhaps it is the notion of experiencing the open sore of life vicariously, a

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poetic hand job free from the taint of social disease.

On another level John Cooper Clarke's poetry of the banal is a poetry of the everyday festering of so much of our urban environment and its concomitant social stress and bizarre behaviour.

But even here the tightrope that Clarke treads as an entertainer, seemingly balanced at the edge of self control, results in a strung out humour which dulls the impact of the anarchy. This means that as a social commentator

neither Clarke's poetry nor his delivery begin to approach the raging anger of a John Giorno.

If Clarke is no Burroughs, then Lol Coxhill is no Keith Jarrett, but his humour is easy and his presence is an ingratiatingly self mocking one. Further, he has an entertaining ability to display the absurd which is contained within so much of the mundane.

So as an evening of poetry and music this was no Nova Convention, but at least Clarke and Coxhill were a couple of hand held sparklers.