Jimmy Pursey of Sham 69 tears up a copy of *Ripped & Torn* number seven which contains a bad review of his band’s performance at the Acklam Hall, explaining that ‘I started writing on it so they made me buy it’. Pursey scatters the ripped-up copy of the fanzine and storms out the room, which is also the Step Forward record label office in Dryden Chambers. Danny Baker, Kris Needs and Mark Perry are among others in there, and they all look at me and ask the same question: ‘What was that about?’ They expected it to be a jokey set-up between me and Jimmy, but they laughed even harder when I said I was terrified one of them would point me out as the author. I laughed their laughter off and got back to typing up my interview with Adam Ant, his first ever which I’d taped two days earlier to provide the main feature for *Ripped & Torn* number eight.

Fanzines meant a lot to everyone in that room, not just Pursey. The people gathered there were so because of fanzines; they saw fanzines as both an integral part of the music media of the time and springboards for their own future careers. Even the room itself, Mark Perry’s office, would not have been there was it not for fanzines! This, after all, was the summer of 1977. Pursey’s Sham 69 were signed to *Sniffin’ Glue*’s record label; Baker was still a writer for the fanzine; Needs was there to steal Baker away to his *Zigzag* magazine and I was using the typewriter because I didn’t have one back at my squat. Perry was helping me out while also using me as a route to get one of my squat-mates, Alex Fergusson, to form a band with him, which would turn out to be Alternative TV.

For me, being in that room was living the dream (even if Pursey was a potential nightmare). And I was there because of starting *Ripped & Torn* in Scotland less than a year previously. I’d escaped my boring life, which was what starting the fanzine was all about. Equally, the concept of me creating a fanzine wouldn’t have been possible without *Sniffin’ Glue*, and I mean that most literally.
In October 1976, I’d travelled to London from Scotland to see if this punk thing was as exciting as the music press was making it out to be. On my first night, I went to see The Damned at the Hope & Anchor and experienced punk at first hand for the first time, experiencing not just the band but the crowd and the energy. I got very excited, and when I met Mark Perry at the gig I said I wanted to write about it for *Sniffin’ Glue*. Mark told me to go back to Scotland and turn my enthusiasm into a fanzine of my own.

Rather than treat Perry’s words as a rebuttal I took them as an inspiration. Back in Cumbernauld a day or so later, I thrashed around listening to my old punk records like the Velvets, Jonathan Richman and the Ramones wondering how to turn my feelings about everything into, well, not just writing but ten pages of single-sided A4 paper stapled in the top left-hand corner just like *Sniffin’ Glue*. That’ll show him, I thought.

*Ripped & Torn* was produced, to cut a long story short, and as that first issue got orders from shops in London like Rough Trade and Compendium it became less of two fingers in Mark’s face and more a sign of how I could escape my dead-end life. It became a one-way ticket for my return to London; the cover stars of *Sniffin’ Glue* number five were Eddie & The Hot Rods, and I took their song ‘Get Out Of Denver’ to heart and got out of Scotland, baby.

Fast forward to the early 1980s. A new punk scene is developing from the Wapping Anarchy Centre, by which time I am producing the fanzine *Kill Your Pet Puppy*. Now I find myself in the same position as Mark Perry in 1976, with people wanting to write for me about how they feel about what is happening to them. I say to them what he said to me, ‘go and make your own fanzine’. By coincidence or influence, the great anarcho-punk fanzine industry erupts; but that’s another story for different kitchen.

Fanzines, then, mean everything to me. I owe them my life and how it has been lived the past forty-odd years. Every fanzine tells a story between the printed lines, of how important doing it meant to the person concerned. Some of those stories appear in this book, as the writers piece together a culture from the scraps we fanzine producers left behind. I can’t wait to read it to see what we got up to … and what it meant.