

Shortlist of the 12th Penderyn Music Book Prize 2026 - 'The Mercury Prize of Books' - NME

The Penderyn Music Book Prize is the only UK-based book prize specifically for music titles, including history, theory, biography, and autobiography. It has now been 12 years since it started in 2015. The winner will be announced at the Laugharne Weekend on Sunday, 22nd March 2026.

Richard Thomas, organiser of both the prize and Laugharne Weekend: 'It's long been an oddity that while there are prizes for the best sports book of the year, the best travel book, the best food and drink book, there has never been a prize for the best music book. So, when we spotted this glaring omission, we felt it was pretty much our civic duty to right that wrong. Publishers and booksellers alike agreed that this was indeed a prize waiting to happen, and one they'd gladly support. And seeing that the Laugharne Weekend's drinking venue - also Dylan Thomas's former local, The Brown's - was well supplied with Penderyn Whisky, it didn't take us long to think up our ideal sponsors for such a prize. Jon Tregenna, manager of Browns in 2014 and a media manager for Penderyn Distillery (2015-), took the concept to Stephen Davies, Penderyn's CEO, and they sponsored the prize.'

Stephen Davies, Chief Exec of Penderyn Distillery: 'Good stories, music and the finest single malt go hand-in-hand, and Penderyn are big fans of the work Richard Thomas and John Williams have done with the Laugharne Weekend. As we all love our music at the distillery, we are delighted to sponsor this exciting prize.'

www.penderynprize.com

Shortlist Books

Men of a Certain Age: My Encounters with Rock Royalty – Kate Mossman (White Rabbit)

168 Songs of Hatred and Failure: A History of Manic Street Preachers - Keith Cameron (White Rabbit)

The Tremolo Diaries: Life on the Road and Other Diseases - Justin Currie (New Modern)

Everything We Do is Music: How 20th-Century Classical Music Shaped Pop - Elizabeth Alker (Faber & Faber)

The Colonel and the King: Tom Parker, Elvis Presley and the Partnership that Rocked the World -Peter Guralnick (White Rabbit)

Bread of Angels: a memoir - Patti Smith (Bloomsbury)

John and Paul: A Love Story in Songs - Ian Leslie (Faber & Faber)

Judges

Geoff Travis

Pete Wylie

Keith Allen

Josie Long

James Endeacott

Eliza Carthy

Longlist Books

Men of a Certain Age: My Encounters with Rock Royalty – Kate Mossman (White Rabbit)

The Drums - Mike Joyce (New Modern)

1975: The Year The World Forgot - Dylan Jones (Constable)

The Lost Folk: From the Forgotten Past to the Emerging Future of Folk - Lally Macbeth (Faber & Faber)

The Absence: Memoirs of a Banshee Drummer – Budgie (White Rabbit)

168 Songs of Hatred and Failure: A History of Manic Street Preachers - Keith Cameron (White Rabbit)

The Tremolo Diaries: Life on the Road and Other Diseases - Justin Currie (New Modern)

Everything We Do is Music: How 20th-Century Classical Music Shaped Pop - Elizabeth Alker (Faber & Faber)

This Ain't Rock 'n' Roll: Pop Music, the Swastika and the Third Reich - Daniel Rachel (White Rabbit)

The Colonel and the King: Tom Parker, Elvis Presley and the Partnership that Rocked the World -Peter Guralnick (White Rabbit)

Bread of Angels: a memoir - Patti Smith (Bloomsbury)

John and Paul: A Love Story in Songs - Ian Leslie (Faber & Faber)

Looking for the Perfect Beat: Remixing and Reshaping Hip-Hop, Rock and Rhythms - Arthur Baker (Faber & Faber)

Previous Winners

2025 – Will Hodgkinson - Street-Level Superstar: A Year With Lawrence (Nine Eight Books)

2024 - Michael Cragg - Reach For The Stars (Nine Eight Books)

2023 - Bob Stanley - Let's Do It (Faber & Faber)

2022 - Darryl W Bullock - The Velvet Maffia (Omnibus Press)

2021 - Pete Paphides - Broken Greek (Quercus)

2020 - Bruce Conforth and Gayle Dean Wardlow - Up Jumped The Devil - The Real Life of Robert Johnson (Omnibus)

2019 - Shirley Collins - All In The Downs (Strange Attractor)

2018 - Stuart Cosgrove - Memphis 68: The Tragedy of Southern Soul (Polygon)

2017 - Daniel Rachel - Walls Come Tumbling Down (Picador)

2016 - Jon Savage - 1966: The Year The Decade Exploded (Faber)

2015 - Mark Lewisohn - The Beatles - All These Years: Volume One: Tune In (Little, Brown)