



The Sky Blue Pound

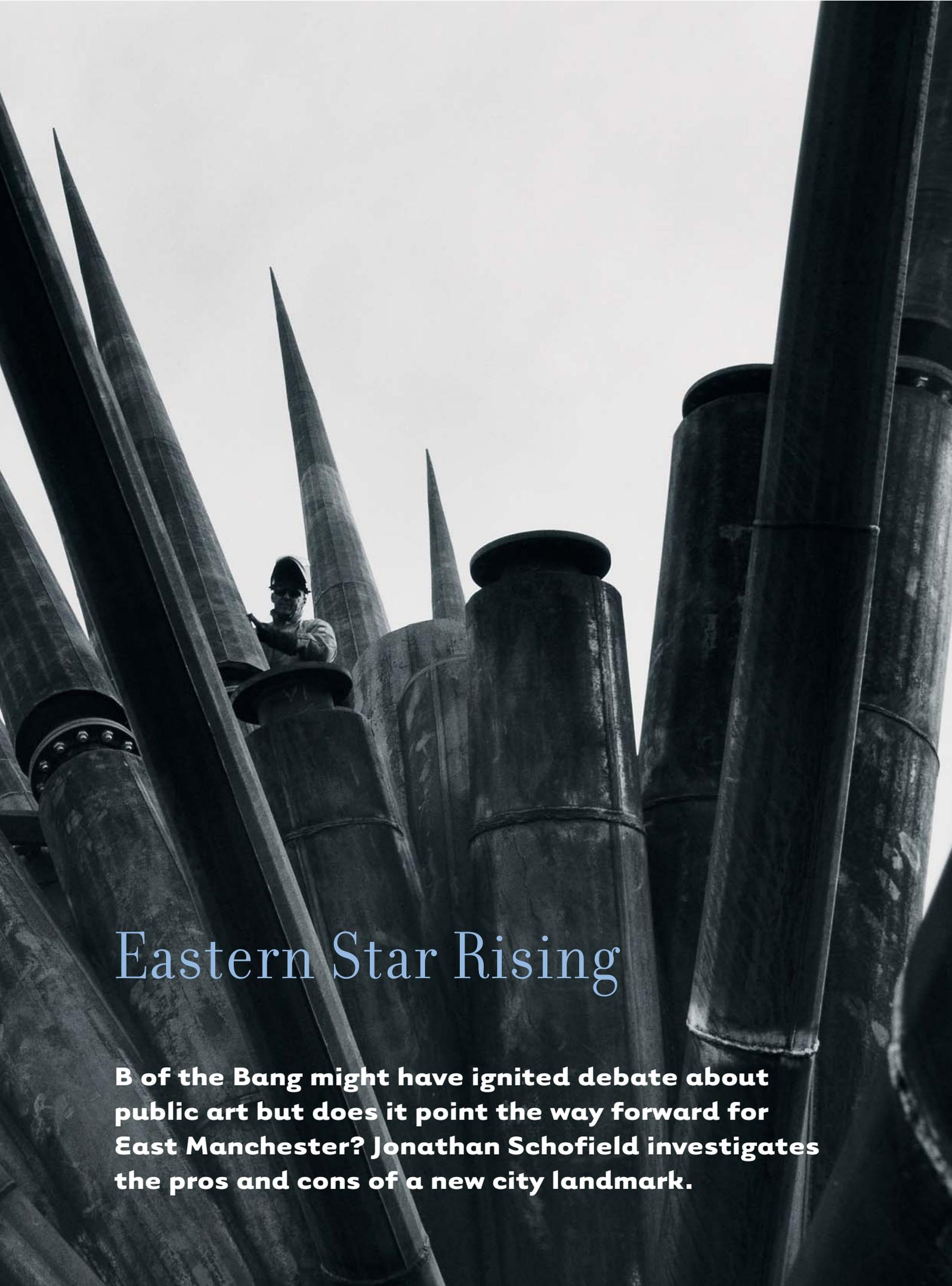
B of the Bang...
rising star?

Elizabeth Wells at 103

Carnival King

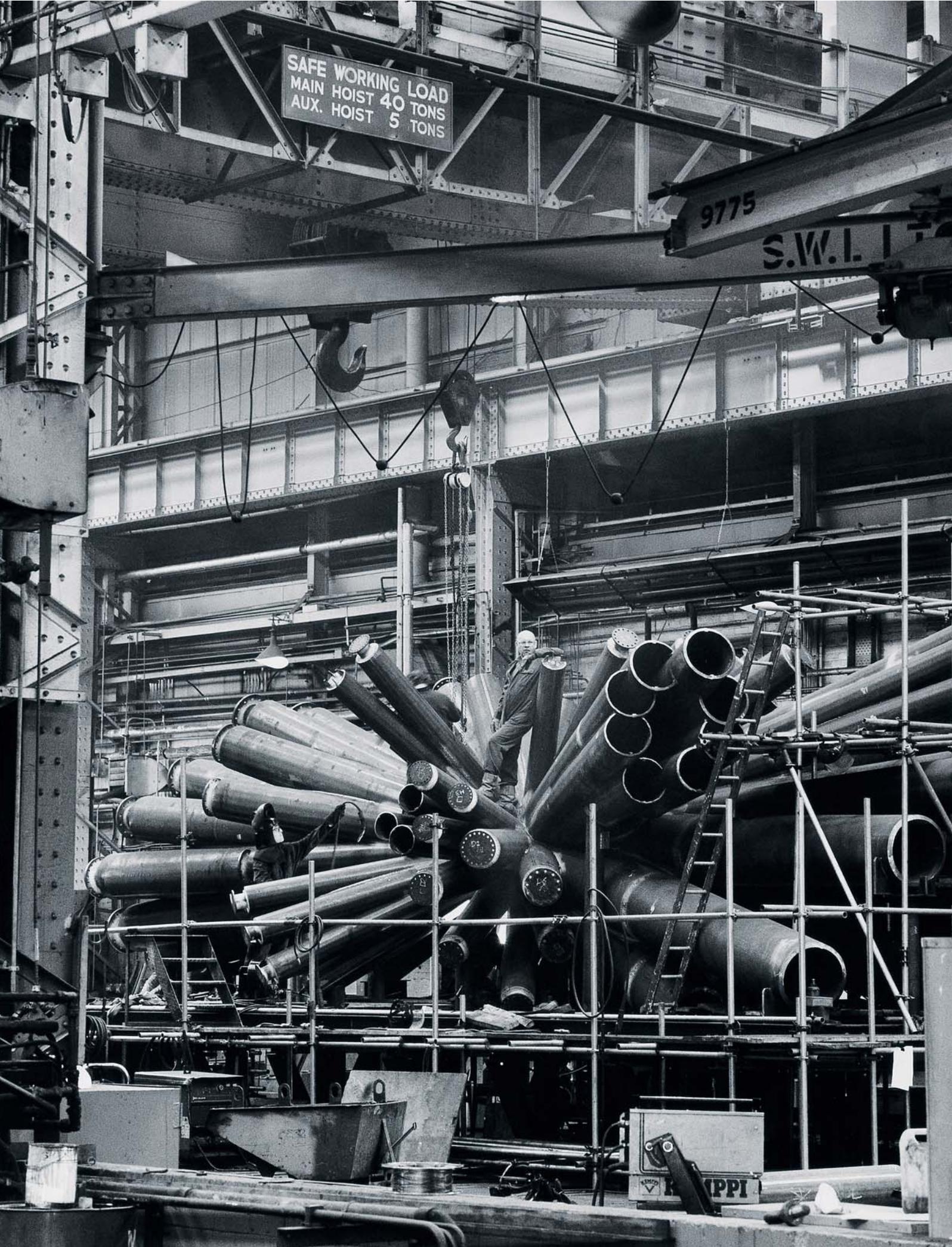






Eastern Star Rising

B of the Bang might have ignited debate about public art but does it point the way forward for East Manchester? Jonathan Schofield investigates the pros and cons of a new city landmark.



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It makes Sportcity and East Manchester a showcase for the best in British engineering.

About twenty years ago something horrible happened to the public spaces of the UK. They got art and it was usually very bad and very cheap. After a while you could safely predict how it would look: a coy laser cut metal fence containing ugly two-dimensional allusions to probably one of the following: a) disappeared industries, b) muddled ideas of multi-culturalism, c) images of what the kids in the area do on the weekend. The metalwork would be supported by a bit of dismal patterning in cobbles. Most people – the lucky ones – didn't even notice it had arrived.

The spiritual home for this type of guff in Manchester remains Trafford Park but you can find it spread out across the nation bothering public parks, canals, schools and heritage centres. Of course, the expression 'public art' should only be used loosely here, the works are as far removed from art as litter – which is how the local vandals regard them. The problem, and one which still happens more often than not, is that any artistic endeavour never has a chance, strangled at birth by political expediency, faddism and a twisted idea of community involvement. After all, the initial brief is probably written with half a fearful eye cast in the direction of the letters' page of the local newspaper.

This is why B of the Bang from the Thomas Heatherwick Studio is so refreshing. Like the best public art, past and present, it is big, bold and surprising. It contributes too, providing interest and excitement to the area in which it is placed.



It seems to care less about the 'context' of the site. OK, the idea is taken from Linford Christie who said he always started to run at 'the b of the bang'. And OK, that sort of refers to the Commonwealth Games held at the neighbouring City of Manchester Stadium, but then it does this in such a grand and wonderfully abstract way that you wouldn't guess unless you were told.

Not that people need to know. B of the Bang speaks for itself. Canted at an improbable angle of 30 degrees – ten times more acute than the tilt of the Leaning Tower of Pisa – this 56 metre, 180 tonne monster sticks out just as it should, like a sore thumb. It complements the City of Manchester Stadium superbly. It also makes Sportcity and East Manchester a showcase for the best in British engineering. Artist Heatherwick owes engineers Packman Lucas more than a few drinks for literally making his ideas stack up.

Of course the impetus behind anything as big as this is ambition. Heatherwick, who learnt his trade at Manchester Polytechnic, has said, "I have created something that does not exist anywhere else. B of the Bang will throw down the gauntlet for a whole new quarter of the city and I hope it will encourage wider ambition in the quality of the housing, public spaces, roads, everything."

Tom Russell, the Chief Executive of the regeneration agency, New East Manchester, charged with re-inventing the east of the city following years of economic decline, sees the project in the same motivational way. "The choice of B of the Bang as the centrepiece for Sportcity is a very clear and bold statement of intent," he says. "The regeneration of East Manchester needed a monumental piece of public art to provide a sense of identity and place and to represent the physical, economic and social changes underway in the area."

Then again, given that New East Manchester have coordinated the project, he would say that wouldn't he? But there is evidence that local opinion is warming to the sculpture. Elaine Mansell, passing under B of the Bang's shadow along Alan Turing Way, said, "Now it's looking more finished it's really growing on me. I look forward to seeing







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it floodlit. It's like when I glimpse the stadium from a distance, when I see B of the Bang I know I'm close to home."

Of course given the scale and the cost – £1.42m – a majority of the host community, it appears, still needs convincing. "It's a waste of money," says Karen Walsh, "very ugly." Her husband summed up what appeared to be the general mood towards the artwork in the Walsh household, "It's a load of crap," he said. Then he repeated the joke that it should be renamed G of the Bang since completion is very overdue.

Such attitudes are hardly unexpected. Can anybody remember the welcome received by the Angel of the North at Gateshead? As the 20 metre high figure spread its wings people queued up to fling abuse at the Antony Gormley work. Then what happened? Within the year residents found they couldn't live without their Angel. It's now as much a part of the landscape in the North East as St James' Park.

The same should happen with B of the Bang, although that level of enthusiasm will be harder to achieve. As artist Colin Spofforth, who sculpted 'The Runner' on the

other side of the stadium from Heatherwick's work, says, "Just about all the work on the scale of B of the Bang is figurative and people find that easier to take to, it becomes part of the community. Think of the Angel of the North, the Statue of Liberty, the Christ statue at Rio. I don't know whether this type of structure will do the same."

A good point. But then size matters and the scale of Heatherwick's work together with the artistry inherent in it – plus a bit of judicious evening lighting – should perform a similar, more slow-burning alchemy. Give it time or take a train ride. Already as travellers move in and out of Piccadilly railway station, noses are being pressed to glass to gaze at the double joy of the City of Manchester Stadium and its starburst neighbour, permanently exploding onto the Manchester skyline.







The Sky Blue Pound

Whatever the score on the pitch, East Manchester businesses win every time with the Blues at Sportcity. Len Grant chats to local publicans.

When Manchester City moved to Eastlands in the summer of 2003, it was hoped it would revive the club's prospects. It hasn't happened yet. City finished 16th in the Premiership at the end of last season.

Their move across the city revived other prospects though. Whilst pubs and takeaways around their old ground in Moss Side closed following City's departure from Maine Road, business blossomed for traders in East Manchester as 44,000 of the sky blue faithful descended every other week to Sportcity.

Pubs, corner shops, chippies, bakers and anyone with a plot of land to park a few cars, has done well out of the move. Tens of thousands of pounds are spent by fans in East Manchester every time there's a home game. "It's been fantastic for every small business in the area," says Steve Deveney of The Kippax pub on Grimshaw Lane. "There's people popping into the corner shops for sweets, drinks and cigarettes. They just wouldn't be walking past if it wasn't for City."

Steve has been a pub landlord for ten years. "I used to work in the factory opposite," he says, "and I fancied a change." Originally called The Gibraltar, he changed the name when he knew City were coming. "I used to stand on the old Kippax stand at Maine Road so that's why I chose it. Lots of the pubs changed their names at that time, but I'm a genuine City fan and to be honest I got a bit fed up with pubs that were United one minute and then City the next.

"I'm fortunate in a way because we were ticking along nicely before City came so I've never had to depend on City. We used to get a few regulars on a Saturday watching a bit of football or racing. Now it's a big bonus."

"It's been a godsend," agrees Billy Kerr, landlord at the Blue Moon on Clayton Lane. "We'd still make a living if City weren't here but it's really pushed up our takings."

Billy and his wife, Anne, bought the pub nearly three years ago. "It was called The Church then," recalls Anne, "and being a lifelong City fan I'd always wanted a pub called the Blue Moon.

"It was a man's pub then," she says, "it was very rare you'd ever see a woman in here. So we shut for two weeks and redecorated. Now we get everyone in: Friday night, Saturday night, Sunday dinner, it's always busy."

Before the beginning of the first season, police and local landlords worked together to ensure match day would be safe for everyone. Pubs closest to the ground cannot let their customers drink outside and everyone has to serve beer in plastic glasses. Away fans are discouraged by most publicans although when they have strayed into 'home' pubs the atmosphere has always remained harmonious.

"We have a membership scheme," says Helen Riley, manageress at The Stadium on Bradford Road, "which is organised by the Ancoats and Miles Platting Supporters' Club.

Helen Riley at The Stadium: Even when they lose the atmosphere is great. They've got all the City songs on the juke box, so they're all singing along. They're good losers.



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Billy and Anne Kerr at the Blue Moon:

I usually leave the stadium ten minutes before the end of the game so I can beat them all back. I can't count the number of goals I've missed because of that.

Steve Deveney at The Kippax:
 You've got about 44,000 people going to the stadium for every home game. Even if only half go to a pub that's 22,000 customers split between a maximum of 40 pubs. It's a captive audience.

I think they just decided it was going to be their local and asked if we'd take them on. Now we employ door staff to make sure it's members only on match days. We've never had any trouble."

For East Manchester landlords, match days start early with shelves and fridges being stacked and the pub prepared.

"I move all the tables out from the middle," explains Billy. "It's standing room only in here. All the glasses go away. We even decant cans into plastic pots."

Supporters start turning up any time after twelve and things start hotting up an hour or so later. Billy has put extra pumps in his bar at the Blue Moon so all his staff can be pulling beer without keeping the customers waiting.

"By about half one you're struggling to keep up," says Steve who employs three other

staff, "there are suddenly about 300 people in your pub all wanting to be served at once. And then in a blink there's nobody there, they've all gone to the match and you're left to clear up."

But a few hours later they are back. Even the result makes a financial difference. If City have won it's good news for the publicans as the supporters stay longer to celebrate.

"If it's gone badly, they'll have a pint and then go," says Steve, "if we've won they'll stay the extra hour or so and even have a sing-song. But we don't have many sing-songs."

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The Sky Blue Pound



One hundred and three

Elizabeth Wells is 103 and East Manchester's oldest resident. In 1902, the year she was born, the Boer War finally finished; Manchester Corporation replaced its horse-drawn trams with electric ones and a football team in Newton Heath changed its name to Manchester United.

Mrs Wells has lived all her life in Clayton. Old and new views of the area are compared on the following pages to show how things have changed over the last 100 years.



In this 1907 photograph of Lock 13 of the Ashton Canal, staff of what was then the Crabtree Inn pose outside with their long white aprons. In the early 1980s the swing bridge that took Crabtree Lane across the canal was dismantled and at about the same time the pub changed hands and was renamed The Strawberry Duck. One regular remembers the Crabtree Inn as, 'a dingy little pub with coal fires.' Now extended and modernised, the pub was recently described in a real ale magazine as, 'probably, the plushest and coolest in all of Clayton, if not in all of East Manchester.'



Clayton Hall dates back to the 12th century but in Tudor times it was rebuilt as a moated manor house and became home to the Byron family. In 1620 the hall was bought by Sir Humphrey Chetham, the founder of Chetham's Hospital School (now Chetham's School of Music) and Chetham's Library, the oldest public library in the English-speaking world.

Although now drained, the moat around the hall was still in use during Elizabeth Well's childhood. She recalls skating on the frozen moat during the winter when it was lit by candles from nearby Crane's candle shop. Local people were warned not to skate under the bridge as this section never froze over properly. Unfortunately one year a visitor from London ignored the advice and was drowned.



The postcard view of Ashton New Road was taken in the 1920s. Today Clayton Conservative Club is still a dominant landmark. The Club was built a few years before Elizabeth Wells was born as the foundation stone was laid by Councillor Dreyfus in 1899. Charles Dreyfus was a chemist who had moved from Alsace, France to England in 1869. At the age of only 28 he and some friends founded the Clayton Aniline Company to manufacture dyes which Mrs Wells remembers as a large employer in the area. She particularly recalls a character known as 'Magenta Joe' because of the effect the dyes had on him and his clothing! The Aniline Company eventually became Ciba Speciality Chemicals which will close down in 2007 after 130 years of production in East Manchester.





The Devil's Work

Peddy Herbert is Manchester's undisputed carnival king. Dozens of costumes for this year's East Feast parade are being made in the living room of his Ancoats home. It's a massive undertaking even for this 68 year-old veteran of carnival culture.

But his dedication has not always been appreciated...





How did it all start for you?

I was brought up on St Kitts in the Caribbean. My father farmed part of a plantation growing sugar cane and keeping animals. He was a very religious man and very ambitious for his children. He wanted his three sons to be ministers and his daughter to be a nurse. I was the oldest son and because I was into my dancing and my music I was the one that stood out. At that age I was the best dancer in the village, no-one else could do what I could do. My dad didn't like it. He'd say I was doing the devil's work and he'd beat me nearly every day.

Did you consider giving up your music and dancing?

No, not at all. But, I'll tell you, the beatings I got, I should have changed my mind. He made me more determined really. Each time he'd beat me I'd stop meeting my friends for a few days and then I'd be back doing it. After a really bad beating, my mother sent me to live with my grandmother for a while because she was worried for my safety. I'll tell you he'd be sent to prison nowadays for what he did to me. I had one enemy in my village and that was my father.

How did you come to make carnival costumes?

I started making costumes for the Moss Side carnival in the early 70s and I've been making them for carnivals ever since. In 1986 I got a grant from the Arts Council to visit Trinidad and learn different costume techniques. Each day I would visit three different workshops, all with their own special techniques and then in my spare time I would learn steel pan-making. Since then I've been going back to the Caribbean every year.

How long does it take to make a costume?

Well, for most carnivals I normally try and make two carnival queens and maybe two princesses. They are about 18 feet wide by 20 feet long and each take about two months to make. They are on wheels because they are just so big. In Trinidad it's amazing to see the size of a costume that even the smallest person can carry.

I start working at about six in the morning and might not finish until one or two the following morning. For a break I'll listen to my music or play the steel drum. But I enjoy what I am doing... it keeps me out of mischief!

What are your plans for East Feast?

I want this to be a great carnival so I want to put at least 150 costumes on the road. As well as the costumes I've been training the young people in the dancing. I was a good limbo dancer when I was younger!

Did your dad ever appreciate your vocation?

About ten years ago I won a prize in a costume competition in Trinidad. With some of the prize money I bought my mum a dress and my dad a black bow tie and went over to St Kitts to give them the presents. They had already heard about the competition from the papers, so my dad said, "You still doing the devil's work, eh?" I gave him the bow tie and when he opened the box he wept. "You always did what you wanted," he said, "I couldn't stop you... Thank you for the bow tie."

L.G.

East is the magazine about regeneration in East Manchester and is published three times a year by Len Grant Photography on behalf of New East Manchester Ltd and New Deal for Communities

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About East

East Manchester is changing from a history steeped in industrial heritage: the area, its neighbourhoods and residents have come through the bleak years of decline and recession and are now emerging as a New East Manchester.

Building on the richness and strength of the past and capitalising on the opportunities made available by the Commonwealth Games, East Manchester is fast becoming the place to live, work and visit. Dominated by the magnificent City of Manchester Stadium, Sportcity in the centre of East Manchester is a jewel in the area's crown. With a plethora of sporting facilities, already being enjoyed by the community and elite athletes alike, to the bustle of Europe's largest ASDA-Walmart and the sophistication of Sportcity Living. These city centre-style apartments are located around the recently refurbished Ashton Canal corridor. New homes are also under construction in Beswick, Ancoats and will shortly start in Openshaw.

To the north, the sprawling Central Park, the largest urban business park of its kind, will become the centre of innovation and technology in East Manchester, that will spearhead the economic renaissance of the area. To the west, as East Manchester meets the already revitalised city centre, lies Ancoats, birthplace of the industrial revolution and now home to a number of initiatives not least of which is New Islington, a Millennium Community, leading the way in ground breaking design for sustainable communities for the new millennium.

In the midst of all this physical change is the Beacons for a Brighter Future Partnership led by the community – the heart of East Manchester. Using £76m from the government's SRB and New Deal for Communities initiatives, the Partnership is now five years into a ten year programme to bring real and lasting changes to the lives of residents. With the help of a resident liaison team, the original 13 resident organisations for the area have now grown to 54, all taking an active role in the many initiatives. The community environmental programme has created 18 community gardens on land that was misused and derelict bringing back a spirit and sense of pride to streets which had forgotten. At the same time improvements to local parks and other open spaces has given birth to celebrations such as the Parties in the Parks. Eastserve, has provided personal computers, training and internet access to over 4000 homes ensuring the residents of East Manchester are geared up to the future.

East aims to tell you the story of these changes, the experiences of the people involved, and the monumental achievements the regeneration process is creating. With unique insights into daily lives, colourful characters and quirky designs, **East** will take you on a journey through change that will make you think twice about the new East Manchester!

Tom Russell
New East Manchester Ltd

Sean McGonigle
New Deal for Communities

Contributors in this issue

Len Grant is a freelance photographer based in Manchester. For the past decade or so he has made regeneration the subject of his personal and commissioned work. In 2003 a retrospective exhibition, *Making Manchester 1990-2003* was held at CUBE. Last year he produced books about the work of Groundwork in East Manchester; the redevelopment of the Cardroom estate into New Islington, and a book about the demolition of Maine Road football ground in Moss Side. See also www.lengrant.co.uk.

Jonathan Schofield has been *City Life* Guidebooks Editor since 2000 and is the Food and Drink editor for the magazine. He contributes many other features from arts and architecture (he was the first to get a public art cover story in a mainstream magazine) to politics and sport. He's also written for publications such as *The Observer* and *The Independent* and edited the Manchester CowParade handbook amongst other projects. Jonathan is also a Blue Badge Guide for the North West of England and has taken 77 different nationalities around the region since 1996 from journalists and tourists to mad eccentrics.

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In this issue of East:

Hit or miss: Jonathan Schofield examines the importance of Britain's largest sculpture; local landlords explain what difference match days make; a hundred years in Clayton; and Peddy's carnival capers.

