

## ART

## YOU'RE GONNA NEED A BIGGER BOAT

BONINGTON GALLERY



■ Some of the signs from Jason Evans' show *You're Gonna Need A Bigger Boat*.

# STREET SIGNS OF THE TIMES

**W**HEN was it, exactly, that high street sign-writing became such an irritating bore? We're thinking here of all those pub and hipsterish coffee shop A-boards decorated with positive messages written in a warm, natural hand.

"Alcohol never solved any problems," reads one near me outside an NG2 bar. "But neither did water." Ha ha. But if such inanities are now filling you with dread then this is the right time to head to NTU's Bonington Gallery where there is a new exhibition filled with signs and notices of all kinds. *You're Gonna Need A Bigger Boat*, curated by photographer Jason Evans, whose portfolio includes zines, concept art and publicity shots for Radiohead, comprises examples of traditional sign-writing, hand-made shop signs, political wood engravings from the 1940s, a T-shirt design, a vinyl record, digital sign imagery and three examples of Evans' works. As entertaining as all this it may be difficult, at the start, to sort out what the theme and intention is here.

What, for example, is the connection between a large artwork by Evans consisting of

several bi-coloured screen prints and signs for "Rob James Disco" and "Barry Sheene Racing" by the late Dick Hambridge? Between a 1945 engraving about the evils of industrialism and the multiple colourful shop "sale" signs produced by Clark Brothers of Manchester? Well, one could guess that there is an interest in traditional commercial sign-writing and production, coupled with a

“

As entertaining as all this it may be difficult, at the start, to sort out what the theme and intention is here

concern about marketing techniques. But on reading the exhibition blurb, and a published Q&A with Evans, it seems that the show also seeks to "highlight [the] ongoing transition from analogue to digital" of "artefacts from our industrial, consumer society". But if that is a theme then it is only

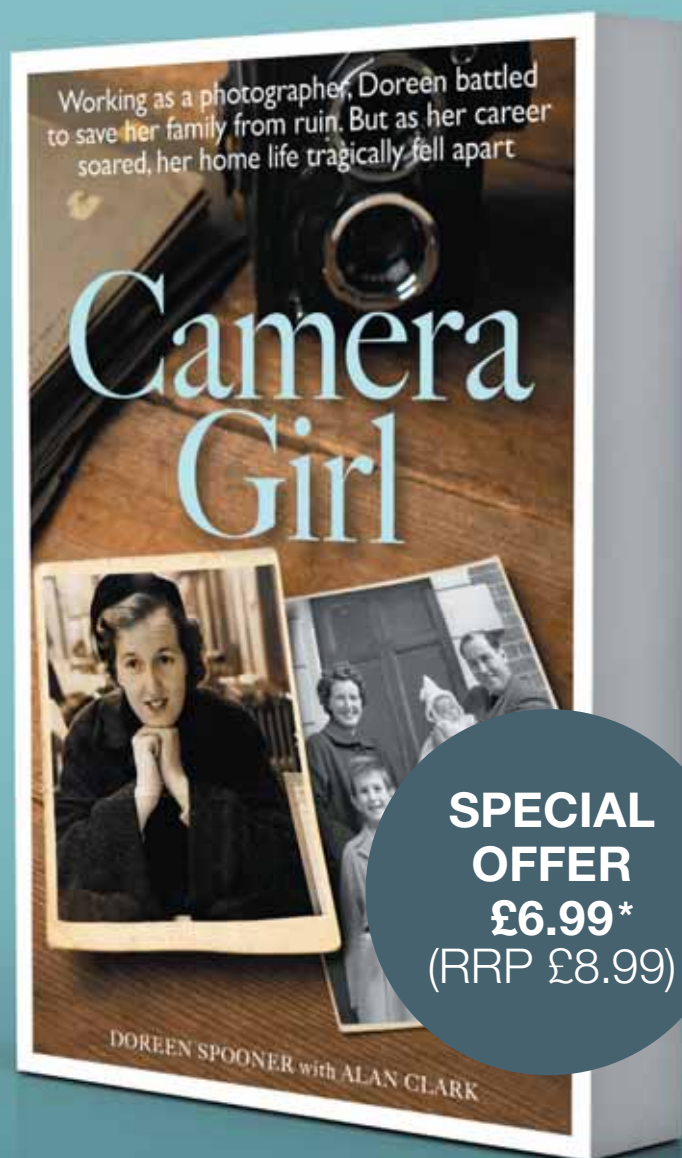
slightly explored as the only example of digital signage we see come in the form of photographs of signs and notices which we all see here, there and everywhere.

"All of us will learn," reads one, outside an Academy school. "What is wrong with this picture?" asks another, on a national parks notice board overlooking a mountain range in the USA. If these quirky signs, and their type, seem strangely familiar it is because they are the kind of thing that appear on Facebook because we post them there for a laugh, or to make some biting apposite comment on a political situation, and invite comment. True, they're usually funnier than hipster café A-board signs but so far as this exhibition is concerned that's the end of the digital input.

So, enjoy the show, and wallow in real nostalgia for people old enough to remember high-street stores which would display signs reading "please examine your change immediately" and "no prams allowed" and a little false nostalgia for people who can't remember society before the internet altered the nature of consumerism. The show runs until May 19.

Mark Patterson

# A true story of love, loss & determination



**SPECIAL OFFER**  
**£6.99\***  
 (RRP £8.99)

Order now at  
[mirrorcollection.co.uk](http://mirrorcollection.co.uk)  
 Or call **0845 143 0001\*\***

Available in all good bookshops and on Kindle and iBook

Mirror Books

\* P&P £1 \*\* Lines open from 9am-5pm. Mon-Fri