

WHAT A SCORICHER!

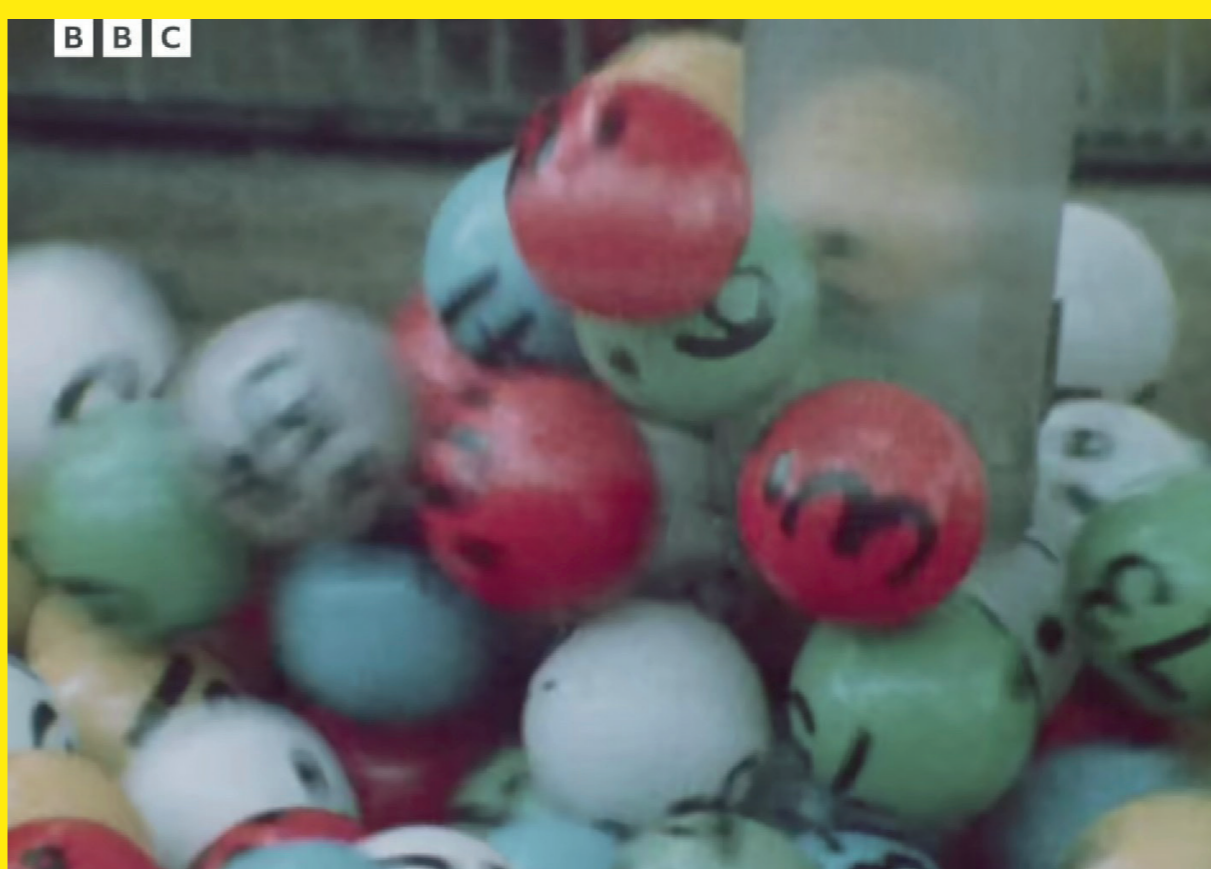


The summer of 1976 would turn out to be one of the hottest on record, with pubs running out of beer, hosepipes banned and road surfaces melting. On the last day of May the BBC director Gerry Tonya filmed a documentary of 24 hours in the life of Scarborough. Broadcast in September as a late-night regional programme on BBC1, it captures the precursor to the heatwave.

Tonya's documentary is a nostalgic treat, though it has a slightly contemptuous undercurrent featuring obtrusive close-ups of pallid faces munching chips and elderly gents squirming in the sun adjusting starched shirt collars. Without narrative, the prowling cameras reveal the town in setting up, the day-tripper trains and coaches arriving, busy landladies, hotel guests tucking in to a fry-up, clinking teacups, clanking amusements, sunbathing, donkey rides and the eventual nighttime clean up.

News items, snippets of traffic reports and incidental music from Radio One are caught in ambient drifts of sound. Nice pop, to soothe and placate. There's an extended segment of Paul McCartney's Wings hit 'Silly Love Songs', with its inane chorus of an elongated "I love you". We catch a glimpse of a middle-aged woman in a kiss-me-quick style beach hat branded to the Bay City Rollers - this is pop music in 1976.

Any evidential imprint of punk rock, set down by the Sex Pistols performing in the town in the previous week, is understandably absent. However, prompted by hindsight, you can feel it lingering like a ghost bearing discontent and disarray. A cast spell. Within a short period of a year, the cultural climate would undergo a seismic shift. Love, and its fluffy pop silliness, would be redefined, as American punk upstarts Richard Hell and the Voidoids declared - in a two-minute salvo - that 'Loves Comes in Spurts'. Everything was up for grabs.



Above: Scenes from the BBC documentary *Scarborough Bank Holiday* (1976)
 Above right: *The Sun* newspaper never missed an opportunity to shout "phwoar" or "whew"