



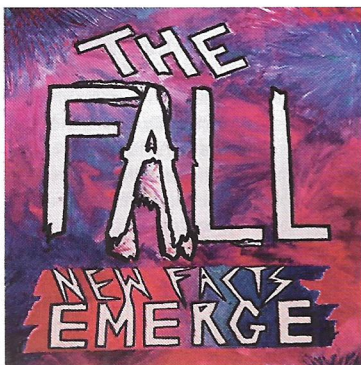
THE FALL NEW FACTS EMERGE

(Cherry Red)

32nd studio release for Mark E Smith and co.

9/10

On the opening track of 'New Facts Emerge', there is the sound of an ageing man uttering guttural, incoherent noises, whilst banging percussion. The man is Mark E Smith, who has been The Fall since 1976, hiring and firing band members and releasing records with more veracity than Dylan Thomas knocked back pints. Smith clearly still has something to say, though at times what he's saying is lost in angry, surreal vocals.



The music, as on 'Fol De Rol' and the title track, is often traditional rock, with a driving, energetic and razor-sharp beat. There is a touch of indie on 'Brillo de Facto' and 'O! ZZTRRK Man'. There is rockabilly on 'Groundsboy', with Smith sounding like an Elvis from hell, and the rock 'n' roller 'Second House Now', with Smith mimicking a drunken, crooning Jerry Lee. 'Gibbus

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Gibson' is much lighter, almost jaunty, with Smith sounding youthful and coherent. 'Couples vs Jobless Mid 30s' is the album's epic. It has a psychedelic opening, with crazy Southern gothic noises, like a Texas Chainsaw Massacre house. Then it segues into industrial noise. There are vocals about torture, and some demonic chanting in the background, before it moves into a rock out ending. Is this what it's like being in the head of Mark E Smith?

The songs, though tight, often sound improvised. There are hints of PiL, though Lydon is too self-aware of his own image, whilst Smith has no boundaries between his stage persona and his own reality. He is a high priest performing an exorcism on himself, spewing forth his inner demons to infect a pristine, antiseptic, virtual world. A man well before his time, channelling a groove that he's made his own; a sullen prophet who brooks no dissent; a cranky old man railing at a ridiculous world. Often a loner can, over time, he's become so self-absorbed that outside influences become irrelevant and there is nobody to put a check on them. What saves Smith is that he's so damn listenable. Genius or piss-taker? Probably both. So, a genius piss-taker who's been ranting in the wilderness since 1976. One day the world will listen, and Smith won't give a fuck.

The last song is called 'Nine Out of Ten' – now that's what I call prophecy.

Mark Ray