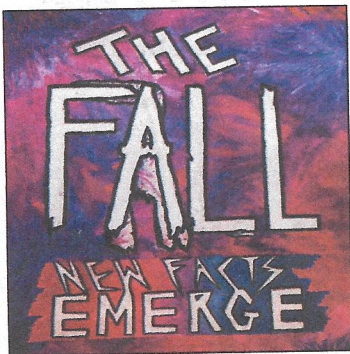


CONSUMER PRODUCT

SAFETY TEST

stomp and stammer picks the hits



The Fall New Facts Emerge

[Cherry Red]

By any rational measure, The Fall long ago passed its expiration date. The record label touts *New Facts Emerge* as the band's 32nd studio full length; depending on your criteria, that number might be high or low by five. I'd be hard pressed to name many artists who've made half as many albums without a sharp dropoff in quality.

The notoriously difficult Mark E. Smith has kept his current lineup intact longer than any in the Fall's 41-year history. That's not much of an endorsement, however — while this unit has 2010's recent high water mark *Your Future, Our Clutter* to its credit, it's also responsible for the band's longest stretch of mediocrity. Yet Smith's snarls and barks continued to deliver just enough to keep diehards engaged and sustain hope for another renaissance in the offing.

For whatever reason, the timing felt right for a bounce-back and *New Facts Emerge* delivers for the most part. There's not a lot of new ground covered, not that anyone was clamoring for a new direction. The riffs are muscular and characteristically repetitive, the production unusually sharp. Most importantly, Mr. Smith sounds

reasonably coherent and surprisingly energized — I could even imagine him having undertaken some mini-fitness regimen to build up his wind for these rants.

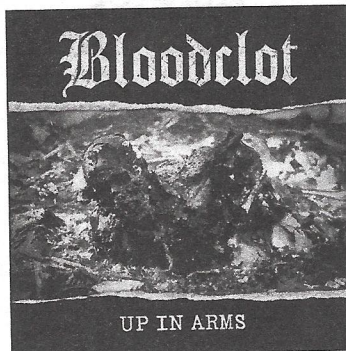
The biggest change may be addition by subtraction. Smith's wife Elena Poulou decided to extricate herself from the band following 2015's *Sub-Lingual Tablet*. Without a dedicated keyboardist the remaining quartet is freed to focus on crunching guitar and brute force rhythms, although guitarist Peter Greenway and bassist Dave Spurr both contribute background squiggles.

MES & Co. aren't above recycling their own playbook. The thrilling "Brillo De Facto" shifts midway into the Fall's trademark Country & Northern shuffle. "Second House Now" starts off like a tenuous sequel to "My New House" from 1985 classic *This Nation's Saving Grace* before breaking into some prime glam racket. Elsewhere, Smith drops the production polish — and the enunciation — for "O! ZZTRRK Man," which plays like a hard-charging GBV single.

They stumble a bit on the long form tracks — despite its amusing title "Couples Vs. Jobless Mid 30s" is eight minutes of unnecessary sludge, and "Fol De Rol"'s solid riff wears out its welcome well before six minutes are up. And there is one curveball — closer "Nine Out of Ten" features nothing but Greenway's reverb-laden guitar behind Smith's impassioned warbling, which drops out after three minutes to allow Greenway a six-minute virtuoso turn worthy of the Durutti Column.

Fall Nation, if you've taken an understandable break it's time to come out of hibernation for *New Facts Emerge*.

—Glen Savvady



Bloodclot Up in Arms

[Metal Blade]

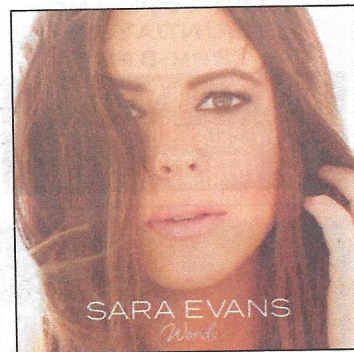
Bloodclot's *Up in Arms* album ought to embarrass today's generation of safe-as-hell, so-called punk, metal, and hardcore bands. Here we have a gaggle of over-the-hill dads, maybe even grandpa grey-beards that can play faster, harder, nastier, and louder than kids half their age.

Notable members among these old fogies include John Joseph of The Cro-Mags and Todd Youth of Youth of Today. Sure, the music here has been done to death, we've heard this sound before ad nauseum, nothing new to see here, but for what they're doing, this is pure perfection, best of breed. Given the current musical landscape, this is refreshing by comparison to what's out there in 2017.

The band is extremely tight on this record. You can tell Bloodclot actually recorded most of the record together live like the way folks used to do things, the way you're supposed to things, especially in punk rock, but no one does that anymore, dammit. The recording sounds very real, so raw, not computerized at all, not too digitized. The drums sound wonderful, a great performance by Danzig drummer Joey Castillo here.

Do any particular songs stick out? No, not really. It's kind of just one giant super-fast, frantic lump of loud, tight, simplistic energy that all runs together. It's

one whole composition piece. But at right around 30 minutes, there are really no major flaws. That's probably 'cause it was made by punk veterans that just know what they're doing and knew what they wanted to make — they weren't worried about fans, social media metrics, PC bullshit, or "their career." Bottom line: this album proves that sometimes geezers still got it and can still kick ass without cheating in the studio. —Lee Satterfield



Sara Evans Words

[Born to Fly]

In 2015, a powerful Music Row radio consultant dismissed the notion that there should be more gender diversity on air by likening women in country music to tomatoes. No joke, an analogy was made where the Luke Bryans of the world were big handfuls of lettuce in radio salad, flavored by little cherry tomatoes named Carrie and Miranda. One of the loudest and most visible protestors of "Tomatogate" was early-aughts hitmaker Sara Evans. The "Born to Fly" singer was justifiably frustrated that current talents aren't allowed to build on her airwave-driven success, just as she had followed in the footsteps of Georgia's own Trisha Yearwood and others.

It's hard to not view Evans' new album *Words* as another counter-punch to "Tomatogate." There are 14 women with co-write credits, including Evans,