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CD of the Week: The Fall's 'Ersatz'

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(Album cover.) By John Adamian 3:43 p.m. EST, December 13, 2011

The Fall Ersatz GB (Cherry Red)

Band names are funny. So short, so vague, so suggestive. With the Fall — the imposingly weird and long-running English post-punk band fronted by surly surrealist Mark E. Smith - you get the feeling that the name doesn't have anything to do with something so quaint as autumn. Rather, and I'm just guessing, the subject of humanity's mythic fall from Eden, booted out by God, seems more like it. These are very postlapsarian jams. The music is a jagged sonic bed, or maybe a murky swamp, over which Smith can intone - mutter? slur? - his absurd, but still poetic, rants. Smith sounds at times like a drunk whose first language isn't necessarily English. The record title seems to be a jab at the phoniness that Smith perceives in Great Britain. "I'm so sick of the Snow Patrol," he coughs at one point. He bends, crushes and drags syllables: "friend" becomes "fray-uh-undt," and "man" becomes "may-uhn." Sometimes he punctuates things with a low growl, or a throat-clearing, maybe even a loogie-hocking. Like Captain Beefheart, this is music that many will hate, but it's very entertaining all the same.



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