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23 November 2011

LISTEN: ERSATZ GB

ANDREW REINHOLDS DISCOVERS THAT THE FALL'S LATEST ALBUM IS A FULL FRONTAL ASSAULT ON THE SENSES

Story by Andrew Reinholds



Okay, so I'll lay my cards on the table now – I am a huge fan of The Fall. Actually, that's probably, no definitely, an understatement. The Fall is my band. I have no idea how or why, but ever since I first heard them, I've been dragged completely and utterly into their wonderful and frightening world.

So, with that in mind, you can imagine my delight when their latest album 'Ersatz GB' arrived on my desk first thing Monday morning.

I have resisted the temptation to download the album on iTunes, instead waiting patiently and truth be told, painfully, for it to finally arrive.

So now it's here, how does it stack up against the previous 28 (yes t-w-e-n-t-y-e-i-g-h-t) albums that have preceded it, in a remarkable career stretching right back to 1977?

Well, after just two listens, it's everything I love about the philosophy, the vision, the ethic, the idea that is The (mighty) Fall. Album #29 finds head honcho Mark E Smith and crew in refreshingly enigmatic, caustic and savage form.

Right from opener 'Cosmos 7' through to closer 'Age of Chang' this is a full frontal assault on the senses as MES lays waste to the complete collapse of England's moral, spiritual, political and economic being.

Over a thrilling marriage of garage, rockabilly and electro, Smith creates incredibly vibrant and compelling characters such as on the gargantuan and vintage Fall that is 'Nate Will Not Return' who has a penchant for trash US TV (Gossip Girls) through to Smith himself, confronting false Fall imitators in the faux-heavy metal pastiche that is 'Greenway' where Smith hilariously laments "I had to wank off the dog to feed the cat"... No stone of mediocrity remains unturned, with Smith, perhaps unfairly picking on MOR band Snow Patrol ("I am so sick of Snow Patrol, and where to find Esso lubricant") who, as luck would have it, just released a new album a few weeks prior. I say unfairly, because let's be honest, it could be any number of bands.

Smith's Greek wife Elena even takes over lead vocals on 'Happi Song' where she delivers a Stars In Their Eyes quality Nico impersonation. It is just a small break in the maelstrom though – immediately we're back to the dense and claustrophobic 'Monocard'.

The album has been both panned (BBC) for being "unremarkable" and praised (The Quietus) who claims it "still trumps most records released this year, as, one suspects, The Fall always will".



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So back to my original question – how does one judge ‘Ersatz GB’ against such an exhaustive back catalogue? To be honest, I still need to listen further, to fully appreciate what Smith and his cohorts have created here. At the end of the day, I keep coming back to the late, and much missed, John Peel for the last word: “with The Fall, you can never be absolutely certain what you’re going to get. Sometimes it may not be what you want. But they’re The Fall and it’s all you need”.

Bless...

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Andrew Reinholds

Andrew lives in a Baptist Church near Grey Lynn Park with his three-legged cat Jimmy. When not out traipsing the bars and clubs in search of new and inspiring music acts he works in advertising. When he grows up he'd like to become a professional footballer, but for the meantime, he's our expert music aficionado, delivering reviews weekly.



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