

THE FALL

ERSATZ GB

It's tough to find a record by the Fall in their extensive back catalogue that could be described as either surprising or shocking. That looks unlikely to change as they approach their 30th studio album, as they've willingly painted themselves into their musical corner. *Ersatz GB* picks up where the band left off, although it cranks up the noise, making for their messiest album in some time. There's the usual mix of rockabilly and driving Krautrock, which clashes wonderfully with Mark E. Smith's surreal, growled vocals. But rather than business as usual, it sounds like the band are simply going through the motions, albeit very competently — something is missing. It isn't without its better moments, as the curious "Nate Will Not Return," with its *Gossip Girl* fixated lyrics, and the tribute to the band's guitarist, "Greenway," demonstrate that the Fall are still capable of greatness, just not as frequently. (Cherry Red, www.cherryred.co.uk)

MICHAEL EDWARDS