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## Culture Desk

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November 7, 2011

### **Twenty Songs by the Fall**

Posted by *Sasha Frere-Jones*

This week's column is about the Fall, a band I have loved for almost thirty years. I am not entirely blind; their immense catalog has many dips, especially between 1995 and 2005. Nonetheless, it was a quick pleasure to assemble a twenty-song playlist on Spotify to introduce the novice into the bandleader Mark E. Smith's world. Hopefully the list will also please loons like me who are never sorry to hear "Cruiser's Creek" for the hundredth time.

Smith once said, "if it's me an your granny on the bongos, it's the Fall." (Smith is equally irritable and quotable on any day, in any decade. A few days ago, the *Financial Times* published an interview with Smith, one of Manchester's most famous musicians. "I can't stand Manchester," he said.) Listen to how the band stays within the realm of monomaniacal repetition, but moves from lighter sounds on "Lie Dream of A Casino Soul" and "L.A." in the eighties to a merciless attack on "Blindness," from the noughts. Smith's rainbow of vocal oddities deserves a periodic table of pronunciations. He barks, moans, mumbles, yowls, swallows consonants, snarfs, giggles, and eventually outdoes Clint Eastwood for the "you kids get off my lawn" yargle. (No, it's not a word, but that wouldn't bother Smith.) Though the new Fall album, "Ersatz GB," is not on Spotify, there was more than enough there to show you why the Fall tower above most everyone.



*Illustration by Steven Wilson.*

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