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The Fall – Ersatz G.B.

Posted on 15 November 2011. Tags: [Cherry Red Records](#), [John Cooper Clarke](#), [Mark E. Smith](#), [The Fall](#)



Is it even possible to write a review of a new album by **The Fall** without getting into figures? Well, no, so here goes: *Ersatz G.B.* is the band's album #29. And to those of us who've been through it all with him, Mark E. Smith is still irresistible; this blind, drunk, crude force of nature that keeps flogging that undying post-punk horse and smashing everything around him in a desperate, abusive, somewhat hilarious, but wholly addictive way. For those who are new to him (well, where have you been all this time?), my only advice would be to try to get into the groove. *Ersatz G.B.* is no classic by any means, and it doesn't even reach the shambolic heights of *Your Future Our Clutter*, but it is still Mark E. Smith. Which means you're in for a bizarre, sloppy, but in the long run totally rewarding ride.

When Smith was telling *Mojo* about this album a month or two ago, he said something about it being a "folky" album. Which of course meant that *Ersatz G.B.* would have fuck-all to do with "folky". And fuck-all it is. As expected (but certainly not feared), *Ersatz G.B.* is the usual glorious mess full of slovenly and engaging grooves, dirty punk riffs, bizarre hooks, occasional melodic outbursts, and Smith narrating his crazy, hardly discernible poetry like some lunatic, like a stoned **John Cooper Clarke** who's never spent a day sober. Though speaking of narrating, there are some failed-but-what-the-heck attempts at singing, too.

All through the record you can here lots of subtle and not-so-subtle references to The Fall's relentless career: 'Happi Song', sung by Smith's wife, Elena Poulou, is the kind of twee pop that might remind one of 1995's *Cerebral Caustic*. It is exactly what its title suggest: "happy" with wrong spelling. The circus-like feel of 'Mask Search' might take one back to the good old days of *Grotesque*. But mostly it's late-period Fall by the numbers. The centrepiece is the eight-minute dark, slow-paced epic 'Monocard' that maybe doesn't offer anything new, but certainly never loses its grip on the eager listener. Among the more accessible numbers I could mention songs like 'Laptop Dog' and the angry riffage-fest of 'Greenway'. All very nice.

Now honestly: having listened to every album by The Fall, I can no longer tell whether this one is a masterpiece or maybe some kind of tomfoolery. What I know for sure is that the band sounds incredibly tight (he hasn't shuffled his musicians for some time now), and the whole thing just keeps brimming with energy and prime, idiosyncratic power. I'd give this one a

high seven. I guess it's always somewhat disappointing – but you are always willing to come back for more. Such is the insoluble paradox of The Fall.



Released on 14th November 2011 by Cherry Red Records

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