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[The Fall, Ersatz G.B.](#)

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By **J Howell**



To trot out, once again, the nearing-cliche bit about [The Fall](#) said by the late John Peel, “they are always the same; they are always different.” Simple wisdom from Peel regarding the Fall, and always applicable: Ersatz G.B. is no different in that regard. Whether that’s a good thing or not is entirely up to the listener.

Ersatz G.B. is by no means a bad record—have The Fall ever released anything that wasn’t at least better than average? To be fair, no band can be sublimely brilliant every time out when they’re 29 or so records into a career that’s pushing 40 years old. It’s not like The Fall have lost steam, either; last year’s *Your Future, Our Clutter* was [brilliant](#), as enjoyable as any Fall record of recent years, more enjoyable than some, and a cut above many other bands’ albums.

Coming off the heels of a record that was easily one of the finest of that year, though, *Ersatz G.B.* feels a bit phoned in. While *Y.F.O.C.* was chock full of memorable tracks, this one is a bit lacking. There are enjoyable moments here, such as “Nate Will Not Return” and “Mask Search,” but as a whole *Ersatz G.B.* feels somewhat plodding. Again, it’s not bad, but it doesn’t quite command the listener’s attention the way so many classic Fall albums old and new do. Few of the tracks stand out from one another, much less from Mark E. Smith and crew’s better work. It may be true of *Ersatz G.B.* that, as Smith growls on “Greenway,” “It’s good enough for you,” but for Fall fans, it could be better.

All the above said, though, one should never underestimate Mark E. Smith, and much of what makes *Ersatz G.B.* less outwardly appealing than other recent Fall albums is likely intended. The production throughout is much less polished, and there's a note from Smith, fittingly somewhat obscured in black type against a blue background on the back cover of the disc, explaining that there were brighter mixes and versions of tracks here, but "I, M.E.S. stick by this thread, I cannot embrace you all, and brightness does not fit with ERSATZ G.B."

Speaking of liner notes, there's no credit for a guitarist on the album, though there is at least one all over *Ersatz G.B.* Whether that was intentional or not—and possibly indicative of another lineup change in the constant evolution of The Fall—is unclear. At any rate, it would appear that the somewhat grey feel (and sound) of the record is intentional, and while it's admirable and ultimately respectable of Smith to honor that intent, it makes for a record less enjoyable than the Fall are capable of even if it is fitting for the somewhat dark days we find ourselves in of late.

As past Fall records have shown time and again, it's quite possible for Mark E. Smith to channel disenchantment into brilliant, infectious songs. While *Ersatz G.B.* doesn't quite stack up in that department, it's still a Fall record, a good record, and for longtime Fall fans, worth checking out.

Ersatz G.B. was released on December 6, 2011 on Cherry Red Records and MVD Audio and can be ordered from [See Of Sound](#). Check out [The Fall Online](#) for more information.

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