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The Fall: Ersatz GB (Cherry Red)

by [Brian Mock](#)

The late, great British disc jockey John Peel once commented that the Fall, his favorite band, were always different, always the same. On his 29th studio album, Mark E. Smith (post-punk's Keith Richards) leads the current version of his band through a mediocre set that could easily be outtakes from their last three albums. Peel would be disappointed.

One key element of great Fall albums is the tension between Smith's brash, speak-singing style, and his band's instrumentation. The excellent players accommodating him over the years gave the band the confidence to take chances and challenge their audience; see 1982's *Hex Enduction Hour* and 1985's *This Nation's Saving Grace* for evidence. Unfortunately, Smith—having gone through approximately 60 band members since 1976—is one tough boss who now seems to need to rely on whoever will put up with his notoriously autocratic style.

While they seem proficient enough, Smith's latest bandmates (including his current wife, Elena Poulou, on keyboards) seem content to simply lock themselves into a repetitive groove and let Smith do his thing. And his "thing" has progressed into a barking, gargling set of angry statements ("I'm so sick of Snow Patrol," etc.). It's the same approach as on the band's last few records, with nothing approaching 2005's great *Fall Heads Roll*.

It may seem like a strange suggestion, but Mark E. Smith should fire his band (and whoever is responsible for the cover art) and start over. It's the only consistent thing he's got going for him at this point.



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