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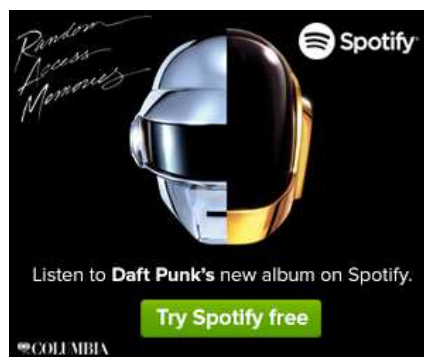
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The Fall: Re-Mit

By **John L. Murphy** 23 May 2013

Sterile spatters, hissing buzz, altered states

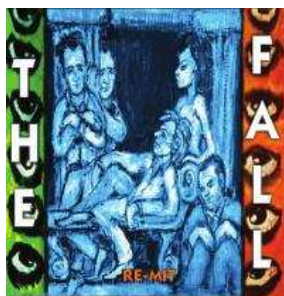
Re-Mit sustains the claustrophobic ambiance and subterranean moods of the Fall's recent releases. Produced by Mark E. Smith, it captures the spookier, isolated feel of the latest incarnation of the long-lived group, on its 30th studio record since 1977. With attention to depth, the mix combines murk with menace.

While trumpeted by Smith as far superior to the previous record, *Ersatz GB* (reviewed by me in 2011), I did not find *Re-Mit* drastically diverging from *Ersatz*, *Our Future Your Clutter* or *Imperial Wax Solvent*. However, it's tighter, focused (if blurry), and no song ambles or annoys for ten minutes. The line-up, by the shifting standards of Smith and whomever he and his wife—keyboardist Elena Poulou—hire, seems stable for now, with Kieron Melling on drums, Dave Spurr on bass, and Peter Greenway on guitar. It's the first time one version of the Fall has endured for four albums straight.

"No Respects" opens the album with a short, perky instrumental, dominated by hissing synthesizers. "Sir William Wray" nods to pioneering roots-distortion guitarist—and influence on Smith and comrades—Link Wray, blending Smith's trademark warbles with another peppy array of keyboards layered on cymbal splashes and guitar sputters. This typifies *Re-Mit* and the past half-decade of the band.

"Kinds of Spine" dangles and submerges within gray depths. "Noise" fits into the subdued noodling Smith favors lately, declaiming by gargles and strangles a crumpled sensibility. He nestles into a character out of a play by Samuel Beckett: shards of emotion dragged over a sensitive, prickly soul.

"He emerges from the ground...sands/ white robes to the ground/ you don't hear him." So begins "Hitite [sic] Man" as it conjures up a familiar specter from Smith's imagination. Long fascinated by the occult and the marginal, Smith comes closest on this track list here to a narrative, if an



The Fall

Re-Mit

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unsettling one. "Pre-MDMA Years" closes what's labeled side one with more gurgling about altered states, although the added unpredictability of the musical backing makes this more listenable than similar tracks on recent records that plumb this same terrain of confusion and hesitation in a liminal realm.

Reprising with a vocal version of "No Respects", the second half marches along as Smith "for twelve years in fast" (I think, given the limits of a download file and lack of a lyric sheet) with "eldritch and me" verbally whooshes around the listener. "England a stranglehold [or swinehold?]/ why are you here?" Lyrics such as these drag the audience into Smith's own tilted fun house.

Re-Mit presses you into a corner, or plunges you under the sea. "Victricola Time" features Smith's wordplay, although his initial squawks here make Captain Beefheart or John Lydon resemble crooners by comparison. Part of the fun of a Fall album is trying to decipher what's coming out of Smith. Meanwhile, Poulou's keyboards churn on steadily as Melling's steady percussion backs the vocalist's chatter.

In the past, The Fall has featured fine guitarists. Greenway's contributions get pushed down into the muck, yet "Irish" lets him struggle for a riff above Smith's trilling. He regales us with snippets difficult or nearly impossible to decipher. My guesswork transcribes "out of reach/ the women and...the bad dream/ is out of reach"; "James Murphy is their chief"; "they show their bollocks when they eat/ commercial radio awaits"; and "make the pledge".

A martial beat and shuffled vocal tracks by band mates construct a shaky story about a novelist; airline queues; London flats; Viennese summer; winter in Florida; Italian Sundays; and euros in "Jetplane". Multilingual phrases and Spurr's bass try to propel this shambling tale. It lands leaving the listener wondering what happened. It conveys the jet-lagged blur of travel, certainly. On "Jam Song", Poulou's patterns over in-the-studio background chatter segue into Smith's affected European accent, carrying over from the previous track into what builds into a shambling construction of drums, synthesizers, and whirring sounds. Unsurprisingly, it wanders. Closing with "Lodestones", the Fall rouses itself from the pedals and playthings to stumble towards a bigger presence. Guitar and keys mingle to push along the bass and float the vocals. It's the closest song to the earlier incarnations of the band which explored a more accessible, propulsive structure.

Re-Mit is a dry production, as if at studio monitor levels. The sterile, dessicated spatters heighten the altered states evoked by Smith's declaimed vocal fragments. They erupt over bursts of processed strings arrayed across a constant, if often attenuated, amplified buzz and vacuumed squawk of keyboards. Splattered effects from guitar and bass both mash into the production's compacted delivery. The results come across as thin and wobbly, playing against the thickened studio mood. Smith's production reveals a band determined to explore its denser, edgy, introverted character. The songs burrow down and hunker dose. You approach them; they do not reach out to you. As with nearly all of the Fall, this album does what it wants to do, forcing the listener to submit to its terms.

Rating: (10 icons) 8



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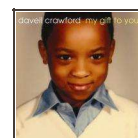
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