

# THE BUSINESS RECORD REVIEWS

## COCK SPARRER FOREVER

(Chase The Ace)

Street punk kings on top form.

9/10

**F**rom the minute Cock Sparrer's fortunes were revived by their inclusion on Garry Bushell's groundbreaking 1980 compilation 'Oi! The Album', their status as the UK's top street punk band has been unassailable. This is partly down to their streetwise honesty and no-bullshit attitude, but mainly to their unerring ability to knock out fantastically addictive, catchy anthems seemingly at will. 'Forever' is no exception, ranking right up there with their best.

The band have never exactly rushed out new studio albums, often allowing a decade between each - 'Runnin' Riot in '84' in 1984, 'Guilty as Charged' in 1994, then 'Two Monkeys' in 1997 and 'Here We Stand' in 2007. Therefore, 'Forever', their sixth studio album, could be viewed as being right on schedule.

If there's ever been a problem with Cock Sparrer albums, it's been down to production, and guitarist Daryl Smith jokes that this has been "due to the band

taking the advance and spending it down the pub and then recording it on a shoe string! So we've got a catalogue of great songs that sound crap!"

No such problems this time. 'Forever', produced by Daryl and James Bragg and recorded at The Old Chapel in Chichester, Gravity Shack in London, and Yellow Shark in Cheltenham, sounds huge, meaty, and crisp. It also brings new subtlety to the band's trademark terrace-filling backing vocals. Daryl says that "this time we really wanted to make an album that sounds great too. We're all really happy with the production and feel that finally we have something that stands up against other 'proper' releases."

Opener 'One By One', telling the story of the band growing up together, is stirring and uplifting, and though not specific, 'Us Against the World' and 'We're the Good Guys' seem to look to their future, while 'Gonna Be Alright' touchingly tells of an unspecified personal tragedy. A common Sparrer lyrical theme is betrayal, and 'Family of One' effectively explores that theme, as does 'Contender.' 'Every Step of the Way' is another heartstring plucker, lifted by those aforementioned textured, harmonious backing vocals, and the familiar theme of violence is explored chillingly in 'Somebody's Brother; Somebody's Son'.

Pirates Press, who release the album in the US, speculate on their website that this may be Sparrer's



last studio album (though the band say "never say never"), but let's hope that's not the case, because on this evidence they seem to be at the top of their game.

Shane Baldwin



SARGENT