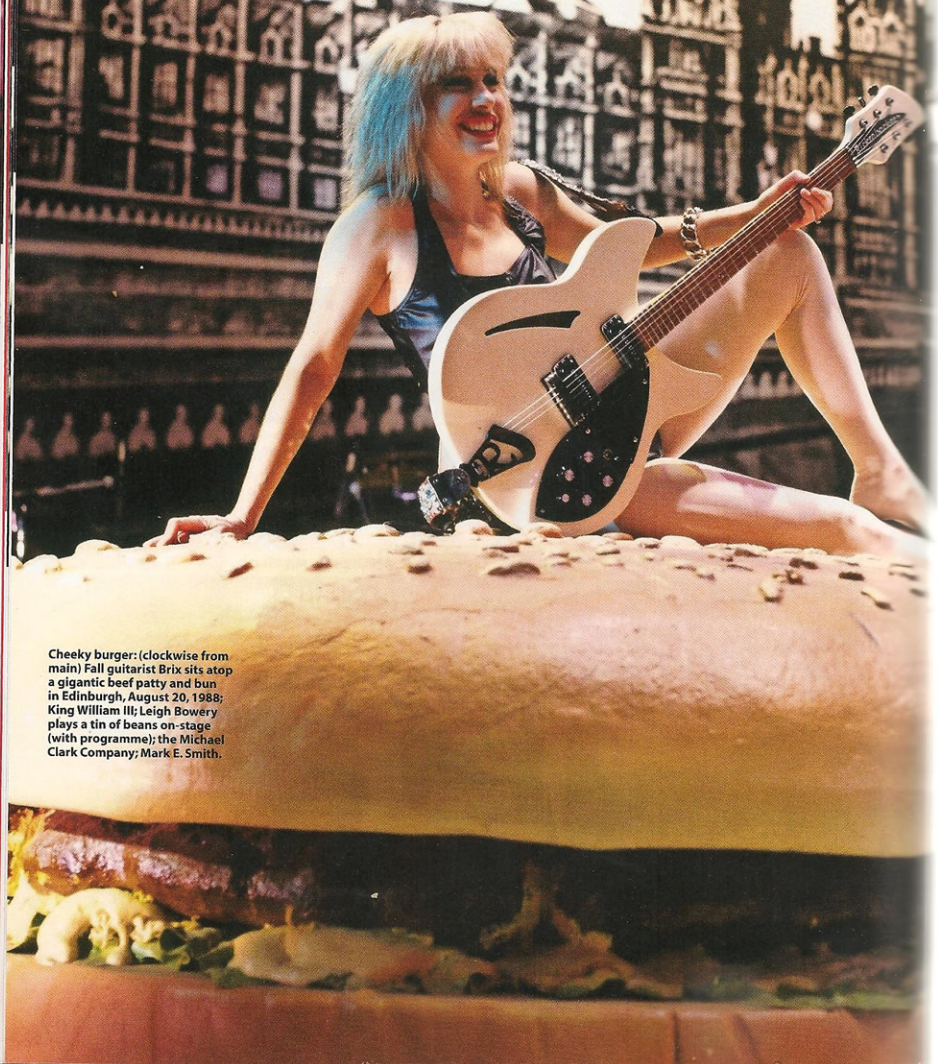


WHAT GOES ON!

MOJO EYEWITNESS

THE FALL PLAY I AM CURIOUS, ORANGE, 1988

On June 21 in Amsterdam, Mark E. Smith's gang and Michael Clark's modernist dance company debuted their ballet heralding the 300th anniversary of the arrival of King William III in England. Then they took it to Edinburgh and London. What really went on there? We only have this excerpt...



Cheeky burger: (clockwise from main) Fall guitarist Brix sits atop a gigantic beef patty and bun in Edinburgh, August 20, 1988; King William III; Leigh Bowery plays a tin of beans on-stage (with programme); the Michael Clark Company; Mark E. Smith.

Fall president-for-life MES and long suffering former bass retainers Steve Hanley remember Dutch royalty, boozy ballerinas and the need for discipline.

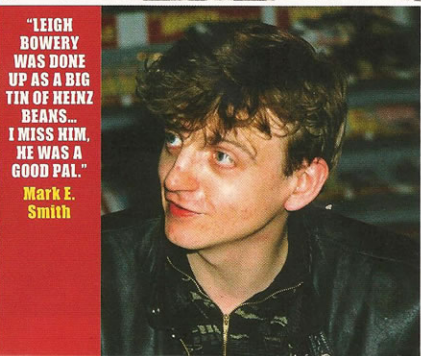
MARK E. SMITH: "The ballet was commissioned by the Dutch government, because of the 300th anniversary of William Of Orange's arrival in England). The Queen [Beatrix of the Netherlands] came to the Amsterdam show, but I didn't see her. I'd written the music right up to the last minute. I think the Dutch promoters didn't like the fact we were doing it in a theatre. To them that was like Johnny Rotten turning into Olivier. We fell out with the promoters on that."

I remember the shows in Edinburgh [the King's Theatre, August 15-20] – very enjoyable. Leigh [late performance artist Leigh Bowery] was done up as a big tin of Heinz beans. The nights in Scotland were good, but I was worried to be honest, about the [sectarian] William Of Orange thing. But people enjoyed it. I was busy trying to get the useless group I had to play in time every night. That wasn't difficult for me, but it was difficult for the group. I should have fired that lot after that, on reflection. The poison dwarf, Brix [then Fall guitarist Brix Smith], was in the middle. Are you talking to her? No? Good. Me and Brix split about three weeks before [the ballet shows] started, so it was very uncomfortable. Sadler's Wells was great [a run of 19 performances at this home of London Ballet]. By then it was really perfected. I knew my history, but I was a bit vague on William Of Orange, so when I was writing the songs I was reading about it. I remember me and Leigh Bowery going out to very rough pubs, him dressed as he was. I miss him, he was a good pal. We had to rush from the venue at five-to-11, sprinting to get last orders."

STEVE HANLEY: "We started in Amsterdam, with a performance for the Queen Of Holland. She came backstage, shaking everyone's hand. I remember speaking to Mark that night and I was like, Oh that worked. Mark was like, 'I always knew it would.' It was a big production. There were 10, 12 dancers in Michael Clark's group and probably about 30 people in total working on the stage show, including the band, wardrobe, lights and so on. It was good in Amsterdam. I thought ballet dancers would be disciplined, looking after their bodies, but they were worse than us for partying and staying up for days."

After Amsterdam we went to Edinburgh as part of the Edinburgh Festival. There you had all the Fall fans in the cheap seats at the back and all the ballet fans at the front. Quite a few ballet fans thought it was too loud and it didn't work – you saw them with their fingers in their ears [laughs]. There was one scene where half [the dancers] wore Rangers tops and half wore Celtic kits, but that didn't stir anything up. There were no riots. They'd just changed the licensing in Scotland so we'd be out all night. The dancers were still definitely outperforming us there. In London we were at Sadler's Wells [September 20-October 8] – a big venue, a couple of thousand and it was full from the first night to the last. It was two 45-minute sets and I remember getting this really bad cramp in my arms. I don't know what it was, if it was the stress of it, but when we got back to doing normal gigs it just stopped happening.

The main difference was discipline – because it was for a dance troupe, it had to be exactly the same every night, the same speed, the same length every night, where The Fall tended to go off on tangents and do 15-minute songs. Kevin Rowland came [to a London show]. He was one of my heroes. He was in the pub afterwards, but I was too scared to talk to him. I met him recently and he remembered [the ballet]. It was probably our most successful time, and everyone was getting on. The ballet was pretty much the last thing Brix did."

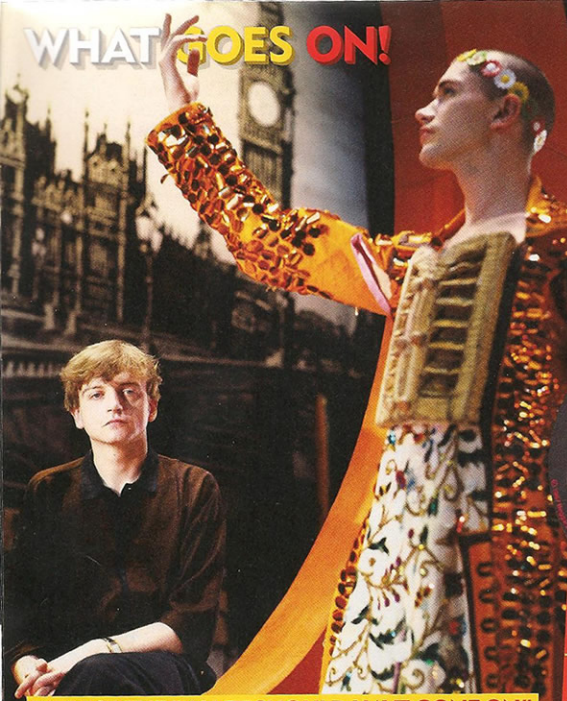


"LEIGH BOWERY WAS DONE UP AS A BIG TIN OF HEINZ BEANS... I MISS HIM, HE WAS A GOOD PAL."

Mark E. Smith

TURN OVER! FOR MEMORIES OF THE SOUNDTRACK ALBUM, I AM CURIOUS, ORANGE...

WHAT GOES ON!



own. There are some good ones – Big New Prinz and Wrong Place, Right Time. But there are a few songs like Bad News Girl that worked OK in the ballet but I don't think are The Fall's best work. The intro [Overture] was just Brix with an afternoon on her own in the studio, with none of the band. Some [of the album] was recorded live, but we couldn't use all of that. I think we were just in the studio for maybe three or four days. We'd played the songs that many times [at the ballet performances] that we probably just went in and banged them down. I saw Frank Black do a talk recently because the Pixies were doing a cover of Big New Prinz. He was asked why they were doing that and he said, "Oh, because I went to the ballet." So he went to one, and I think Some Youth came. I heard

PART 2 "THE BALLET SHOULD HAVE GONE ON"

THE FALL PLAY I AM KURIOS, ORANGE, 1988

The stage show was followed by The Fall's *I Am Kurios Oranj* album, recorded in the studio and live in Edinburgh.

MARK E. SMITH: "The ballet should have gone on really. We could have taken it to America and all around the world. There was demand to see it, but the sponsorship ran out and there were all those different people involved so it would've been difficult. We'd sort of started [the album] before the shows because I wanted to get it out as the ballet was winding down. I was sending Michael rough versions of songs and I was trying to explain to the group, this is what they will be dancing to. The LP is a bit up and down. A track like [dance-flavoured] Win Fall CD 2080 is prophetic – that was a time when dance was underground, all the drugs and that. The Fall don't play Big New Prinz these days, but the Pixies do [their live cover version]. I saw it on a computer – it's all right. We still play Wrong Place, Right Time now and again. I do think that is one of my best songs. I think it's great – I wrote every note and every word of it."

STEVE HANLEY: "I think it was the best time in The Fall. It was the most

An MES of help: (clockwise from main) Smith and dance master Michael Clark; Sadder's Wells poster; LP label; LP back sleeve; (bottom) Fall members (from left) Simon Wolstencroft, Brix Smith and Steve Hanley.

creative. We'd been on tour in America, writing songs on a cassette – just me and Craig [Scanlon] on bass and guitar and Mark on vocals in a hotel room. We'd send the tracks to [Michael Clark], to put his dancers through their paces. But by the time we'd played the songs as a band in rehearsal they sounded nothing like the versions we'd sent him. I actually don't think the album's strong on its

the Pixies' version of Big New Prinz and I know Ding who played bass in The Fall after me and who has also played on Pixies stuff. The Pixies were playing Manchester Apollo, so I asked Ding if I could get up – the guy who wrote Big New Prinz – and do it with them. But it was a no [laughs]."
Roy Wilkinson

The Fall's new album Dedication Not Medication is due out later this year on Cherry Red. Steve Hanley's book The Big Midweek: Life Inside The Fall is out now.

"I THINK IT WAS THE BEST TIME IN THE FALL. IT WAS THE MOST CREATIVE."

Steve Hanley

