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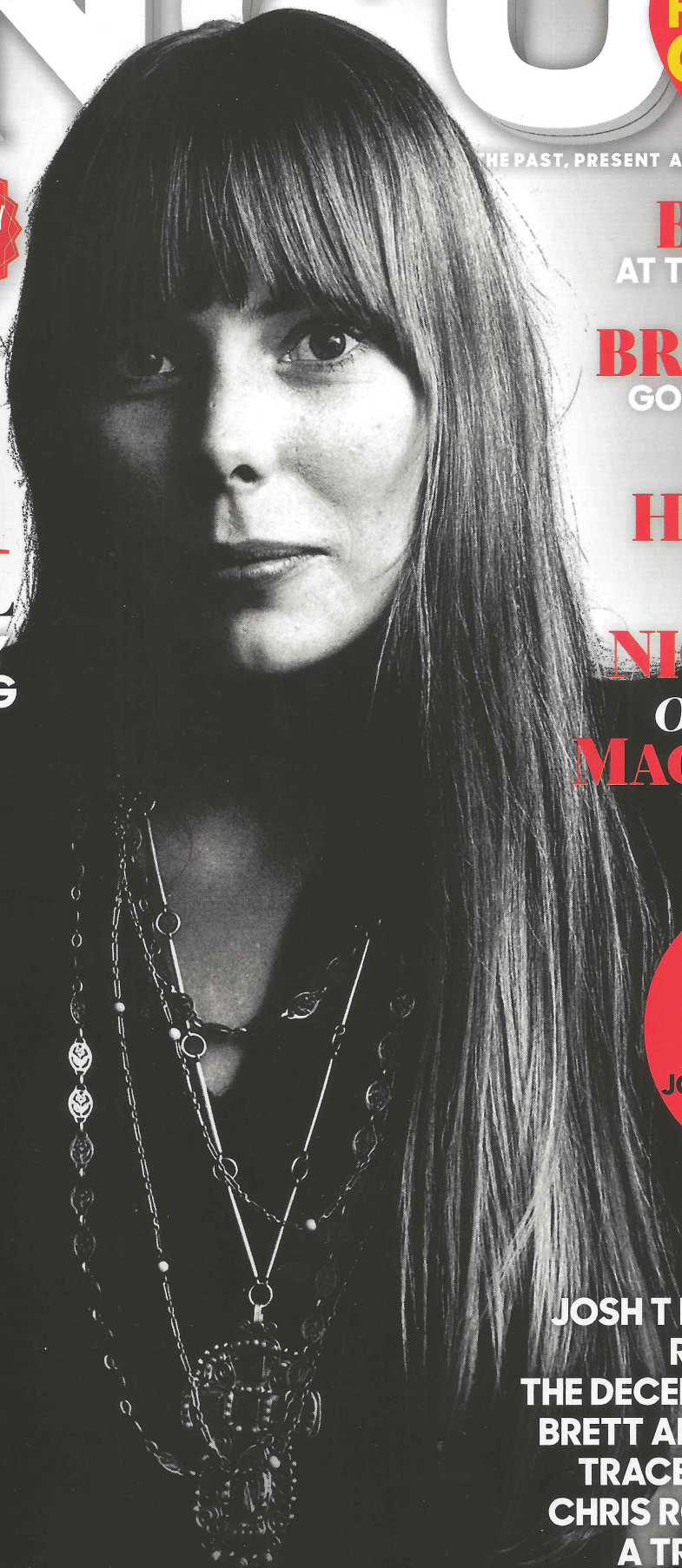
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“He was the leader,
the garrulous
contrarian,
the ideas man,
the visionary...”

MARK E SMITH | 1957–2018

...with help from some of Smith's closest collaborators, **David Cavanagh** examines the life and work of **THE FALL**'s utterly uncompromising leader. As part of **UNCUT**'s extensive tribute, Julian Cope pays tribute to Smith's genius: “He had very shamanistic qualities, a particular ability to draw the best from people.”

Photo by STEVE GULLICK



“Nobody loved The Fall more than Mark did”

GRANT SHOWBIZ

Big bad apple: Smith in New York City, 1985

SPEAKING to Granada TV's *So It Goes* in February 1978, the singer of The Fall attempted, not for the last time in his life, to explain what his group were fighting against. “Coming from the north,” he said, “you’ve got this inoffensive, cap-touching attitude which we’re trying to break out of.” Shot side on, with his attention shifting back and forth between the interviewer and the ceiling, he resembled a younger, fidgetier version of the Leeds United striker Allan Clarke. This was Mark E Smith at 20. One day a tower of writing would bear his name.

Almost 40 years later, at Glasgow University’s Queen Margaret Union, Smith made his final public entrance in the most dramatic circumstances. The Fall launched into their opening song, “Wolf Kidult Man”, and Smith’s unmistakable snarl rang out loud and clear over the top. But where was he? Nobody could see him. The 60-year-old singer was in a platform lift, being borne slowly upwards to the stage. The door of the lift opened and there he was, looking shockingly frail in a wheelchair. Pamela Vander, his girlfriend and manager, wheeled him to the front of the stage. The roar from the crowd nearly drowned out the music.

To a certain breed of Fall fan, Smith was more than a writer. He was

a force of nature, an indomitable survivor, a man who’d fought his way back from the brink. Over the years, his fans’ feelings towards him have been distinctly complex, highly intense and oddly loving. Now he was dying before their eyes. He sang for about an hour, holding the microphone in his left hand, his right arm strapped in a sling. The next three gigs were cancelled as his condition took a turn for the worse. He never performed live again.

The journey that took Smith from *So It Goes* in ’78 to that night in Glasgow last November was, in every single respect, an incredible one. How could it not be? It was the historic, phantasmagoric, true-life story of The Fall. It’s a story that began with five young people discussing Camus novels in Prestwich, Greater Manchester, and it’s a story that ended with the announcement of Smith’s death by the former Fall guitarist Marc Riley on BBC Radio 6 Music on January 24. Even as his time ran out, Smith had been making plans for a new Fall album, due to be recorded in the Lake District early this year. He knew no other way of living. Being Mark E Smith of The Fall was his vocation, his livelihood, his burden, his curse. It was his body of work and his creative purpose.

“He always wanted everything to be right,” says his friend and producer Grant Showbiz. “Forget all the stuff you’ve heard. Nobody loved The Fall more than Mark did.”

As they saw in Glasgow, he remained a Fall fan for as long as he had a breath in his body.

IF the death of a visibly dying man can ever lead to widespread shock and disbelief, the man was Mark E Smith. To the younger members of The Fall he was simply indestructible, a hard case

MARK E SMITH'S FINEST MOMENTS

1980. “Last orders half past ten!” Mark makes important informational announcement in the midst of brisk, early live album *Totale’s Turns: It’s Now Or Never*.

1980s Prestwich homage. “Fall

album covers are like an archive of old Prestwich,” he once said. Early singles and albums feature photos of historic buildings since demolished.

1984. The video for “Cruiser’s Creek”. Performance artist Leigh Bowery gatecrashes a scenario in which The Fall

play guests at a depressing office party. Re-cuts some of the footage for “Mr Pharmacist” promo – as was standard Fall practice (cf promos for “Wings” and “Container Drivers”).

1985. The Fall release “Terry Waite Sez”, shortly

before the famed hostage negotiator is captured. MES later responsible for other vaguely prophetic tracks including “Powder Keg”, in advance of the Manchester bombing.

1985. “Paintwork” – MES accidentally records some TV and ramblings on to a tape – in so



from a previous generation who mistrusted fresh air and regarded being ill as something that was good for the character. In 2004, Smith had done a number of shows in a wheelchair after fracturing his hip. During the recording of the 2010 album *Your Future Our Clutter*, he was in a wheelchair again, surviving on “German painkillers” that caused him to write lyrics he would later assess as “downright fucking weird”. Not that there was anything untoward or alarming about that. Downright weirdness was a long-established Fall prerequisite. No outside influence was allowed to corrupt it – not the threat of a prison sentence for Smith in 1998, not his bankruptcy in 1999. He bounced back from every blow he took.

But not this time. Not this time. Mark E Smith's death was the end of an era, and people from all corners of society knew it. *Guardian*-reading veterans of John Peel shows. Football pundits. Filmmakers. Politicians. Academics. The social media community expressed its profound condolences. Smith cared nothing for

the internet, and had no online profile, yet his R.I.P. hashtag was the top trend on Twitter for several hours that sad evening. He might have found the scenario exceptionally perverse. God knows what he would have made of Emily Maitlis and Tim Burgess paying solemn tribute to him on *Newsnight*. If his previous form was anything to go by, they both would have ended up in a Fall song of the most sardonic variety.

Smith was a man who revelled in disparaging others, seeing it as a crucial part of his job. He held politicians and cultural figures to the highest standards, and when they fell short, as they always did – indeed, just as he'd predicted they would, years before anyone else cottoned onto them – their reputations would be fair game for his devastating invective. It was sport, but it had a serious undercurrent. The Fall were conceived all along, we could argue, as a group of people at odds with virtually everything in their purlieu – including other groups – which put the emphasis and onus on Smith right from the earliest Fall lineup to the last. He was the leader, the garrulous contrarian, the ideas man, the visionary. A hard-as-nails poet and a tone-deaf lead vocalist, he had to work hard to justify his contradictions. He solved the problem by creating his own universe of language, a brave and fantastic planet of words where every paradox, every caprice, every imperative, every afterthought and every topic under the sun could logically coexist. He could put everything into a Fall song, and that's why The Fall were about everything.

Agile, vituperative, brilliant. MES at 21. He was as fast as the speed he took for breakfast. MES at 22 and 23. His train of thought was impossible to keep up with, even when he wrote it down and belowed it into a microphone. “*Mind moving fast is mad/Mind moving slow is sane*,” he reflected in a 1984 song called “Craigness”, a clue as to how he monitored his psyche under pressure.

A Fall song could take any subject as its starting point, be it a geopolitical crisis in the Balkans or a mistyped subtitle on a daytime TV show, before spinning off into riddles, sub-riddles, veils of supernatural proto-riddles, indecipherable passages, impenetrable



Fairly early daze: The Fall in 1978, with Marc Riley (centre)

Photo: Paul Slaterry

the fall

jargon and redacted non-sequiturs. Listeners would feel exhilarated but baffled – but mainly exhilarated. You could lose five-to-ten years of your life to The Fall quite easily. Make it 15. Make it 30. The mood that lured you in might be one of horror or mysticism, or the air might burn and stink with a corrosive satirical odour. The perspective would move from the first person to the third, and the tenses would change abruptly, making you wonder how many narrators were in the story and how many stories were in the narrative. The syntax, for rock lyrics, was unparalleled. “*It is a good life here/Football and beer much superior/Gringo gets cheap servant staff/Low tax and a dusky wife.*”

Song titles were his calling card. Each one a vortex, a wink, a realm of the essence of Smith. “To Nkroachment: Yarbles”. “Haf Found Bormann”. “Last Commands Of Xyralothep Via M.E.S.”. Some song titles grouped together adjectives and nouns that you knew had never been seen in the same company before. “Mollusc In Tyrol”. “Hexen Definitive/Strife Knot”. “Distilled Mug Art”. Language poured out of Smith in a cryptic, pared-down dialect ➤

HEY DRUDE

“I was in awe of Mark...”

Julian Cope remembers the great man

“MARK Smith was my supreme ally against the prevailing Bowie obsessions of the Liverpool scene in the late '70s. We were both totally suspicious of the Thin White Duke and were compadres in krautrock. Unfortunately, Smithy took such a dislike to the sartorial Bowie obsessions of Paul Simpson [*The Teardrop Explodes*, later *of the Wild Swans*] that Ian McCulloch and I always felt obliged to sneak off to the Manchester scene, enthusiastically returning to regale Simmo with tales of hanging out at John Cooper Clarke's and suchlike. Also, Mark had auditioned unsuccessfully for the avant-garde band Henry

Cow and was appalled at their attitudes – what he called in a letter to me ‘anti-new wave snobs’.

“Mark's enthusiasm for myself and Mac – and the sweet hippy enthusiasm of his partner, Fall manager Kay Carroll – manifested visibly throughout 1978 and '79 in lovely letters and also in namechecks in Fall songs. To both myself and lan, these kindnesses were manna for us during our dark, unsung early period. I saw The Fall play live 28 times in 1978 and Mac and I were in awe of Mark.

He had very shamanistic qualities, a particular ability to draw the best from people.”

INTERVIEW:
ROB
HUGHES



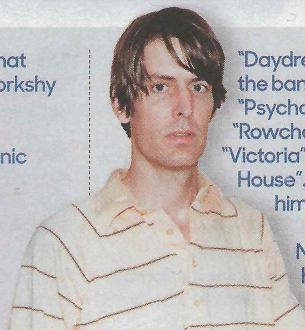
doing prompting one of the group's multi-layered masterpieces.

1989. Nick Cave/Shane MacGowan/Mark E Smith summit in *NME*. When Cave comments that he is often exhausted after being on stage, MES



comments that Cave is a “workshy Australian”.

1989. The Sonic Youth “Fall” Peel session, October 18. A week before the release of



“Daydream Nation”, the band record “Psycho Mafia”, “Rowche Rumble”, “Victoria”, “My New House”. Mark was himself no fan.

Nor did he like Pavement

much. “He's driving round in a BMW,” Smith once said of Steve Malkmus, “while I'm struggling to pay my lads.”

1990. Director Jonathan Demme includes a fraction of “Hip Priest” in *The Silence Of The Lambs*, heard diagetically while Clarice Starling hunts Buffalo Bill in his home/macabre kill suite. >>

PAUL SLATTERY

MARK E SMITH

that was provincial and rural, corporeal and intangible, modern and ancient. A compendium of Fall quotes exists for every occasion. "I do not like your tone. It has ephemeral whinging aspects." "Not malicious, I hope you understand and grasp." "Where are you going? This work has not yet reached cessation."

Now, obviously, more than one intrepid soul sought to connect the strands of his complicated literary and geographical lineages. He was a combination of – let's see – Colin Wilson and Anthony Burgess. No! He was an amalgam of HP Lovecraft and Captain Beefheart. No, no! He was a cross between Arthur Machen and Hunter S Thompson. No! He was the spiritual progeny of John Lydon and MR James. No! He was the bastard love child of Wyndham Lewis and Brian Clough.

"He was a one-off," says The Fall's guitarist Pete Greenway, a quiet man who thought the world of him. "Whatever subject you talked to Mark about, he would always come at it from a completely different angle to you. An angle you'd never thought of and would never expect. And that would be *all the time*. He was like that in his life and he was like that in his songwriting."

The Fall's bassist Dave Spurr, like Greenway, has heard the theories. The theory that Smith was not especially unique. The theory that the pubs of northern England are full of characters every bit as eccentric and original as he was; it's just that none of them have spent the last 40 years writing bizarre tunes about Damo Suzuki ("Generous of lyric, Jehovah's Witness"), Oprah Winfrey ("she studied bees") or Mike Love of The Beach Boys. ("Good vibrations, man").

Spurr doesn't believe it. He's never met anyone like Smith – not in a pub, not in the north – during the 11 years he's known him. "He wasn't a product of anything other than Mark E Smith," Spurr insists. "He came from a northern British male tradition, yes, but he was an extreme case. You or I could never fashion ourselves into Mark E Smith. It takes years of practice and a lot of alcohol."

WARNING. This should not be tried by anyone watching at home.

WHILE Spurr, Greenway and The Fall's drummer Keiron Melling slowly accustom themselves to a new era of Smith absence, the rest of us can walk unhurried through the rooms of the great edifice that is his now-completed work. It can be accessed like a library or a portal. Once you're in, you're in. A pair of bookends stands where once the shelf stretched to infinity. One bookend is "Nine Out Of Ten", the last track on last year's *New Facts Emerge* – The Fall's last studio LP – and the other is "Psycho Mafia", the first song on their first EP, "Bingo-Master's Break-Out!"

Released in August 1978 as punk rock softened into the radio-friendly sound of new wave, "Bingo-Master's Break-Out!" did not follow Blondie's "Picture This" or The Rezillos' "Top Of The Pops" into the UK singles charts. Abrasive almost to the point of mental scarring, the three songs on it are all, in their own



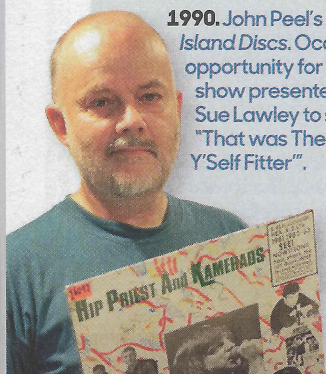
With founding Fall member Martin Bramah in 1978



ways, early major works from the pen of Smith. The five-minute rant on Side Two, "Repetition", is The Fall's closest thing to a manifesto ("Repetition in the music and we're never going to lose it"), a promise from the Velvet Underground-loving Smith that the discipline of simplicity will forever be the group's musical conscience. It's interesting to plot a course through all 31 albums and come to a decision on whether he was right. Certainly, when The Fall played "Repetition" at venues around Manchester and London in '77-'78, audiences must have sensed they were in the presence of something new. Something dressed in unfashionable knitwear and haranguing them with a bony outstretched finger and a larynx coated in acid. "Mark just let fly with such venom from day one," Martin Bramah, The Fall's original guitarist, later recalled. No heckler could faze Smith, not for a moment, let alone upstage him. The grammar-school boy had a maturity far beyond his years. His mother, Irene, would tell him he was born an old man. He was 50 when he was nine. As a teenager, he had the ability to seek out music, books and political discourses that would influence him for life. Unlike a lot of Greater Manchester adolescents who discovered music around the age of 14, Smith went straight for the hard stuff – Can, Beefheart, the Velvets – without first passing through an apprenticeship of Bolan and Bowie. He was arrogant. He could see where other writers were getting it wrong. He picked up on minute subtleties of human interaction and motivation that the average person missed. And like all good psychics, he would always be impervious to nostalgia. The past began six seconds ago and was already irrelevant by seven.

It was on the other side of the "Bingo-Master's Break-Out!" EP, however, that Smith observed his city through

BARRY PLUMMER/EAMONN MCCABE/RED FERNS



1990. John Peel's *Desert Island Discs*. Occasions opportunity for (then show presenter) Sue Lawley to say: "That was The Fall – 'Eat Y' Self Fitter'".

1990. Appears as the

joker in *NME* playing cards. MES is unimpressed.

Without fail MES sends a Christmas card to *NME* office: "From your pal, Mark E Smith".

1992. "Kimble". The Fall cover Perry on a Peel session. A spectacular, expansive versioning, and stealthily a cousin of

"Paintwork" – trailing later single "Why Are People Grudgeful?". "I wear very comfortable shoes!"

1992. "Free Range" – The Fall's only self-written Top 40 single, referencing Friedrich Nietzsche, Stanley Kubrick and the breakdown of the Soviet Union (maybe) over their finest indie-dance groove.

1994. Smith appears with the Inspiral Carpets on *Top Of The Pops*, to perform their composition "I Want You" – to which he offers vocal interjections. Smith vocally consults the printed lyrics to the song, replaces them in his pocket, then continues his performance. "You say you lost two stone in weight/ Then why/ Are you/ SO FAT?"

hallucinatory eyes. "Bingo-Master" is the poignant tale of a bingo-caller who goes mad and makes a desperate bid for freedom. The detail and pathos give it the feel of a rogue episode of Peter Kay's *Phoenix Nights*, hammered out on a typewriter 25 years ahead of its time. Preceding it, "Psycho Mafia" was about a curious street gang who mope around the streets, taking weed and acid, finding no pub or venue that will admit them. "Shot heads and teeth/Our eyes are red/Our brains are dead." As would become Smith's policy, when meaning was ambiguous, his voice would drive the point home subliminally. He delivered the three texts in a sarcastic, atonal salvo, only occasionally displaying a vague concept of melody. The sound of him was so brutal that radio airplay was effectively denied to The Fall for years. John Peel on Radio 1 was a lone champion.

Yes, the music papers and Peel were the Fall-friendly outposts of the media. That's how most people got into them. But if you chanced upon Smith in mid-song or in mid-interview during the early '80s, he could be utterly elusive. He was used to being hailed as the most incisive lyricist of the post-punk era ("Fiery Jack", "How I Wrote Elastic Man"), but it was an encomium to which he responded with disdain. Always several steps in advance of anyone who fancied they were catching up with him, he rejected the compliments bestowed on him and took them as warnings of trouble ahead. Stagnating and selling out were equal evils. His belief was that The Fall were better off ignoring praise. Like fresh air, there was something not right about it.

"I don't want to make [*the music*] faultless," Smith told a fanzine called *Printed Noises* in 1980, "because then you've just blown it... I mean, The Fall could have been a really good rock band two years ago. If we'd got our shit together we could have been a Top 50 band like The Ruts. There's bits where I'm trying to catch the band out, where I'm fighting against the band for them to do something off-the-wall 'cos it's more interesting to me."

This methodology of

attrition ensured a constant flow of music and ideas that earned The Fall more respect than almost any of their peers. Everything about the critically acclaimed 1982 album *Hex Enduction Hour* stood at the precipice of uncertainty – from the cacophonous onslaught of the two-drummer lineup to the moot question of whether the group would soon have to disband due to lack of money – and Smith, you suspect, was hyper-keen that all of the anxiety and trepidation in their lives should be captured in the recording. He became obsessed with the idea of keeping Fall members on their toes. He pushed some of them to the limits of their endurance. Some of his behaviour, if accounts are true, would be tantamount to physical and psychological abuse. By the end of the '80s he had a reputation for hiring and firing Fall personnel on a whim. People were beginning to count how many musicians had come and gone.

Smith's 1983 marriage to the American guitarist Laura (Brix) Salenger changed the look and sound of The Fall, if not Smith's headstrong ideology. The group revealed a new interest in pop music on their 1984 singles "Oh! Brother" and "C.r.e.e.p.", but Smith

"He'd always come at subjects from a different angle to you"

PETE GREENWAY

1999. "Touch Sensitive". Among the finest of the band's later period garage rock songs is blasted into homes on a TV ad for the Vauxhall Corsa.

2004. When John Peel dies, MES is called to appear as a talking head on current affairs show *Newsnight* – and uses the opportunity, essentially, to bait

his fellow guest Damian O'Neill from The Undertones. In so doing



10 Classic Fall albums

LAY OF THE LAND



EXTRICATE

COG SINISTER/
PHONOGRAM, 1990

A magnificent album, delightful to hardcore and newcomer alike. Punchy hi-fi production, a rueful ballad ("Bill Is Dead") a nod to hip-hop ("Telephone Thing"), and every one a winner. **10/10**



CODE: SELFISH

COG SINISTER/
PHONOGRAM, 1991

Possibly the last truly great Fall LP, with musical adventure and acute social observation ("Free Range"; "Married. 2 Kids") in equal measure. Slide guitar, fidgety techno and fine opener "The Birmingham School Of Business School", too. **9/10**



DRAGNET

STEP FORWARD, 1979

A field recording from inside a ghost story. After their comparatively crisp debut, the band's second record was an experiment in fidelity, a dank and literary post-punk. The likes of "Spectre Vs Rector" offered a cold and frightening trip into the MES universe. **9/10**



HEX ENDUCTION HOUR

KAMERA, 1992

Stretching two sides of vinyl to its absolute limit, The Fall's fourth LP is a chilly, needle-pushing masterpiece: the hypnotic grooves of "The Classical" and the two-part "Winter" are stunning, while "Jawbone & The Air Rifle" might be Smith's most evocative tale of horror. **9/10**



PALACE OF SWORDS REVERSED (COMPILATION)

COG SINISTER, 1987

Strong comp of early singles, inc the extraordinary "Wings", the B-side of "Kicker Conspiracy". Some great bits of Slaters, (cf "Fit And Working Again") on here, too. **7/10**



BEND SINISTER

BEGGARS BANQUET, 1986

The "pop" Fall, as complemented by the melodic talents of Smith's wife Brix continued an amazing run of form. Atmospheric, tuneful and weird, this felt visionary work, updated for a new audience. **8/10**



THIS NATION'S SAVING GRACE

BEGGARS BANQUET, 1985

The band's second label for Beggars is an extraordinary work. While finding room for oddball pop gems – "Spoilt Victorian Child"; "My New House" – the LP's strength is in its multi-layered longform work: "I Am Dama Suzuki" and "Paintwork". **10/10**



GROTESQUE

ROUGH TRADE, 1980

After the aggressive audio of their previous record, The Fall's third album felt positively welcoming. With the increasingly melodic playing of Marc Riley, the group straddle longform self-reference ("C'n C Smithering"; "The NWR") and spunky rockabilly. **8/10**



FALL HEADS ROLL

SLOGAN, 2005

Smith may have later dubbed this lineup "traitors, liars and cunts" after they abandoned him in the middle of a US tour, but The Fall's 24th studio album is a metallic, vitalic delight – "Blindness" remains a fan favourite. **7/10**



YOUR FUTURE OUR CLUTTER

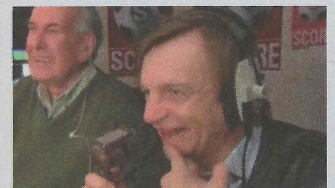
DOMINO, 2010

Tracked at a Castleford metal studio, The Fall's first (and only) LP for Domino is probably the finest work by the last iteration of the group. "Bury Pts 1 + 3", in particular, is a highlight, a hilarious glam stomp through the extremes of fidelity. **7/10** TOM PINNOCK, JOHN ROBINSON

illustrating the very off-piste spontaneity for which Peel so admired him.

2004. *The Real New Fall LP*. Part of their unreleased new album leaks online, MES re-records, re-works and re-titles it.

2005. A treat for the non-soccer-inclined, Fall fan – as MES turns the



reading of the classified football results into a seven-minute a cappella Fall track. >>

revealed no interest in singing either of them in tune. Still, The Fall were a spiky, ever-industrious singles band. They finally reached the Top 40, a once unthinkable notion, with covers of R Dean Taylor's "There's A Ghost In My House" (1987) and The Kinks' "Victoria" (1988). When Brix was joined by a new keyboardist, Marcia Schofield, in 1986, The Fall completed a remarkable transformation from grey, shapeless, anti-fashion slobs into the country's most glamorous alternative-rock sextet. What can you say? They made great videos.

Following his divorce from Brix in 1989, however, and her departure from The Fall, Smith fell into a cycle of heavy drinking that would escalate by the mid-'90s into terrifying alcoholic rages. His second marriage – to Saffron Prior, the secretary of The Fall's fan club – lasted just over three years before being dissolved in 1995. Again Smith went off the rails. Teeth began falling out. His gaunt face aged 15 years between 1993 and 1997. The Fall's fortunes dwindled as the years passed. Rudderless and now haemorrhaging musicians, they downsized to a series of smaller and more obscure indie labels, all but disappearing off the map. Smith's erratic live performances went from bad to worse – and then to the humiliating and nadiresque. In April 1998, he was arrested on a third-degree assault charge after attacking Fall member Julia Nagle in New York. He was ordered to undergo an alcohol treatment programme back home. In August 1999, the treatment having evidently failed, he walked onstage at Reading Festival in a blood-covered shirt following a backstage punch-up with The Fall's guitarist.

And yet, for all that, The Fall became an ongoing story of survival. His. And theirs. He had fallen so far journalists no longer compared him to Wyndham Lewis, but to Alex 'Hurricane' Higgins, the mayhem-attracting snooker refusenik whose life had become an endless public tragicomedy. Smith and Higgins even looked alike, it was noticed, now that Smith's face had hardened into a pained, pickled grimace. You invited him to an awards ceremony at your peril. Fall gigs, never slick, had become wildly unpredictable. Would he fall backwards into the drumkit? The fans that stayed to watch saw walk-offs and stand-offs galore. They saw their hero, if that's what Smith still was, meet their gazes with scowling indifference.

The long road back began with his third marriage, to Elena Poulou, in 2001. Smith may have been running on instinct, but his instinct was one of the few things that hadn't deserted him. Elena was demonstrably good for him. She played keyboards and kept a close eye to make sure he didn't trip over his microphone lead. Under their stewardship, The Fall returned to the studio again and again, creating work to be proud of (*The Real New Fall LP*), taking inspiration from everyone from Bo Diddley to Hawkwind, and staying true to a singular vision that Smith implicitly understood as rock'n'roll.

With Brix Smith in 1985



"I don't want to make music faultless, because then you've blown it..." MARK E SMITH



"In his crazed way, he knew the way it should be," Grant Showbiz remarks. "Like, he waited for me to go to Australia after I'd produced a Fall album for him in 2008 (*Imperial Wax Solvent*) and then he went back in the studio and remixed it all in mono! A completely adversarial thing to do. But he wasn't trying to destroy it. He was doing what he thought it needed. His listening references at home were a small Dansette record-player and a cassette machine. I never saw him with a hi-fi or a proper stereo system. He didn't understand concepts of musical space. He just wanted it to sound great coming out of his equipment at home."

The trademark hirings and firings slowed to a trickle, and then stopped. Elena Poulou played in The Fall for 14 years until her marriage to Smith broke down in 2016. Pete Greenway, Dave Spurr and Keiron Melling joined in 2006, remaining with Smith until the end. Twice their age and able to make them cry with laughter, Smith was genuinely fond of the musicians he called "the lads". Grant Showbiz thinks Smith saw them as the sons he never had.

We live in a post-Fall world now, due to the sad events of January 24. The group is over; the work has reached cessation. By the time *New Facts Emerge* became The Fall's 31st studio album in July last year, Smith was comprehensively unrecognisable from the fever-pitched, motormouthed 20-year-old of "Psycho Mafia" – the bookend on the opposite side of the shelf.

He was 60. He was ill. But he was always excited about a new Fall LP; that had never changed. He was animated as he sang his final vocal for the album ("Nine Out Of Ten"), with guitarist Greenway seated beside him. The song came to a natural end. Greenway stopped playing. "No," Smith said. "Play it again." He got up and walked slowly around the studio, tapping bits of percussion, while Greenway strummed the chords for three, four, then five minutes.

And that's exactly how we hear it on the record. The track ends. The guitar resumes. But Mark E Smith is now silent. ☹

2005. Appears on *Later... With Jools Holland*. Asks for a clause in contract to state that Holland is not to play "boogie-woogie piano anywhere near The Fall".

2006. Appears in *Ideal*, a TV comedy with Johnny Vegas. MES comes as a swearsy, murder-advocating Jesus. "I'll use any words I fucking want, OK pal?" Also

appears as himself in the film *24 Hour Party People*.

2007. Paul Wilson invents the Mark E Smith font – so that all may now endow their prosaic to-do lists with a hint of MES's cryptic lexis.

Enduring literary references. MES enthusiasms for Arthur Machen, Wyndham Lewis, William Blake, MR

James, HP Lovecraft, Philip K Dick feeds a post-punk literati. (In 2011, he said his favourite books were *North* by Céline and Kevin Keegan's autobiography.) His sartorial consistency. Always a shirt with a collar. Always the second button unfastened –

even when in a wheelchair.

MES apparently throws a bottle at Mumford & Sons during a rehearsal at a European festival. Obviously violence isn't an answer, but a person can only take so much provocation. JOHN ROBINSON

