

# invisible jukebox



Every month we play a musician a series of records which they're asked to identify and comment on – with no prior knowledge of what they're about to hear. This month it's the turn of...

## Mark E Smith

Tested by Dave Haslam

One of the most wilfully independent figures in British music in the last 20 years, The Fall's Mark E Smith remains an outsider and maverick. He formed the group in Manchester in 1977 while he was working at Salford Docks as a customs clerk. First heard making a contribution to the 10" compilation album *Short Circuit: Live At The Electric Circus*, the group has gone on to release an album a year ever since, as well as taking part in numerous side projects such as providing music for the dancer Michael Clark. Fall cover versions testify to Smith's broad music tastes, ranging from 60s garage punk to 70s disco hits, and on the new album, *Cerebral Caustic* (Permanent), a version of Frank Zappa's "I'm Not Satisfied". Smith is both The Fall's one constant presence and its charismatic focus, delivering his pitiless lyrical chronicles with a withering sneer. The group currently also contains two drummers, plus bass player Steve Hanley, who first joined the group 16 years ago, and Smith's American wife, guitarist Brix, with whom he has reunited after several years of estrangement. The jukebox took place in the central Manchester offices of The Fall's Cog Sinister label.

### **CAPTAIN BEEFHEART & HIS MAGIC BAND**

#### **"Mirror Man" from Mirror Man (Castle Communications)**

[Almost immediately] Captain Beefheart... and on guitar.

**It's some kind of out-take, I think.**

It's "Mirror Man". The Captain used to lock [The Magic Band] in a room until they got it right. The drums follow the guitar parts instead of the bass part like usual rock. I like Captain Beefheart. I got *Strictly Personal* because it was a budget LP. When you're poor and taking acid, *Strictly Personal* is the one. There was no alternative in those days, and it was 99 pence. I like all his stuff before he went to Virgin; all the 65, 66 stuff is really outrageous, and a lot more jazzy. *Trout Mask Replica* is a brilliant LP.

**What appeals to you about it?**

It's like nothing on earth. It's free-form but with discipline. There's a method behind it. The Magic Band worked hard; you could tell that. And The Mothers Of Invention did too; I used to think they were better than Frank Zappa actually.

### **JOHNNY BURNETTE TRIO**

#### **"Drinking Wine Spo-De-O-Dee" from Rockabilly Boogie (Bear Family Records)**

I've got this by The Pirates... What is it?

**It's Johnny Burnette.**

Johnny Burnette. Fucking great. He wrote "Jingle Bell Rock" which we were going to do on *The Word* at Christmas, funnily enough. Johnny Burnette's great. This is recorded on one mic; you can tell. Guys like Johnny Burnette, they thought that Buddy Holly and Elvis Presley were sell-outs. That's the mentality they're coming from.

**Singing songs about the pleasures of drinking wine all day was outlaw activity in 1956.**

For sure. Speed freaks. I love rockabilly. The ones I've got are just one-offs, compilations. I got one for my birthday, all the classic trucker songs. It's got "White Line Fever" on it, and "Caffeine, Nicotine And Benzedrine" is one of the tracks. I always buy that stuff when I'm touring America. We always go to the truck stops because you can get the best food there, and the tapes they sell are amazing.

**This sort of sound is still alive there?**

You won't get any Suede cassettes in those joints, no.

### **NICK CAVE & THE BAD SEEDS**

#### **"Helpless" from Various Artists: The Bridge (Caroline)**

Nick Cave or Bono or someone?

**Nick Cave. It's a Neil Young song.**

PHOTO: KEITH JAMES

It's a Neil Young cover version? What's it called? "Hopeless"? [Laughs] The Bad Seeds always play so slow. . . It's just slack. I've been to so many Bad Seeds gigs like this. . . And I've never liked Neil Young's stuff. I used to class him with James Taylor and all those other nuisances. They killed rock 'n' roll. I find it hilarious, all these groups aged 21 and their favourite LP is *After The Goldrush*. I used to go to parties and trash that LP when I was 16. It was the enemy.

**ELVIS PRESLEY**  
**"American Trilogy (Medley)"**  
**from *Elvis At Madison Square Garden* (RCA)**

"Dixie" by Elvis Presley. [Elvis whoops and Smith laughs] It's a comedy number; he's taking the piss. The best stuff of this period [early/mid-70s] is things like "Suspicious Minds" and "Poke Salad Annie".

**This is part of a medley.**

And it's terrible. One of the worst things he ever did. He's obviously on drugs and he feels he has to keep connecting with his roots, but the band are bored to death. I was always a big fan of Elvis. The first Sun LP used to keep me going for months, and at that time you weren't allowed to like Elvis because he was fat and a fascist and all that crap. I used to say it doesn't matter; if you like it, you like it. You don't have to look like Elvis or behave like him. People have lost that; now you've got to look like what you like.

**And the next one is a prime example of that. . .**

**MORRISSEY**  
**"National Front Disco" from**  
***Your Arsenal* (EMI)**

Morrissey, isn't it? Is it new?

**No, it's old. It's "National Front Disco".** I've never heard it before. [We sit trying to make out the lyric]

**He seems to have a fascination with rough boys.**

I'll say this; all closets have a fascination with Nazis. That's a fact of history. It's like the Hitler Youth in their little shorts. I've got no fascination with rough boys; I put one on crutches last week!

**Whatever the sentiments in the song, the music is so dull, and even more reactionary than the lyrics.**

Session musicians. Such a shame The Smiths broke up, just as they were getting good. . . I don't identify with that English thing about being fascinated by rough types and skinheads and that. I

can't relate to it. It's funny because I'm usually seen as that kind of hooligan, working class idiot, but I think they're all closets. I don't have anything to do with them.

**The myth is that football hooligans, or whatever, are somehow more authentic.**

Well, anyone can go to Dublin and cause trouble. What makes me laugh; they cause trouble in the softest parts of the world. They always start in Copenhagen or Amsterdam, or they're tough in Dublin. In Dublin they'll let you into a match without a ticket, they're so nice and easy-going. The Italians had them sorted out. There was no trouble in Italy because the Italians told them: "If you ruin our game of soccer, we'll machine-gun you." It's easy to throw a few sticks at some Dublin kids; pseudo-hardoes, like bouncers or something. I have this trouble with road crews when I'm on tour; they get to Amsterdam and they have a bit of pot and see a few prostitutes and they go off the wall. It's embarrassing.

**Morrissey defended this song by saying, "I don't think black and white people will ever get on."**

It's bollocks, isn't it?

**THE BUZZCOCKS**  
**"Boredom" from *Spiral Scratch EP* (New Hormones)**

[Immediately] The Buzzcocks. Best song they wrote.

**And when punk arrived in Manchester how did it affect you?**

I saw The Buzzcocks and I thought, 'I better form a group, I can do better than that!' I actually remember coming out of the gig at [Manchester's] Lesser Free Trade Hall and thinking that.

**Did you consider The Fall a punk group when you started?**

No, we were into garage. We were punk, but not as it was known then. Our idea of punk was mid-60s: The Kinks, The Seeds. Well, my idea of it was anyway. . . The Buzzcocks were very good, better than The Vibrators and all that shit. They had an avant garde touch. Also they paid for our first recording.

**PUBLIC ENEMY**  
**"Bring The Noise" 12" (Def Jam)**

I quite like Public Enemy. I like the slower ones, funnily enough. I like NWA; they're very sparse and hard. This, to me, has no content. I used to buy rap compilations. The early rap stuff was quite good; they used to talk about

ghosts and original subject matter, like in Northern Soul. Now it's all about, I've got a car and I fuck lots of girls. . . It reminds me very much of reggae.

Reggae in the late 1960s was fucking great; just at the interim period between bluebeat and Rasta it was excellent. And then there was Bob Marley and Island Records and Virgin Records and it got all technical and it just lost it. Prince Buster was great, Big Youth was great. They were hard.

**VELVET UNDERGROUND**  
**"Rock 'N' Roll" from *Live MCMXIII* (Sire)**

[Immediately] "Rock 'N' Roll" by The Velvet Underground. From 1969.

**1993, live in Paris.**

1993? We played Glastonbury with them and this was the best thing they did, but I didn't like them at all. I think Lou Reed was doing it for the money, to be honest, and you can't blame him for that. I'm a *White Light/White Heat* person — one of the best LPs ever made. I don't like Lou Reed's recent stuff; too topical. The thing about Lou Reed is that he was dead simple and original, but now he's talking about Third World Wars and CND and it doesn't suit him. I wouldn't knock him, though; I think he's great. I think he's just got fed up with being ignored. You used to have to really hunt for a Velvet Underground record in Manchester in 1972 and 1973. In the 70s, Eric Clapton would be selling millions of records, and The Velvet Underground couldn't get in the Top 200.

**That seemed to fuck him up.** I don't blame him. I would be outraged.

**CAN**  
**"Pinch" from *Ege Bamyasi* (Spoon)**

It's Can isn't it? Off *Tago Mago*. . . Off *Ege Bamyasi*. It's "Pinch". It always clears the room at parties when I put this on. It's fucking marvellous; the drums are great. It's a great LP. All their drum beats are like rave music, or disco; it really fucking moves.

**Your song, "I Am Damo Suzuki" (off *This Nation's Saving Grace*); what was that about?**

It was about Can, and [the group's Japanese vocalist] Damo as well. He's a good mate of mine now, actually. He doesn't believe in making records anymore. He still plays, but he makes

cassettes; he makes about three cassettes and he sends one to me. He still works with Jaki Liebezit on the drums. If we play Cologne or Essen or somewhere he comes to see us play. He's one of the heroes of mine who've actually lived up to expectations.

**ORBITAL**  
**"Philosophy By Numbers" from *Snivilisation* (Internal)**

[Two minutes of foot-tapping]. I've no idea.

**Orbital.**

Is it? I like Orbital. They remixed "Middle Class Revolt"; they were halfway through it but I put a stop to it. They're good, Orbital, but too machine-orientated. There's not enough feel.

**What current music do you listen to?**

Just Italian rave really. It's got a lot of guts to it. Visnardi and stuff. . . The thing about stuff like this is that you can hear it's been done by a machine and you can tell there isn't going to be anything coming up. They should use technology to make it heavier; that's what I try and do. The problem with these is that they're not musicians, they're DJs. They don't really know much about studios and they don't really respect musicians because they're used to working with Primal Scream. The Drum Club were like that. They did tracks for us, but I didn't want it released. It was just a machine and me in the middle going "*middle class revolt*". It's not like you're in your bedroom anymore, you're in a studio and you've got to record it. People like Johnny Burnette knew that; professionals. He'd just put the mic there, put the amp at this level, and do it in one take. Now you go in a studio and it's like *Star Trek*; it's like going into the Starship Enterprise.

**SCARFACE FEATURING ICE CUBE**  
**"Hand Of The Dead Body (Goldie Remix)" 12" (Virgin)**

It's great that. Great sounds. The bass sound is excellent. What is it?

**Scarface, a Goldie mix. It's hard to hear Jungle like this anywhere; you have to search for it.**

Yeah, and you go to clubs and the DJs don't even know what the records are; it's all white labels. It's good, it puts the shits up the corporates. This is excellent. You'll have to do me a copy. □