

THE FALL



Dear David, 2 voices OCT. 82

Cheers for writing, The Fall Foundation was erected & quicked from the Salford 7 address.

We've split from our recent booking agent, but the dates we have 'nearest' to you are

7th DEC. LEEDS UNIVERSITY
9th DEC. TRENT POLY

We're trying to get in that Bier Keller again, but we're not having much 'luck'. We're ~~the~~ testing out R. Trade's Agency for a while, Mike Ince on 01-229-2126 could tell you if he's getting anywhere, or

if you're serious about putting a concert on, ring him anyway. all the best,

M.E.S.

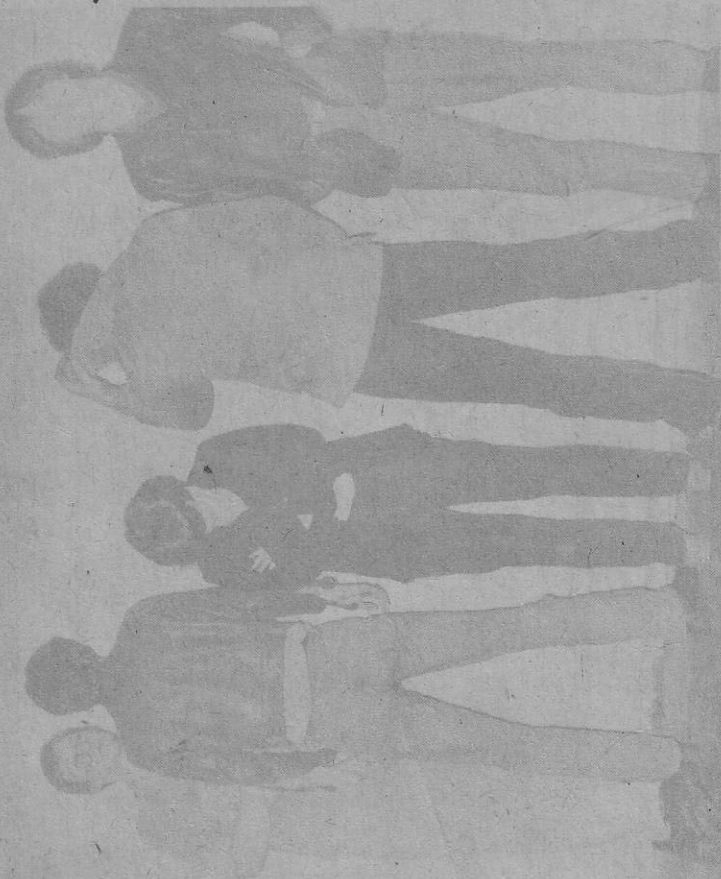
LEEDS UNIVERSITY UNION
The Fall
RILEY-SMITH HALL
TUESDAY
17th DECEMBER 1982
£3,000
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GARDEN
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THE SAME OLD FALL OUTRAGE AGAIN!



MANIC STREET PREACHERS
PIC: BONNIEVENTURE

MANIC STREET PREACHERS

DEAR 'GAZ' Bushell, Frankly we're quite disappointed with your review of our latest single (*Sounds* July 19): we expected something much more hard-hitting than that. You let yourself down a bit, but thanks anyway, ha ha. Do you give 60% of your salary to *Private Eye* magazine? If you don't you certainly should. Also, why are you so paranoid about the army? Surely you're too short and too old to be conscripted. — Regards and affectations, **Joe Totale for: 'The Fall'**

I'm six foot tall and 24 years old and next time I meet Mark Smiff or any of you tediously self-important intellectual hippies I intend to demonstrate a revolutionary interpretation of square-bashing. — Eric's Pal, Gal

High priest of paranoia



MARK SMIFF: self doubt can be a laugh

An interview with Mark E. Smith (singer). Kay Carroll (manager), of The Fall

"The majority of people who are into the Fall, you know it's weird like, they're dead bored, they think they've got an angle on life and maybe they have, and the Fall puzzle them, and there's nothing better for you when you're really, really down, than to get a puzzle. And I don't know what the Fall is, I mean I live with Mark and I don't know where he's coming from". — Kay Carroll.

The Fall are, as Kay Carroll sums up, a bit of a mystery — they threaten, they confound, they excite and they mystify. It's all down to the obscure lyrics of Mark E. Smith and the fierce line of independence they forge in the music world. Their recent decision to play the Venue caused a few raised-eyebrow mutterings — the definitive alternative band playing Virgin's custom built theatre? But that's the whole point:

"The Fall can play anywhere they f.....g want, we're not anything to do with that scene. I could play pubs if I wanted to. That's why America was good — we were playing discos; places where they'd never even heard of punks, never mind anything else. Oh I'm not playing Unis again, it's like playing f.....g mental hospitals, what's so good about that?" — M.E.S.

Mark's views on the "posing c...s" of Heaven, and the "obligatory niggers and slags" of the Venue are contrasted against his view on American audiences: "I think artwise they're the greatest, they haven't got any barriers — academia or anything like that — they're not like anybody else in the world, they don't say: This isn't my

scene, this is the thing for me — everybody's supposedly equal, I mean that's a big fault of America as well, but when we played we got guys in Hawaii shirts and that, salesmen, stuff like that, could really get into it. It's like an eternal youth culture".

The Fall's stance is provocation, making people think for themselves, which is why he was so p....d off with the audience response at the Venue: "Well I thought the idea was excellent, but since we've played there, the Virgin Prunes played there, Blue Orchids, Nico every f.....g Rough Trade w...er, after we broke the barrier down. Well that's what crapped me about that place really, 'cause those people that are into us had a chance to go there, to see that scene.

We did about four new songs and they were all to the Venue, almost the whole set was geared to that, and nobody sussed it — they were all going: Aah, am I selling out or not? the audience was still into that. As I was going into the place, the kids were trying to make everyone feel inferior. This is what we're saying on Dagnet you know. all these people who laugh at pop groups and that, they think that just because they're pretentious they're better than other people, it doesn't mean that at all. You pay money to go the Venue, you treat it positively. I'm not saying you embrace it. The whole audience was in a state of indecision. We got loads of people in there and they played along with it, that's why I was disinterested".

How do they feel about the music press's response to them? "We're only hip in the NME because there's nothing else going on which is what we've always been saying anyway, because they've gone through so many f.....g idiots, and it's like the old story, when you actually get there, is it worthwhile at all? The Fall is like the perfect story of that. You know, when we did the front cover of NME — That hasn't meant anything to me for two years, I grew out of that two years ago, getting a kick out of being on the front cover of NME. I thought it was a good piece and I like Barney (Hoskyns) very much but people talk to

you, and they go: The Fall, they've been going for years I feel like saying I'm not history yet mate. The Editor of the NME's an absolute pr.k. I don't care if he f.....g slags me off or not you know, it doesn't bother me at all, you grow out of that in the end. The thing about the Fall is, it inspires fear — which is great, yeah. The Fall have never really been slagged off in any paper, apart from *Sounds* they feel upset, because if you look at the senior staff, they have four people basically, they have a heavy metal guy, a punk guy, a new wave guy, and an odds and sods guy".

And the Fall don't click into any of those categories which makes them a difficult proposition for anyone who'd like to stick this wild beast in a cage — they don't answer to anyone, they live by the knife-edged word, tooth and claw. Kay: "Ian Penman, and Barney, they're the only two bits of journalism that had any sort of ambivalence to 'em where you could actually look at summat and see summat yourself, not just read about what they said, or what he said — that's two, you don't need any more than two. It's no compliment to us if we get put in the NME or on the front page or not, if it's a good piece of work, it's a good piece of work".

Mark: "Most famous rock journalists are guys that make something out of nothing — like the Beatles and Dylan — if you read the prose that was written on them, it's a lot more interesting than the actual records. Like it or not — Joy Division, if you ever read a thing about Joy Division, I sort of think: Oh, I don't like Joy Division, but I do you know, I think they're a good working band, but when you read the prose about them by a critic, the guy's really trying you know.

The Fall have musically become tighter, professional but not polished, shy and sniping, sardonic stories against a backdrop of tuneful chaos and repeating riveting rhythms. The band, now a six-piece, are as watchable on stage as their endearing, sneering frontman. MES: "You've gotta whip 'em, they are as good as bands go I think. I don't like good live reviews, never

THE FALL

THE FALL, who start the second leg of their UK tour at North London Polytechnic tomorrow (Friday), have added another batch of dates to their schedule — at Reading Top Rank (April 25), Oxford Scamps (26), Bury The Derby Hall (27), Manchester Band On The Wall (May 3, 4 and 5), Manchester Fagins (15) and Burnley Football Club (17). Support act is Icelandic group Purkkur Pillinnk. With The Fall's album 'Hex Enduction Hour' already on release, Kamera Records this week issue their new single 'Look, Know'/'I'm Into GB' — written and produced by Mark E Smith, and not included on the LP.

MEANWHILE BACK AT THE WITCH TRIALS: The Fall spent a week recently in London recording their much awaited debut album. Everything was going hunky dory until lead singer Mark Smith lost his voice mid-way through the album. Step Forward apparatchik Nick

who could supply Mark with immediate help, while the rest of the band pub crawled around London in disillusionment. Finally a quack was found and the band laid down the entire album, tentatively titled 'Live At The Witch Trials', in just two days. Sources close to the band (well, it was Mark Smith himself actually) claim that the two days proved remarkably fruitful. No doubt.

have, I think it's really negative for groups. I don't think bands should be made up of similar-thinking people you know, I think that's where PIL fall down, 'cause they're all the same, they've all got the same attitude to everything".

The group as an entity are brilliant on stage, but it seems the band are essentially providing the pattern through which Mark creates: "Mark's basically a writer, but he loves music; he could write a book, he'll write loads of good books, but it's not enough, and his lyrics are a true occurrence, he's just exaggerated them all, like the 'mad kid' — all those people in those stories exist. Every writer does that all writers have got incredible imagination at looking at real life but staying totally objective about it". And the band? "They're musicians you know. Musicians are a strange breed, they're into chords, they're almost mathematicians, music's basically an emotion, whereas Mark's coming from the total opposite of that — it's coming from his brain cells."

"I mean of course they're good, but so bleeding what you know, you've been given a gift, so what?" Mark: "Like most of the music I wrote anyway. If it was left to them to make up all the music, it'd just be like they'd develop an ego about it". "It's like anybody, you give anybody a chance to say summat, right, and they say four times as much as they should. Smith's got it down to one line, they've got it down to four, so he goes: that's it, that's it NOW".

Mark: "I tell them what to play, they come up with some really good melodies though, I can't do that, but I know what's right — because I'm not a musician, I know, I have taste. They always get credits for writing the music but I mean if it was like what they wanted it, it's like any group, it wouldn't be anywhere near as good, I know that. Or it wouldn't be what I want. 'Witch Trials' was the only album where I didn't have musical control and I think it's a really s..t album".

They work for me, I pay them to work for me and if they don't like it, they can stuff it. I mean that's why the whole band has changed since we started out, that's the

only way you can have it. You can't have six people thinking different things or thinking in the same vein, it's just not on. But I never tell Craig what to do, 'cause Craig's an artist, and I never tell Steve, the bass player, 'cause he's an artist too. They have a completely original approach to their instruments. All musicians'd just go on. The only problem I have is in stopping myself. I mean I'm getting very much into that, being a controller".

Mark and Kay have a lot to say; self-confident, self-contradictory, they're difficult to make out at times, I'm still not sure where they're going, but like they say, they've only just started. Will the Fall go to the top? Kay reckons when the bomb drops, 'Frightened' will be the last song on the radio. But poeple's lives are ragged enough, they're after a softener. She doesn't mind being an Adam and the Ants, but she wants to do it on her own terms, and if she can't, well then that's the story; if the Fall live and die by their own beliefs, then perhaps that's for enough in the music world. They certainly want to leave some sort of an impression, but there's a right and a wrong way to do that, as Mark's acid comments on John Lennon illustrate:

"....he led all these people right, and never lived it, and people don't seem to see that about him Lennon never did anything you know, except to line his f.....g pocket; he was a f.....g scouse opportunist — he was a very 'humane' man, if you know what I mean? But if you lead people on like that, he's talking blood and revolution while he's living it up in New York under lock and key. He made his fortune by making a lot of people f....d up on cannabis. And he had a feel for music like, he had a great feel for music, I'll give him that, but I mean like stuff like 'Imagine' and that are just bulls..t — the lyrics are just s..t, I can't believe how anybody can take it, and the fact that everybody does take it, is proof that it's crap. Making a fortune out of telling everybody: hate is bad, love is not — you know what I mean, dead perceptive things like that".

The Fall were not created as a vehicle for some commercial trend, so they stick out of the tasteless, tacky medium they're in, their brand of hard entertainment — humourous wit submerged in biting sarcasm, washed in great music — appeals to me because the Fall is just an extension of its members, so there's real depth to it. They've a live cassette out recently, a new album, they played Liverpool March 3rd, Mark's bringing a book of lyrics and short stories out in the future — Stimulate your ears, your eyes, your thoughts with the Fall.

C. Richards

J. Morgan



Mes. nihil. pos. m. 'And

The Fall Retford

HEY, I BET your class a bit, he c Now th Rossi (F some I was in a couple from thei my mind. Having re: approach ap Velvets drone- challenging th are outsiders, de music biz and the Still looking like Atlas/Bullworker ac nihilism to the assem of 'Printhead' he even the size of John 'Born for stuff indeed. I don't believe either, Mark. The set comprised such harsh, s 'Rowche Rumble', 'Rebellious' and ' great anti-style and conviction. The proce an unsettling version of 'Muzorewa's Daugh creeping, with lots of funked-up tribal-infie metal guitar interplay. This song undoubte at their most exciting and accomplished. They gaining constantly in power. Though I enjoy se them I don't rate them as an especially importan they keep on at this rate. I reckon they soon will b The Fall were called back for two encores, both 'Dragnet' is an uneven but rewarding album, and th themselves are delivering the goods in a live context v increasing capability. And no, I'm not just indulging in a little typical rock 'C hyperbole. It's the truth. Straight up. Yeah, Mark Smith can come and play in my back yard any time. He's one of the big kids now.

PETE SCOTT



Edwin Pouncey
I'M INTO CB, The Fall, Kamera 45
WALK AMONG US, The Misfits, Ruby LP
TEEN JAM, Trinity, Joe Gibbs 12"

Mick Sinclair
PROMISED YOU A MIRACLE, Simple Minds, Virg
DON'T FORGET TO TURN ME ON, Hilary And Th
Head tape
THE LONG MARCH OF THE AVANT-GARDE, Ze
tape



THE FALL
THE RISE OF CITIZEN SMITH
BY BARNEY HOSKYNS



HIP

PRIEST

**Barney Hoskyns
meets Citizen
Smith, prophet of
the proletariat,
who transformed
barbiturates,
boozing and
bingo into a
cultural
revolution.
Photos Anton
Corbijn.**

THE MARK SMITH INTERVIEW

"A vigorous, painstaking, patient, and implacable sobriety in the work of destruction . . . is more surely imperative today than the general mobilisation of art and artists, than turbulence or improvised agitation under the mocking and tranquil eyes of the police." (Jacques Derrida, 1966)



ESSELTE
Copy Sale

WE WILL FALL, SANG Iggy Stooze to the accompaniment of John Cale's viola, but he might have continued, *When we dead awaken . . .*

The Fall are still the most important band in the land, and still taking patient stock of our pompous and stupid myths. Mark Smith knows that before we can wake up we are going to have to die just a little, and a certain depression of life never did thought any harm.

When we have immersed ourselves in his vision, we will wake out of our social slumbers, our living death of mass culture. And we will each of us have the right to dream our myths all over again, preferably into extinction.

I still believe Mark Smith is the only really important writer and singer in the vast, myth-saturated culture of Pop. I have seen the truth of a popular music culture and its name is Mark Smith. So here in this *NME* Fall cover story we could maybe see the very rationality of Pop's game of fame, and journalism's game of order and hierarchy, turned over and disgorged on itself.

OK: out of the eulogy and into the story. On with the journalism, except that:

**My journalistic acquaintances
Go Soft, Go Places
On record company expenses,
Lose humour, manners become barb,
writers
Don't know it, smart hedonists
('C 'n' C-S Mithering)**

BUT I'M LAUGHING, Mark, I'm laughing, it's a riot. "The bursting of the human face into laughter and the return of masks . . ." (Foucault). A biopic of Mark's countenance would tell the same story: a beautiful face creased up with irony, stretched into a shape by violent delight.

The Imperial Cinema, Birmingham, is the last stop on this fall's short whip round the country. To Mark's pleasure, The Fall are supporting Nico, whom we must all continue to love, honour, and support.

But maybe to you The Fall is just a name which slides into press space along-side a lot of other names — like, say, "Joy Division", "Magazine", "Teardrop Explodes" . . . and then again maybe The Fall never fell into place at all.

Dave McCullough will remind you that "the danger is to look on The Fall as an idea", and it's difficult to get this further idea out of one's head. Since, however, The Fall take some three hours longer to arrive than promised, there's plenty of time to work it out.

So. The Fall have always been Mark Smith, born 1958, and a bunch of much younger, very dedicated and very silent Mancunians. They come not from the university Manchester of Buzzcocks, Joy Division, old uncle Tony Wilson and all, but the northern, industrial part of the city.

When 'Live At The Witch Trials' and

'Dagnet' came aching out of the greyness and squalor of it all, McCullough went verbosely ape and the rest of the world cringed.

That was 1979: the rock press pregnant with the legend of Joy Division, punk in disarray, many frustrated souls in chains. Since this year's 'Slates', an innovatory 10" milestone and the tightest, cleanest, and perhaps most concentrated Fall product to date, the cringing has been traced back to the 'Prole Art Threat'.

For what Mark Smith really brought tidings of, and what the furiously ugly punkbilly of

Dancehall' really brought spewing out over the nation, was an ascendant proletarianism whose anger and arrogance could only be penned in and explained as lower-middle-class shame. One thing was for sure, no real prole would ever dare take himself so seriously.

Surely rock was meant to be fun, as in punk — no? Punk was a gift of the newly McLarenised media to the mass of provincial oiks: let them eat it. Of course we all hated the class system, but wasn't it better to stay working-class than fuck it up and risk aspiring to classlessness?

What no one sussed was that Mark Smith

was an alien. In other words, an average sort of Mancunian Joe who just happened to have struck on a vision of what made him proletarian in the first place. Instead of monotonously lambasting a hypothetical "them" for having made him indignant, bored, and uneducated, Smith dreamt the whole thing up from scratch. Single-handed, his pen far mightier than Joe Strummer's guitar ever was, he reinvented proletarianism.

And thus was born the white crap about "the white crap that talks back . . .", the press incarnation of the sarky, belligerent anti-hero. (A working-class hero being by now a contradiction in terms.) 'Dagnet', the live 'Totale's Turns', and 'Grotesque (After The Gramme)' were collections of dirty, eclectic garbageland rock, wastelands of sound without themes, messages, or politics. These records were politics, living conjurations of the crass and the grotesque in Northern prole life. They shone and stung without preaching, but then how do you preach to the media-converted anyway?

"Stupidity is contemplated: sight penetrates its domain and becomes fascinated; it carries one gently

along and its action is mimed in the abandonment of oneself. . . "
(Michel Foucault on Andy Warhol)

MARK SMITH STUNG us back into an oral tradition of narrative fragments and cultural contradictions. The Fall were the true and absolute fall of rock 'n' roll — rock 'n' roll as fetishised in the form of the three-minute pop classic, with all its famous 45s and elaborately coded themes of love and dance. By 'Slates' of last spring, the "songs" had become "tracts", random pile-ups of imagery and statement. Here was a prole pop, an ill-tempered trash, that seriously proposed itself as ART.

And what it implied was that the whole bastion of comfortable working-class traditions — the institutions of barbiturates, boozing, and bingo — could be transformed, could even perhaps transform themselves, into a deep cultural "revolution".

Down in the south, we know nothing concrete of the "working men's clubs", the whole lunatic vaudeville of northern life. Proletarian culture in London is swamped by the "higher" culture programmed into us by such new weapons of the status quo as *The South Bank Show* (congratulations, Elvis) and the Gate cinema network. Nor could your average golden-hearted cockney really be counted as one of Smith's "grotesque peasants".

What Smith was really singing was a kind of folk music, a ranting and raving poetry which demanded ears rather than eyes. "In the poetry of the folk song," wrote Nietzsche, "language is strained to its utmost that it may imitate music; continuously generating melody scatters image sparks all round, which in their variegation, their abrupt change, their mad precipitation, manifest a power quite unknown to the epic and its steady flow . . ."

And that "steady flow" holds good for everyone from Yes to The Sex Pistols to Joy Division. For the entertainment industry of "Rock" and "Pop" (and they are not antithetical) is a monolithic, epic construct, an enormous self-servicing scheme of comfort, hierarchy, and identification, however "powerful" or "passionate" the music

In this absolute sense, The Fall do not belong in the same universe as your average favourite alternative pop groups. They do not fit in the marketplace of mild equivalences. They show up virtually the whole of the rest of rock as a gross, illusory hype.

The Fall return us to a world that has been interfered with, a culture that is no longer "real" or "realistic". But only if you are prepared to kill off your past, only if you let the "real" of your securities and comforts spill out like superfluous intestines and allow the madness of the crass and the grotesque to feed among your memories, will you profit by the association. For through this massive cultural overdetermination we lose our cultural selves and perhaps gain a certain epistemological freedom.

The Fall is not the music of pure physical abandon, but we are scarcely ready for that yet. The Fall is the cultural catharsis we must undergo before beauty can be grasped — an almost inert, meditative passage through our social selves that can only be called spiritual.

Real desire cannot be attained inside the insidious synaesthethico-cultural trick of Pop. The Fall may politically propel you outside it.

RIGHT. WELL THAT'S that cleared up. Now for the serious stuff. The eventual appearance. The charisma and authority simply oozing out of his old black pullover. And more. For while the "lads", as Smith in his scout-leaderish way calls them, play billiards next door with grim concentration. I'm given the go-ahead for "The Mark Smith Interview" . . .

Composing his skeletal limbs into a comfortable slouch, Mark reaches for his pint, and kicks off on the subject of the second American tour.

"We're pretty proud, coz we paid our way this time. And we played places where they hadn't had a band for ten years. Those kids in the midwest have got no preconceptions, so you're taken on your true worth. We got a lot of catcalls, but it was like starting all over again, it was great."

Does he still think America is a classless society?

"I've never actually said that, your editor said that. But, y'know, I still think there's a lot of bullshit pulled over people's eyes about

every other country in the world, and we're taught that this place is the best when the more places you go the more you realise it's the fucking worst. I hate that sort of obligatory anti-Americanism. I mean some of those bands on the West Coast are worth about twenty fucking Teardrop Explodes and they've been fighting for years, they can't even get an independent label deal."

Did they play anywhere in the South?

"Yeah, Texas . . . we went down to Memphis and hung out with The Panther Burns, whose guitarist is, y'know, Alex Chilton, and that was incredible."

"Memphis is the place to play all right — the PA is two fuckin' microphones, and you say, 'Where's the PA?' and they go, 'Aw, it'll be alright, use this mike over here! And the PA guy's just sittin' there playing Charlie Feathers and all this shit. It's great. Those people really don't give a shit about anything."

Is he feeling any particular pressures at the moment? What about all those old questions of responsibility and that twaddle?

"Well, yeah, after America I'd just had enough, like we'd gone through so much of this responsibility stuff and it felt really bad. I was worried, you get all the worries of groups you think are coming behind you — and especially me, I have to put up with fucking bands on TV, like, watering it all down. I don't care what anybody says, I have to put up with a lot of that. But I can throw it all off now, y'know, and Karl's helped me a lot in that way (Karl being Karl Burns, original Fall drummer, who's just rejoined), he's brought a bit of jollity back into the band. You can 'ave a crack with Karl, coz everyone else gets too serious about The Fall."

Smith uses the word "concentration" to describe his approach to change and development. What does he feel about his

"One of the things that got me screwed up was I was writing these songs that were like tracts. I gotta be careful with that or I'll end up like someone like Peter Hammill, who I admire very much. I mean, his texts tend to be like just a few pages of prose. All this tour there's been people walking out coz they can't handle it. I'm amazed that people sit through concerts, but I think about half the people are making that commitment, which is great.

"At the moment, I almost have a nervous breakdown before each gig about the set, coz I change it ever day, and sometimes it gets quite hairy."

THIS WEEK SEES the release of a new Fall double-A side-single, 'Lie Dream Of The Casino Soul' and 'The Fantastic Life', both of which sounded pretty superb in concert. What will the next LP be like?

"The songs are more accessible, like we've got a really good producer and that shit. It's the first time I've ever let anyone else do the production, coz the next album is gonna be like what we've got live, it's a well-produced noise, and that's what we're going for. After America, I stopped taking writing so seriously. I was taking *myself* too seriously, especially in America, like we played universities and these guys go, 'You're one of the best writers I've ever read in my fucking life', and nobody's ever said that to me here, nobody ever gives me a compliment. But after they say that to you in America, you stop worrying about it, y'know."

"But I still write lyrics in the same way, cutting things from newspapers and stuff. I'm really into the ridiculous ways people abuse the English language. I like the letters page in the *Daily Mirror*."

Does he still believe in the 'Prole Art Threat'?

"Yeah, I think it could blow people's heads off, but then again if everybody was conscious of it, it probably wouldn't be any good. When the students got hold of rock'n'roll, that's when it started going downhill. That's what you learn from going down to Memphis, y'know, those innovators are still there, and nobody's heard of them. And Sun Records sits, like, between a garage and a porn shop and you hardly notice it..."

Has he paid the price of fame yet?

"Well, the beauty of Manchester is that you can't really be a star there. I'm not well-known there. I don't lead that kind of life. And I've never had a real picture of where the Fall stands nationwide. I mean, we started off on this British tour and we didn't think anyone was going to come. We've been really surprised."

"You do get rain, of course, especially when you're taking a lot of speed and that, you start looking in mirrors and getting ulcers. But Kay always keeps me on me toes (Kay Carroll,

manager and mother-figure). We've got an inbuilt thing to knock us down when we get too high."

Did rock'n'roll fall with The Fall?

"Nah, not really. I always felt strongly about the class thing, like art-college people pretending to be working-class groups, and the working-class groups selling their asses at the first available opportunity. I always hated The Soft Machine and the Cambridge scene and all that. Y'know, when I was about 16, I used to take acid and go round clubs wearing swastika armbands, me, Tony, Bramah, and Una (original Fall members), and we used to try and cause fights with heavy metal gangs and get bands to play proper music and real heavy stuff like that. But it's funny, coz that's all coming back now, like with Oi."

"We're out to get a new audience of kids who maybe like Slade and heavy metal, y'know, like 'Prole Art Threat' was slightly inspired by the way that Andy Gill piece was edited, making me out to be some kind of nutcase. I mean, Andy was right behind us, but the piece was slanted by wet liberalism, and the Prole Art Threat is what that whole thing's about, the destruction of these ridiculous liberal views which perpetuate the

system. It's incredible to me, y'know, they laugh at the skinheads, they laugh at the punks, they laugh at the heavy metal kids, and then they turn round and say the Americans are bigoted and fascist!

"And also, a lot of those kids who went to the Wigan Casino... this is what 'Lie Dream Of The Casino Soul' is about, y'know, those kids are not interested in rock at all, it's fuckin' tragic. Young, healthy kids... I mean, that's why record sales are going down, coz it's a lot of shit, man, and of course these kids think of The Fall as the same as all these other pretentious groups. And that's why 'Slates' came out, as something totally, y'know, unfathomable, neither an EP nor an LP, and also partly why we've left Rough Trade and the whole independent scene."

"I think we are different, I really do. Y'know, when I meet other bands, I just don't relate to them. I can't speak to these mollycoddled artists."

The trouble is, isn't the idea of permanence and commitment antithetical to the whole scheme of a popular culture.

Kay Carroll (having just sat down at the table): "Yeah, all you're talking about is that The Fall sell this many records so a cover feature on The Fall is gonna sell this many copies, that's all Pop's about. Investigative journalism's gone out the window, the approach to bands is all just so contrived. But you ask whether things can change within the pop music culture we've got? I think it can."

What kind of effect does Mark Smith think The Fall's music has on people?

"I've always wondered about this, coz I've always worried about whether we depressed people too much, but when I think about it, our music's like the stuff I listen to anyway. I've always found, like, that the Top Thirty is more depressing, coz most of it's so sentimental, and nothing is more depressing than sentimentality."

"Well, take the heavy metal thing," says Smith, "that is quite healthy. There's a whole bunch who live at the bottom of our street and when I walk past they shout things at me, in a fairly Teutonic way! It's like the biker kids I was brought up with, who, like, talk about once every half and hour, but they're great, y'know. The Heavy Metal kids get the problem out of the way, they don't talk about heavy metal all



the time. And maybe that's a lot more healthy than getting involved in the whole philosophy of it all."

IS HE PATRONISING these kids by reducing them to his subject matter? Doesn't it bother him that their "straightness" is the substance of the status quo?

"With council-subsidised pop concerts starring The Fall, things will never change. But I think people should know about the country... England is really, like, fuckin' interesting. I went down to Plymouth, and they're great down there, and it's great to take my stuff to kids who are part of England, part of what I write, and who don't have, y'know, culture. England is *what they are about*..."

"One of me favourite bands was The Saints who naturally got really bad reviews. I saw them right back at the beginning of '77, and they were, like, the best."

"But did you ever see them on Top Of The Pops? They were doing 'This Perfect Day', I think, and they looked, y'know, just slightly wrong! They all had these pullovers on, and they were really, like, *dirty*, and really over the top, and the singer stood at this strange angle,

CONTINUES PAGE 56

THE FALL

FROM PAGE 15

I think he had a pint in his hand, y'know... fuckin' great! That was the great thing about them, there was no way the English could televise them. Yeah, I still play all their singles."

What does the next year hold in store?

"I can't be sure, really, but I'm getting into the production scene more, because the sound becomes a much greater vehicle for the lyrics. Like 'Slates' was much clearer than the previous stuff, coz you're getting rid of choruses more and more, and you're putting more literal stuff on it, and therefore it's important to have a good production behind it. Chilton, I always thought, did that great, and the album's gonna be like that, very dense and hard."

SOON IT'S TIME for The Fall to put these ideas into action, and the others quickly take their places on stage. Smith says the five of them would be totally mind-blowing without him, and by the second new song, 'Into C.B.', this is obvious. Dischords like church bells are expertly overlapped, treading on each others' tails, while over them Smith chants a twisted, snarling lyric concerning Citizen's Band radio. On 'Beer Park', 'Hip Priest' and 'Step Up', The Fall are playing the most intense, hypnotic

rock'n'roll since The Velvets of 'Sister Ray'; as Mark Riley keeps up a brilliant, fevered Cale organ part, Craig Scanlan batters his guitar, Steve Hanley's bass pins every beat to the floor, and the dual drum unit of Karl Burns and Paul Hanley never lets off its devastating power for nigh on ten minutes. After five of these, you feel quite simply entranced, ecstatic.

Smith sauntering about the stage with icily calculated indifference only adds to the sheer rigour of the sound. He addresses nobody, but his delivery is fanatical. Anger breaks over its surface, but a Fall gig is a vital confusion of sound and meaning, signifier and signified, a theatre of clamour and impersonality. Sometimes you can make out his words, at other times not; it doesn't matter, the challenge to both heart and mind is there.

Mark Smith and The Fall do this because they know that Pop, within the system it has created for its expansion, can only further represent *itself*. They know that it's time for a "popular" (or populist) but radical white rock to address itself to questions of art, culture, politics that Pop has only too conveniently ignored for too long. That Smith has managed to do this with a severe and violent humour and a vision of incomparable breadth, and without regressing to slogans and exhibitionistic vitriol, only testifies the more to the manifold importance of this group.

Within this kind of discipline, prole art really is a threat.

READS

Gulcher Richard Meltzer
 A Small Town In Germany John Le Carre
 A Scanner Darkly Philip K. Dick
 The Sirens Of Titan Kurt Vonnegut Jnr
 The Deer Park Norman Mailer
 The Black Room Colin Wilson
 Ritual In The Dark Colin Wilson
 Cogan's Trade George V. Higgins
 At The Mountains Of Madness H. P. Lovecraft
 Beyond Good And Evil Frederick Nietzsche

... AND

U.S. Civil War Handbook William H. Price
 How I Created Modern Music
 D. McCulloch (a weekly serial)
 True Crime Monthly
 Private Eye
 Fibs About M. E. Smith by J. Cope (a pamphlet)

WRITERS

Claude Bessy
 Burroughs

ART

Wyndham Lewis
 Malcolm Allison
 Virgin Prunes
 The Worst live, Manchester Dec. '77

Portrait Of The
 Artist As A
CONSUMER
 MARK E. SMITH
 of The Fall



COMEDIANS

Lenny Bruce
 Allan Pella
 Bernard Manning
 All Ian Curtis derivatives

FILMS

Polanski's Macbeth
 Mel Brook's High Anxiety
 Fellini's Roma
 The Man With X-Ray Eyes and The Lost
 Weekend starring Ray Milland
 Visconti's The Damned
 Days Of Wine And Roses with Jack Lemmon
 Charlie Bubbles with Albert Finney

TV

Bluey
 John Cleese adverts

MUSIC

Take No Prisoners . . . Lou Reed
 Peter Hammill
 Johnny Cash
 The Panther Burns
 God Save The Queen . . . The Sex Pistols
 Raw And Alive . . . The Seeds
 Pebbles Vol 3 . . . Various
 16 Greatest Truck Driver Hits cassette
 Radio City . . . Philip Johnson (cassette)
 Der Plan
 Alternative TV
 Land Of The Homo Jews and Hank Williams
 Was Queer, live
 Fear (L.A. group)
 We're Only In It For The Money . . . Mothers Of
 Invention



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Issue 18 Fall/Autumn

50p

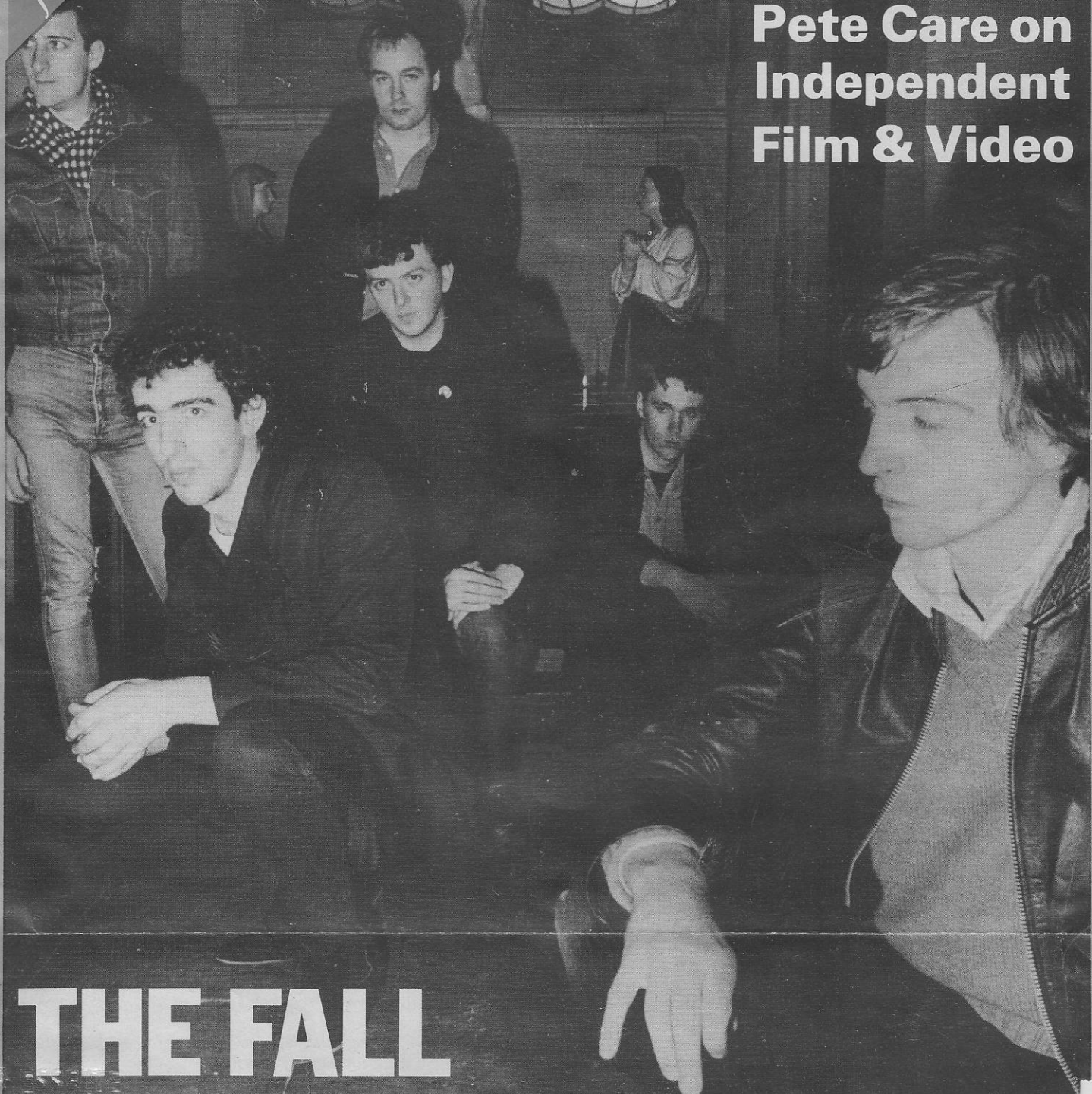
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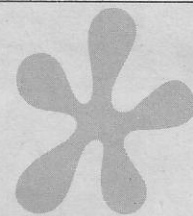


THE FALL

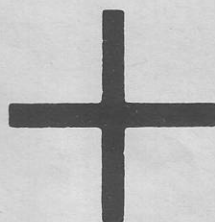
Mark Smith does some plain talking

LATEST INDEPENDENT RELEASES

THE FALL



Mark E. Smith does a bit of plain talking
with Helen Fitzgerald
Photographs: Stephen Barnett



THE FALL. MARK E. SMITH. Together over the years they've provoked a slurry of pathetic pseudo-intellectual journalistic garbage, the like of which has never before been seen. I'm sick of reading verbose theories about the Fall. Sick of the Morleys/MacCulloughs/Hoskyns of this world who strain with bated breath to catch the tiniest morsels of wisdom from his Lordship's lips, for them to synthesise and interpret through their own inhibited personalities, twisting and distorting them into what *they* like to laud as "prophetic" statements. You see to me the Fall is a very simple thing . . . Mark Smith never put *himself* on any pedestal, never asked anyone to read deep esoteric meaning into his songs . . . he left them open to personal interpretation, not intellectual over-analysis. MacCullough and his ilk should take a few night classes in simplicity and humility – if their egos could take the strain! And Mark himself is less than amused by the dictatorial intelligentsia . . .

"It really pisses me off you know – and whatever I say, people are definitely influenced by this shit. These superior bastards pick us to pieces – they're not content with *presenting* the Fall to readers, it has to be filtered and coloured by their own attitudes first . . . their articles are like, 15% the Fall and 75% the journalists' own hangups. Basically there's not much to write about the Fall, like you say, we make the music and let individuals decide for *themselves* what to make of it . . ."

OK . . . well before we get too superior, let's start this interview . . . you're just back from playing Athens – how did that go?

"Well . . . we played in this huge basketball stadium as part of a three-night 'extravaganza', the Birthday Party had been on the night before us, and New Order were on the night after us. The gig itself was great, we were on for hours, mind you, I don't think the crowd understood much about what we had to say."

Did you expect them to?

"No, I suppose not! . . . blasted by the Birthday Party and then us . . . they were a bit confused I think . . ."

I notice certain insane parallels between you and the 'Party, and more specifically between you and Nick Cave – nothing you could call tangible, but the same intense self-analysis projected through disjoint/distorted lyrics and semi-sinister heavy drumbeat music . . . what d'you think?

"Yeah, they're one band I really like and I would say we have similar vibes . . . what they played in Athens was real bluesy stuff which I really liked, and I take your point that there's certain cross-influences, when I saw them at the Venue I went home and wrote a couple of songs the same night . . . mostly about the *audience* though, not the band!"

Continuing the Aussie train of thought, you played the Antipodes fairly extensively last month, I can't imagine all the laid back Bruce and Sheilas reacting favourably to a healthy



dose of incisive Mancunian wit . . . In fact I'm always surprised when you're acclaimed abroad, to me the Fall are so intrinsically British, Northern British at that . . . I mean what do these middle class bronzed surfies know about the stark realities of life in the industrial wastelands of dying cities?

"Yeah it was dead weird playing Australia . . . we went to Sydney fr'instance and it's like some sort of surrogate Frisco, and they'd expected us to be somewhere in the UB40/Jam category, not being able to get our records and that . . . it was incredible seeing their faces when we started to play, we did six gigs there, the first night 1200 people came, the last we counted two hundred! But, like, that's one of the reasons I wanted to play there, an old fashioned pioneer, like they were Rip Van Winkle and I was waking them up!

"They were saying to me . . . Why are you here . . . ? what's the catch . . . ? what do you want from us . . . ? the geeks who interviewed us couldn't understand that I just wanted to give them a bit of . . . what they originate from, it sounds arrogant but it's true, I mean the fucking Scots, Irish and northern English built Australia with their bare hands . . ."

But you can't really resent their incomprehension of the Fall or of the imagery of the music . . . I mean they've never seen snotty nosed kids playing in derelict Moss Side buildings on a rainy Saturday afternoon . . . that'd be as alien to them as little green men from Mars . . .

"I know, but they're just so fucking lazy, they just go on being an outpost of 'whitey' you know, I hated it . . ."

All?
"No . . . Melbourne was alright, it's only 500 miles from Sydney but the difference is incredible, they've got a healthier music scene, more adrenalin, and we went down really well, I suppose that compensated some!"

Right then, the Fall have just released a lump of vinyl called 'Room to Live'—it's not an album, not an EP—a twelve inch seven track thing—Mark describes it as—the press blurb explains that it was 'precipitated by the events that hit Britain circa Spring '82—presumably the Falklands fiasco and the much celebrated Pope's visit . . . but why not wait and incorporate these songs onto an album proper?

"Room to Live" is an interlude like you said, an aside . . . the songs are an overflow . . . it started off as a single, but then I decided to put down this other material I had, the songs all went together, and I wanted to do something instantaneous . . . to get back to the old Fall way of recording songs straight off the top of our heads! I thought we were getting a bit restricted by 'Hex', it was so 'thought out', planned, and like, intensive. That's why I've shuffled round with the band, I didn't want the same sound reproduced twice. We've only used one drum set on here, a bit of an experiment, and I excluded some of the band from certain tracks, shuffled them round a bit, and used some outside musicians.

"All of the Fall are on the record, but not all of them on every track . . . which I did to keep with this 'instant' thing that we've had in the past—the far past! The band weren't even familiar with some of the songs, we just went in and did them which is how we always operated in the good old days! . . . and I think it's served to stir them up a bit! I suppose I'm a contrary bastard—I like to do the opposite of what I've just done . . . the new songs we've been doing live will find a place on the next album, like I said this is more me going off on a tangent . . . most of the songs are about Britain as I see it on a wider scale, having been abroad a lot and that . . . what'd you think of it anyway?"

Well I've only had a few days with it . . . but so far only a couple of songs have grabbed me by the balls!—"Marquis Cha Cha"—the new 7"—mellow man, mellow!—"Joker Hysterical Face"—(a tale of urban pretentiousness turning

rotten within marriage—this person is classless and could dig K-Tel or Kreches or house prices) but the best one to me is "Hard Life in Country"—a brilliant dose of paranoia with traces of ingredients of all my favourite Fall songs, the early ones, "Dice Man"—"Underground Medecine"—"Muzorewa's Daughter"—"Mother/Sister" . . . heavy on the old sandpaper abrasiveness . . . hah!—oh yeah and "Papal Visit"—not so much coz of the music, it's a bit detached, but I love the sentiment expressed!—but aren't you afraid it might be seen as anti-Catholic as well as anti-Pope?

"No—it's not anti-Catholic, fer Christ's sake! the rest of the band are all Catholics . . ."

"I was brought up a Methodist—they're the ones who wanted to burn down all the Catholic churches and used to encourage people to drop hot wax on priests' heads! . . . I'm just strongly vibed by John Paul II . . . this Polish boy he really frightens me—no—disgusts. I mean he's reeking of socialist dictatorship man, he's propagating populist myths . . . 'The people's Pope'—but he's really quite insidious. The guy stinks.

"I'll tell you a story about their precious Pope . . . Kay bought this book, a biography of Roman Polanski—you know, the film director—his family lived in a Warsaw ghetto during the war. His mother was shot by a German soldier and his father blamed him coz he'd been playing in an area that



was restricted—no Jews allowed, and he'd attracted the Nazis to the house. So his Dad packed him off to the country . . . some Catholic families used to take in Jewish kids to hide them from the Nazis. Anyway Polanski got shunted off to Cracow—and guess whose family took him in? Yeah, JP's—he was the eldest son. Anyhow the family got real paranoid about the Nazis, jittery you know, so they finally chucked him out of the house to fend for himself, left him to his own devices—and their fucking son becomes Pope—preaches love thy neighbour, Christian charity, better love no man has than he who lays down his life for his friend, big fucking deal! Biggest fucking hypocrite in the world that guy is . . ."

That may well be but when he came here he gave a lot of mothers and old biddies a lot of happiness, maybe whose sons had just been killed in the conflict—would you deny them a bit of comfort, however transparent?

"It's all crap 'elen, escapist fucking crap—and now there's this big Vatican financial scandal, it's rotten to the core."

OK—enough about religion—let's talk about war, Marquis Cha Cha, the single—I don't really understand the lyrics, you'll have to decipher them for me!

"Yeah well I got this funny idea in the middle of it all . . . why don't I get a plane to Buenos Aires and become like a modern version of Lord Ha Ha . . ."

broadcast messages to the Brits . . . 'This is Buenos Aires calling. This is Buenos Aires calling . . . come over 'ere lads, it's not as bad as they paint it . . .' (Hernandez Fiendish comes over to me/Offers a job as a broadcaster/That's how I came to be/MARQUIS CHA CHA!)"

Did you think the war was jingoistic or that Thatcher had a rightful claim to the islands?

"Listen, I'm sick of hearing people bemoan the war for monetary reasons—how much it cost in money and lives, I drink in this Labour Club, right?—and they have posters on the wall 'No to Thatcher's War'—and all this, and they moan about it all the time, but I'll tell you, if someone invaded their island they'd want something done about it fucking quick, irrespective of cost.

"And all these women bewailing their dead sons 'Cut off in his prime at the start of an illustrious career' . . . I mean you don't join the fucking Navy and earn three hundred quid a week for just prancin' about in a fancy uniform . . . you join to defend your country, to the death."

That sounds very unsympathetic, cold, if it was your brother that had been killed I'm sure it would have been a different story.

"Yeah, perhaps, I'm just sick of people wailing and moaning about it—I mean in most countries you have to join the army for a period, there's no choice, it's compulsory, some of these moaners should get a good dose of army discipline and patriotism, then they'd change their tune!"
So you'd class yourself as a staunch patriot, would you?

"I'm proud of me nationality, yeah, and proud to be Mancunian, and if something was threatening either of these issues I'd bloody well do something about it."

Well, let me throw Hard Life in Country back in your face—that's a song of paranoid contempt for parochial English life . . . to quote yourself . . . 'The hidden evil behind villages' . . . that song wasn't so happy with the English way of things . . . 'It's hard to live in the country/In the present state of things/Your body gets pulled right back/You get a terrible urge to drink . . .'

"It's really hard for me to explain that song, it's like, I'm too subjective. It started as a sort of pop song, real simple, but then I kept distorting it, you know, kept adding bits, like, when I heard Bow Wow Wow singing about the country it really pissed me off so I put in the line about 'When New Romantics come over the hill—it gets a bit depressing'. It's like, semi-fun but very prophetic, I really did have feelings of paranoia about the villagers surrounding the house, and it came true. When we went to Australia I left this bloke in charge of me house, but he let all the scum of the village in and they, like, wrecked the place, broke down doors, and they attracted the police to the place, so the village did close in on me.

"I mean don't get me wrong, I love Manchester, but sometimes the claustrophobia sets in . . . I love the mixture of people there, like, I was brought up with Jews and Irish, and when I go away from the town that's what I miss most, the Jews and Irish. I mean, it's really perverse, I feel more at home in New York than I do in London, even though I hate the place, coz it reminds me of home, big red brick buildings with wrought iron fire escapes, built by the Irish, and plenty of Jews and Irish on the ground! That's why I got into the Velvets when I was fifteen—coz they sang about things that reminded me more of Manchester than anything English groups were doing at the time."

"Mark Smith is a cynical, bitter critic of English Society. He's also a rude and sarcastic man . . . I disliked him intensely . . ." (M. Ryan—RAM magazine . . . Australia).

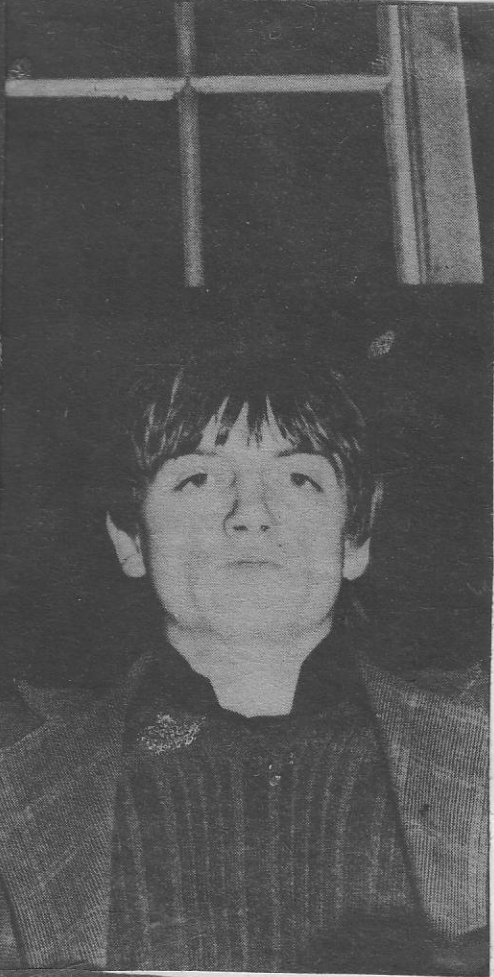
"Sydney was the most unreal place I've ever been to . . . I just kept fighting all the time, like, I was fighting for my life, if I didn't fight they'd suck me into their quicksand torpor—it scared me stiff."

M. E. Smith.



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THE FALL

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Mark Smith, Eric, Martin Bramah, Una



Paul Slattery

FALL GUYS



Do you get upset that the albums don't sell more copies? That The Fall remain only a top of the league indie?

Well "Hex" sold 20,000 copies and I think that's incredible. 50,000 would get you in the Top 20 you know. And don't forget other bands only do two LPs and don't sell anymore, whereas we've had five LPs that have sold.

Would you agree that The Fall has remained essential because of your total unpredictability?

Yeah, I'm just a contrary swine like that. I always have been. I get fed up doing the same songs. Every song on "Hex" I'm sick to death of. I always think of "Hex" as being made years ago. That's why I keep on changing the live material.

The trick of watching a set that had become dull with being played every night was played on me too many times during the Seventies. That's how I was moulded and I'm determined never to get into that rut. It's amazing how many so-called new wave bands have fallen into that trap.

It's like "Fiery Jack". I think that's our most popular song but we dropped it about six months after we released it, because we were doing it every night on stage and it was horrible! I mean, even people in the audience were murdering it!

Now we get audiences that just stare because a lot of what we do is new stuff. We're going out doing stuff that even we don't know properly! But it's better than doing everything old.

Taking an example of current live performers who are drawing in the crowds, how do you react to David Bowie - the man who some would say is the epitome of consistent change?

He's too much of a rip-off and the irony now is that everyone else is ripping him off! After he's ripped off everyone under the sun! I mean, I was listening to the Bunnyman the

other day - I try to like them but I can't! - and I thought "this Cutter thing isn't a bad song really". But then he goes into this Bowie rap in the middle and I thought "Not again!" It's a disease - an epidemic!

Returning to The Fall - the others in the band must have similar ideas to your own to make the jigsaw click together?

Well, in a way they haven't! But they're self-disciplined and incredible towards people I've had before. They can translate what I want into something even better.

The most original aspect of The Fall is Steve on the bass. I've never heard a bass player like him in my life. I don't have to tell him what to play, he just knows. He is The Fall sound.

In the early days of The Fall there was a lot of talk about you being a sort of spokesman for the north. How do you feel about that now?

Well, I love the north but I don't like the people doing themselves down. I mean, I like "Coronation Street" but I get depressed at the end of it. I don't like it when people say I'm sticking up for the north. A lot of my writing is anti-north.

People up here are too willing to accept that they're beneath the southerners, but it's only in the last century that the north has come to be seen as unimportant.

And yet London's a lot more poverty stricken. If you're in a slum in London you're really in a slum. You're crowded, there's no air and there's no companionship.

Everybody I know has been brought up in a slum - I was brought up in one in Salford. I just use the north because it's good for my work. The northern thing is a Sixties thing - that's when the fuck up came in northern culture. The Beatles and all that shit.

They were the people who made *income* out of being northern. I hate that. I mean, it's dead easy going down south and just coming the northern trip, but people are laughing at you, even though they're slathering all over you. I'd

rather go down there and have them say "Oh you peasants!" But English people would never do that in a million years.

Do you never honestly get the urge to write a "pop single" because I'm sure it must be within your reach.

It's funny that but only northern people say that to me. Me dad's like that - "Why don't you write some love songs instead of all this stuff about war!" Well, the answer is I *do* write stuff like that, but I always have this urge to corrupt it and leave me own mark on it. I can write pop songs, but I also hold them in contempt.

But aren't you limiting yourself - something you always criticise people for doing in your songs?

I just don't wanna write a hit! I suppose a lot of it is the fighter in me. Even though I get on with people around me I know I'm a bit different and it's the same with the songs. A lot of people only talk to me because of what I am. They didn't used to talk to me before I was in a group. I was just the boy on the corner.

You never seem to sketch out any hope in your songs for mankind. Do you like man?

I'm getting more pro-mankind as I get older. What I do get angry about is the crap that is sold in the record shops. I see some groups now and I wonder why they are in the business. Why don't they get a proper job? They've got degrees and they're playing some shitty guitar in a group that's ripping off Joy Division.

I'm in it because it's my only format. I'm striving for something above that. I never wanted to be a pop singer, but I just had something to say. I hate those who just play about at it. I'm quite a fascist like that.

Do you think people are basically sheep?

No it's not so much that they're idiots as just insecure. They want others to tell them how to live their lives. But I mean I'm like that - I get reassured after watching TV and reading the papers. I wouldn't want to deny it. Like the minute I heard about the Falklands, I thought we've gotta get them back. We've gotta fight for them. I thought that was great. I was proud at the time - I was already to go out there!

What do you think of the current world situation? Do the Russians worry you?

The more I look at the Russians the more they don't seem much different to the Brits or anybody. I'm suspicious of the Japs. I think the threat will come from people like that who have nothing to do. I mean, what have the Russians to gain by starting a war?

How do you see yourself? Are you humble, immodest or loud and proud?

I'm a snob. I think every Briton is a snob. You can't get away with it if you're brought up in Britain. If anybody walks in my house without my permission I'll tell 'em to bugger off...



KIS

COOL: I WANT TO KNOW WHO MUZOREWI IS.

MURK B SMITH: BISHOP MUZOREWA, but I can't pronounce it; Bishop Muzorewi to manchanians

COOL: WHY'D YOU CALL IT DRAGNET?

MES: To, like, catch people, & get rid of the pretentious element who follow us. 'Cos we were getting into a bad curcuit with what we were doing. Dragnet is to take in people. The sound's changed, right, so the people are obviously going to change... I think so. It's just off the wall like... it's also part of the song 'Flat of Angles' as well. Dragnet; when the police look for people they call it a dragnet.

MIKE LEIGH: ... say a murderer or something, they throw a dragnet out & that will cover a circle, a big wide circle, & they'll gradually close in until they pin him. It's a net grabbing people in.

MES: It's like anti trend really, like before we were pushed as an intellectual band, which we're not. But also, I've noticed it with the fall that we're getting a lot of young very young people & very old people, and not just the 'new wave' audience which I'm not very interested in because they're just trends, d'you get me. I've started getting letters from 12 year-olds & 13 year-olds, & that is really... that is what the dragnet is for.

ISAAC COOL: Yeah when I've been to gigs I've seen young kids,

MES: Yeah but obviously the kids can't get in anyway, but there's a big undercurrent there. Like I get people coming up to me & saying, people about my age like 21-22, saying, oh i hate you, I hate the music you do, I'm into thin Lizzy, but my 13 year old brother... theres loads of people there.

'Cos people are very 'ageist,' they're prejudiced against various age groups of certain people.

COOL: THERE WAS A LOT OF PEOPLE UP THE FRONT TONIGHT DOING A KNEES UP MOTHER BROWN KIND OF THINGZ, DO YOU THINK YOURE GETTING THROUGH TO THEM?

MES: I mean they're not simpletons! ... I also was like that when I was 15 & it's like a gradual process, & that's the DRAGNET ha ha (wicked laugh) get the name in... It upsets me sometimes, but I wouldn't like it to be so..... that they treat the music as just a joke, because the music bit is very important. I mean I'm not a bloody writer! I am one of the FALL, one of the Fall sound. The music should always represent what the singer is saying. Which is on DRAGNET... which wasn't on WITCH TRIALS.

COOL: ARE YOU PRETTY KEEN ON HAVING KEYBOARDS BACK INTO THE BAND... THE LP SOUNDS GOOD W/OUT KEYBOARDS?

STEVE HANLEY: Well, we didn't have time to find them, 'cos Yvonne left a week before we were going to make it. We're really just experimenting now.

COOL: YOU WERE USING ECHO ON THE VOCAL & THINGS LIKE THIS (TONIGHT AT THE GIG) PERSONALLY I DON'T THINK THAT WAS VERY SUCCESSFUL TONIGHT.

MES: It DIDN'T come accross?

COOL: NO.

ML: Well that's the way it is with having it really, sometimes it ~~is~~ works & sometimes it does'nt

MES: Well you see the mixer, the guy who produced the album (GRANT SHOWBIZ) we told him to avoid the album sound.... ~~EM~~ It's not pre planned, If Grant feels like it he just does it.

COOL: WOULD YOU SAY THERE WAS A CYNICAL ELEMENT IN FALL MUSIC?

MES: Oh yeah, all the way through... I mean I don't think we're odd, I think it's the rest of the people who are odd. I think the other people are living a lie... the other bands... it's just mainly how I feel, & even then it's a compromise; I mean if you went & just did what you felt it would be ,like, boring.

COOL: DO YOU EVER FEEL THAT YOU CAN EVER REALLY MAKE MUCH IMPACT EVER AS A POP GROUP?.. I MEAN YOU MAY MAKE AN IMPACT ON ONLY... A REAL IMPACT ON ONLY A HANDFUL OF PEOPLE.

MES: Yeah, but that's always been the way really.

COOL: DO YOU THINK THERE'S ANY REAL CHANCE OF THE FALL BECOMING COMMERCIAL?

MES: I think we'd have to change our desire a lot to be commercial. I get very suspicious when we are accepted. It's a bit of a drag tonight.... I know we could become commercial, but I want to question peoples attitude over what is commercial. I dont think people really know.

COOL: A FRIEND OF MINE WAS SAYING HE REALLY LIKED THE FALL, BUT THE ONE THING THAT WORRIED HIM WAS THE DRUGS ANGLE. HE WAS TOLD THAT THE FALL NEVER WENT ON STAGE UNLESS THEY WERE STONED. IT DOESN'T SEEM THAT WAY TONIGHT BUT....

MES: Yeah, it's not true, but we do & we don't, sometimes we do & sometimes we don't. He (ML) doesn't drink or anything

ML: I don't drink, I don't smoke, or take drugs.

MES: He doesn't need it; he's high from life itself.

COOL: SO THERE'S NO KIND OF DRUGS THING WITH THE FALL?

MES: There's drugs in the songs, like anything else... I don't like the palarva around drugs.... I also, this is the great thing.... people write to us, like 12 year olds and say 'what are you talking about in this song' & I write back & say I'm talking about a certain type of drug.... take it or leave it.... it's really for education. I mean I found out stuff like that... I didn't find out from school or from friends a lot, a lot of stuff I found out from records, that is a really good alternative.

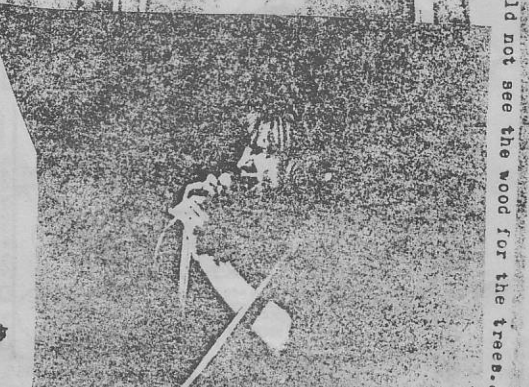
COOL: HOW DO YOU SEE THE FUTURE... DO YOU WORRY ABOUT THE FUTURE?

MES: I worry about bread and stuff but... you've got to weigh it up; when I started a group I didn't treat it like that, it was something I liked doing. I mean, I know what I could do could make a lot of money. I mean I know, and I DO KNOW what to do to make mohey, I could, the songs, the er anything, but I wouldn't do it because I wouldn't be happy, 'cos the reason I was in a band was because of what your getting over.... as opposed to, like, work. This is what I mean about the bands I see now, they look to be like workers. I don't understand why they're in bands a lot of them, apart from the pure ego sense of it which I can get anyway really.

COOL: EGO IS A BIG PART OF IT THEN?

MES: Yeah yeah it is. Like we get support bands who play cover versions of 'ANARCHY IN THE U.K.' I really can't understand WHAT ARE THEY DOING? 'Cos the money's shit, I mean everything is shit. The only thing that makes it worthwhile is what you are actually doing & that you enjoy it yourself. I really can't understand it; you get bands in the charts; they go into the studio, they cut it, & thats the last know, the last they see of it until it's in the charts. The record comes out & somebody else's produced it, somebody else tampered with the sound virtually, somebody's put on a cover & given it an image. But these guys are getting only about 30-40 quid a week, they must be stupid.... some of them make loads of ~~manx~~ money yeah... but a lot of them, you'd be suprised, ~~don't~~ don't make a lot of money & i can't understand that attitude. If I was a bloke who did cover versions.... you might as well work somewhere, because you get your freedom in a band you've got a lot of nasty little pressures & you've got ~~substant~~

" we are private detectives, onward back from



work under the name of the fall, you won't suspect this, it is too obvious. our office is secluded. those there to suspect would not see the wood for the trees.

the FALL

interview (contd)



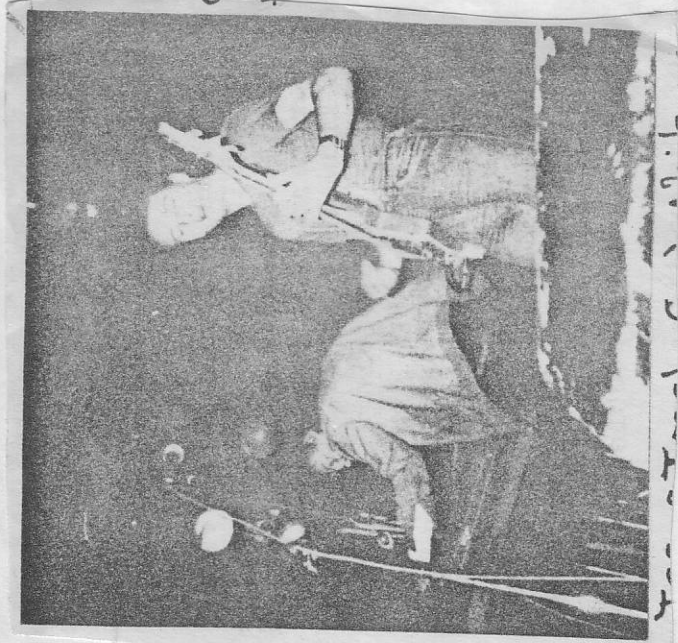
from a MOP....

writing to you requesting the refund of my 1p.
of stopping people in the street and asking if
like a copy of this pathetic piece of literature
I was shocked when as I was walking to work a
young gentleman hurried himself at me and pers-
buy this rubbish.

COOL: CAN YOU UNDERSTAND WHY YOU'VE GOT SO MANY YOUNG KIDS FOLLOWING THE FALL?
MES: I can't understand it really when I think what I was into when I was about 13....
I was just grasping with the basics of pop music. The first record that I ever bought was
'PARANOID' by black sabbath. It sounded wierd, like WIERD, & it set me on a course.
I think it's really good that kids these days are into stuff like this, I think it's better
then....it's one reason I think the big boys are good; people knock them, & I hate them,
but they are getting kids, a lot of kids their olds, they're getting puerty songs that
aren't too condescending; they're pretty cool, but not too condescending.
COOL: SOMEONE SAID TO ME THAT THEY TRIED TO LINE UP A GIG AT THROUGHING CRISLIE & YOU
WEE WHEM'T TOO HAPPY ABOUT IT.
MES: I know throbbing gristle won't play with us, they hate us.
COOL: TELL THAT'S THAT THEN.
MES: I think they just thought we were a 'new wave' group as they'd call it.
COOL: 'SPECTOR VERSUS RECTOR' SOUNDS LIKE THERE'S A TO ELEMENT THERE
MES: I don't like that stuff, I don't listen to it really.
COOL: HOW DID YOU RECORD THAT?
MES: Craig'll tell you
SH: Well it was recorded in an old warehouse & that's the way it came out on the cassette.
Then the vocal was overdubbed, but with the original vocals in the background... sounds
like an echo.
COOL: HAVE YOU EVER DONE ANY R.A.R. GIGS?
MES: We used to in the early days yes.
COOL: HAVE YOU BECOME WEARY OF THEM SINCE?
MES: Yeah we've chucked them in definitely. I used to dabble in left wing bits myself I know
.....R.A.R. they take on groups who will make loads of people go & see. They'd be like to
sell more R.A.R. badges, that's what I found. I thought, rock against racism, I'm sort of
for that, but it's a revolution right, so if you're going to have a revolution against
racism, you want a revolutionary music, which didn't HAPPEN. It didn't matter what the
entertainment was, as long as the proletariat was there. Which is not what our fuckin'
attitude is.
THE END.

yet more lies!

'When we had to decide whether to be on the same label
as Shell Waps or Generation X, it was easy, Generation X
of course. At least they can play. At least they stand
a chance of doing something that'll please people.
Jake Burns (stiff little fingers)
IN SOUNDS



The Fall go to The Wall

TAKE a walk down
the
Kurfurstendamm,
West Berlin's gaudy
main drag, an opulent
avenue of restaurants
and Euro-man fashion
shops which merge
into slick free sex
shows and seedy
sausage parlours, to
find a terminal city's
number two eyesore:
the infamous Zoo
Station.

Home and epicentre for
a rapidly multiplying
junkie sub-culture, along
with Checkpoint Charlie,
immortalised in countless
cheesy spy thrillers, it
functions as the last stop
before the traveller hits the
final darkness on the edge
of town, grim East Berlin.
For those who don't care to
cross the border with a coat
lined with toothbrushes -
the latest commodity
shortage on the other side -
the timid tourist may stroll

through the Tiergarten right
up to embarrassment number
one, Kie Mauer (The Wall).
There, you won't find any
flying pigs or one-day heroes,
but carefully placed podiums
bristling with rich
international voyeurs taking a
discreet peek at what is
probably to them, a vision of
hell on earth: communism
incarnate.

Not that you can spot many
human forms beyond the
heavily armed border guards.
In fact, what you actually see
is a bleak vista of empty
tenement-style buildings so
cold and barren they could be
part of a Hollywood mock-up
designed to scare the pants
off any would-be-pinko-
commie-faggot.

Armed with an array of
expensive cameras, they click
away at the 300 yard stretch
of no-man's land that
separates the opposing
blocks. Beneath them are
various souvenir shops and
fast-food stalls. See the guns,
check the poverty and spend,
spend, spend.

AS WELL as being an over-
romanticised rock
scenario, West Berlin is a

playground for rich Germans
- there seems to be some
kind of unofficial contest
going on to decide who can
cultivate the biggest gut and
eat the most knackwurst 'n'
sauerkraut. Pre-packaged
consuming is the name of the
game. Unintentionally
parodying Western excess,
it's as if the city has been
deliberately redesigned
following the thorough
trashing it received in the last
war as a snide taunt and
cheap lure at the East - a
step away from the "we've
got more than yewooo..."
childhood chant.

Yet this decadent
vunderland has its share of
grey, forgotten streets -
Oranien Strasse is one.
Running almost parallel to
The Wall, it's the site for the
Club S036. An ex-
supermarket turned rock
venue, it consists of a single
rectangular room, painted
mud brown with a tar-
textured ceiling and a starkly
lit bar at one end. Though
desperately seedy, it
nevertheless has a feel of
gritty realism lacking in many
parts of a city bathed in post-
war affluence. Appropriately,
this is where the Fall will

Mark Smith lectures. Ian Pye takes notes. Kishi Yamamoto takes pictures.



Mark Smith with drummer Karl Burns.

their assault on the... Youm... my Carroll, the band's public manager, has been to drag the group down in early afternoon check, but since this is saved to be a case of over bus Teutonic efficiency is already setting by me we make the gig and over what the club's ers were thinking of: a plown Turkish wedding is ll swing, reeling to the ds of a hot Islamic bo called Karavan. e are, after all, deep in the s notoriously dangerous igrant quarter and by the things are moving ybody seems to be doing best to forget the nities of a daily life as sient dishwashers and menials." Christ, this fucking better than this

shower. "Mark Smith sneers... at this... group - now Steve Hanley (bass), Craig Scanlon (guitar), Marc Riley (guitar) and, for the tour, replacing Paul Hanley who's back home doing his "A" levels, original Fall drummer Karl Burns.

Gradually, the festivities die down. The bride, covered in pinned money as is the custom, makes her exit looking like she'd just been to her own funeral, though perhaps she was scowling at the bizarre assortment of colourful "rock fans" already filing into the club. Every conceivable variety from Berlin's thriving underbelly society seems to have turned up. Bedraggled hippies, florid transvestites, whores, hard core punks, a smattering of pseudo pirates and not one of

them, recognises Mark Smith.

"That's my advantage," he observes, "most people just don't notice me. I thank God for that. In England you have to hide backstage from all these vampires who follow you around and start drinking your beer and stuff like that - really bad news. I hate that you know, I'm really a very quiet person who likes to go to the pub, have a pint and go home."

"What I find with most people is that once you do let them into your confidence then the knife comes in. I don't like the company of people at all to be honest - never have. I haven't got many friends, though I could have. I've always had loads of lads coming round to see me but I always try and avoid them."

REE weeks into their European tour and the Fall are looking decidedly wasted. Smith's Marks & Sparks attire is stained and sweaty, his hair plastered to his scalp with a layer of natural grease. "I've had about five hours fucking sleep, since we left home," he grins, "but things have been going really well, you know."

And with typical didactic authority he adds: "I think the Germans are fucking great. They say this is a police state but I see more police on the streets of England. There's something really wrong back home. The government's doing anything they want but the people deserve it if they won't stand up for themselves."

"Belgium's bloody worse though. It's like the Third Reich there. We were doing this gig and a copper walks

on stage with a revolver in his hand. I thought it was the local loony dressed up as a cowboy. This big bastard stopped the gig after three numbers, then he orders us to start playing again!"

As the rest of the group finally make their soundcheck Mark Smith and I retreat to the group's van outside the club's entrance to find the only available sanctuary for a brief chat before the show. Contrary to his abrasive stage persona he seemed cautiously friendly, drawing each word together into long strands of musical Mancunian dialect.

Suddenly the Fall have become oh-so-hip instead of simply famous as they should be. Having recorded four albums and numerous singles their career has peaked with the release of

"Slates", their most perfectly realised record to date, a six-song, ten inch slice of vinyl packed with stories, scorn and poetical insights that the BPI have ruled is neither single nor album and can therefore not appear in the straight charts.

Labelist the Fall are not. "It's ironic really," Mark muses. "One of the intentions of 'Slates' in the first place was to get out of all this singles, albums, indies crap. I mean a lot of these independent labels are just fronts for the big companies."

Unlike their earlier work, "Slates" mostly sees the group eschewing the rough-hewn production sound that infuriated their critics.

That approach was quite deliberate in both cases, Mark

continued overleaf

from previous page

explained: "I mean everybody thought our production was just bad because we want to be credible. But it's because I'm really into a rough production and you have to work hard to achieve that."

"Now a lot of other groups seem to be going for a raw sound so that's why we've moved a bit away from it. In fact I'm dead proud of 'Slates'. I think it's one of the best things we've done - really great."

Often the listener is forced to grapple with Fall songs to decipher Smith's rewarding if discursive monologues that can be meandering narrative tracts, cynical asides attacking everybody from the press to posturing politicians, or humorous pun-ridden amphetamine rants populated by a host of rich characters including Roman Totalle, grotesque peasants and city hobgoblins. "I want people to work at understanding the songs," he asserts.

There can't be a lyricist in Britain to touch him, and a book of his exceptional prose may be forthcoming. "I've got

the outline down in notes but I just haven't got the discipline at the moment. I keep starting one but I think the book world is pretty stale. Also the trouble is when you come back from a tour like this you're a changed person so you've got problems picking up where you left off - it's a case of the more you do the less you know."

One of the few groups to come to terms with the tragedy of the British proletariat, the Fall have scored a series of firsts all the way. "Totally Wired" crystallised urban angst before the concept became another r'n'r cliché. Smith's obsession with northern squalor versus southern seclusion pre-dated the heavier dividing lines drawn by the recession, which in turn threw up the centre-piece of "Grotesque", "The North Will Rise Again."

And in "Fiery Jack" they rediscovered rockabilly when the all-style, no-content Blank Cats were a thousand quiffs away.

Although the strain epitomised by "Jack" is but one small part of the Fall's music, the whole experience has left Smith feeling very bitter.

"We innovated that form," he nearly spits at the floor and looks away. "I don't care what any fucker says about that, we innovated British rockabilly and no fucker's given us a grain of credit for it. But I got bored with that a year ago. As far as I'm concerned 'Fiery Jack' was just an experiment, you know."

"The part of rockabilly that I like," he continues, a little calmer, "is that it springs from northern folk music. Rockabilly was played by people from the north of England because all the mid-west of America was made up by the Scots and northern English who got kicked out,



Support act - Turkish wedding.



like. That's why it appeals to me. It strikes a chord."

Smith's tenacity is borne out by a highly personal style of music which in many ways is founded on folk traditions in the sense that it frequently tells a story or documents a popular event. It makes sense, then, to learn that one of his own musical influences is Johnny Cash who came close to the spirit of the Fall when he sang about "walking the line."

As always, Mark changes the set from night to night, inevitably suffering the wrath of the group who patiently wait till the last minute for his decisions. However, his unusual enthusiasm for the "Slates" material has ensured that this forms the gist of most of their

European tour dates. Opening with the magnificent "Leave The Capitol" and climaxing with "Totally Wired", at their best the band are a brutally tight rhythm section over which Smith delivers his touching stories and seething diatribes.

Peculiarly northern English in tone and content, one wonders what it all means to the young Germans and what the purpose of the whole exercise is anyway.

"Well for a start I think tours like this do us a lot of good," Smith replies. "We were a bit fed up in England. This tour (touching Holland and Belgium) is good for our act. I can say anything I want. Of course they always come up afterwards and say they don't understand but then

again I get that in England. "One thing I'm not going to do is condescend to them - mean I'm not getting my phrase book out but I think they understand some of it. That's why I never put lyric sheets with Fall records. I think the music should operate on its own."

"If the lyrics were played backwards or were just tott gobbledegook I'd still want get across because that's the whole justification for the group, otherwise I should j go out and give lectures."

The time comes round to leave the S036 as dawn creeps down the grubby streets. Tomorrow the group will cross The Wall, but have no doubt their time has at last arrived. So be ready because: The Fall Will Rise Again!



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FLIGHT INTO FALL COUNTRY

THE MARK SMITH INTERVIEW
by Richard Cook



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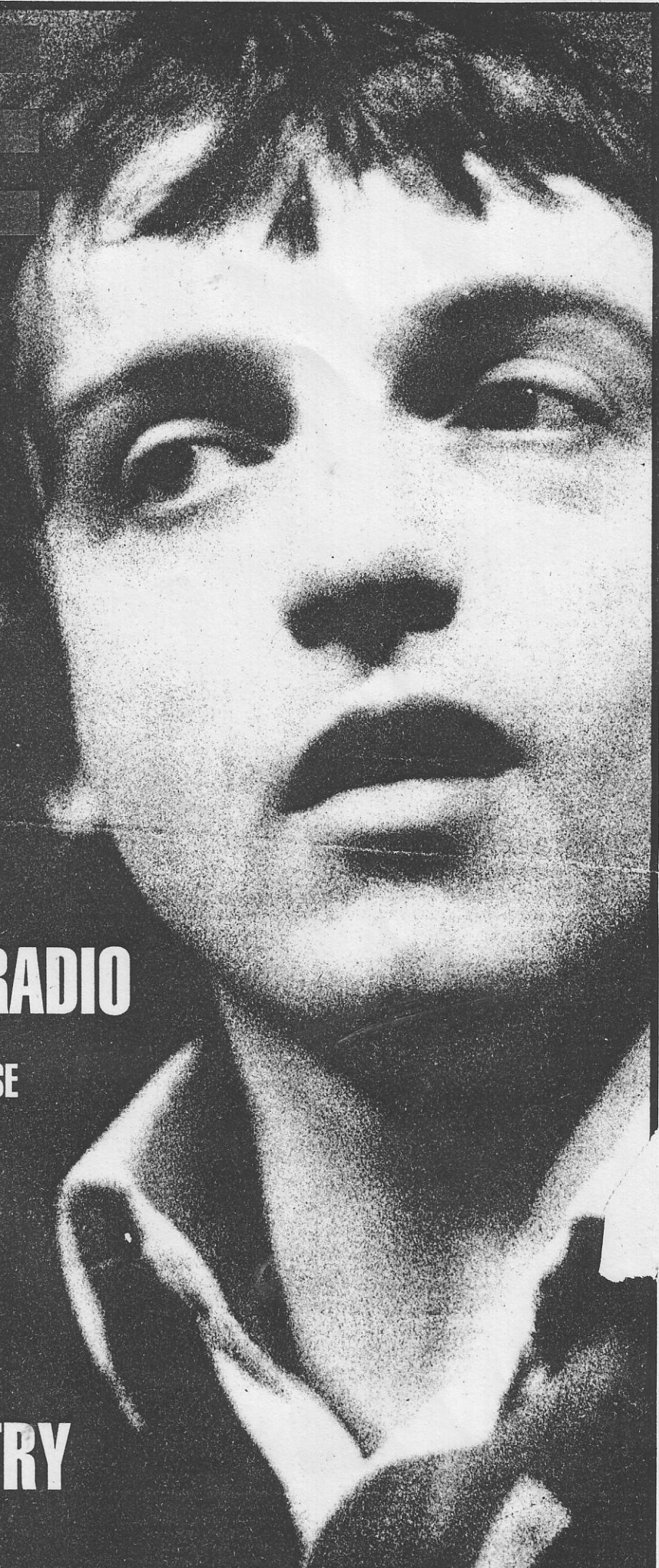
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The Curse Of The Fall

al Express 15th January, 1983

THIS IS SPLENDID Fall country.

From the bricked ugliness of the Victorian railway buildings the crawl of streets pitters up slopes, entwines a town centre crowned by a bright shopping citadel and passes out again into grimy Midland hills.

Consumers bent by Christmas huddle the pavements, run under and past the outspread arms of a grotesque artificial giant: he is beaming a yawning grin under his perspex roof.

The irradiant glow of the new shops blinks against the older relics of the town — churches sharpened by age into jagged points, graveyards dark as iron, the shells of ancient cinemas. Like a virgin shrine to a mysterious bourgeois aspiration, the principal arts theatre holds up its neoteric design and neon temperature sculpture, totems of civic pride. Tonight, it presents *The Cannon And Ball Christmas Show*, a sell-out attraction.

Nottingham is an excellent place for The Fall to play.

England stumbles into a New Year of crippling misery and empty prospect and The Fall are continuing to pursue their erosion of the consumed music that, for all its Christmassy gleam, is similarly stricken by poverty. In a year which saw their remaining early contemporaries finally estranged from their audience, The Fall began to seem stronger than ever.

Pop is traditionally out of joint with its times — its formula of gay abandon a calculated reaction to surrounding despondency — and the sour joke of Modern Romance's 'Best Years Of Our Lives' was a slug of sarcasm that even Mark E. Smith couldn't have pitched.

But Smith's own commentary on the times has moved far on from stand-up satire. While the 1982 Fall has remained true to the sallow, scrawny energy of 'It's The New Thing' *et al*, its thrashing form has multiplied and arisen into a state of almost fantastic complexity: a continuously evolving swirl of aural collision, pristine noise, images electrified by unholy discontent, squalor jolted by desperate rhythmic intensity.

And at its still, unmoving centre, Mark E. Smith dismantles the lyric form with the frosty alacrity of a man heedless of tradition. Truly, a child of McLuhan!

'Hex Enduction Hour', the first of The Fall's two long-players last year, was the most violent and uncompromising record of 1982. Like a gutterful of despair-sodden dregs, it sprayed out the sludge in the sources of our terrible malaise — lies, stupidity and selfish greed — and proceeded to douse them still further in a soup of amplified retching and cut-up half-sense.

Much like any Fall record, in fact, except that Smith's group had crept almost unnoticed to a level of sophistication that challenged the given precepts of 'The Fall' as we had known them. The kind of music that was being played on 'The Classical' or the absolutely withering 'And This Day' had all the tension of skilled improvised music married to an unflinching grasp of form: tyrannical, claustrophobic, it smelt of decay and renewal in exact counterbalance.

As Barney Hoskyns noted, in the most penetrating analysis of The Fall to date, Smith had formulated a type of folk music: a return to an oral tradition that fashioned an ugly new set of features to graft over the similarly rancid roots of stone age rock'n'roll. His insistence on diffusing specific polemics across trails of abstract messages and indistinct ravings, the product of a profound mistrust of sloganeering, led him and his group into a shabby domain where white rock had its nose rubbed in the dirt of its own real character — a mess of guitar scrape and stodgy, meat-substitute drums.

The Fall's triumph has been to recognise this and make

entirely to the aural sense.

Miraculously, at a moment when pop has become besotted with its visual trappings, The Fall have made their strongest play for an identity based entirely in sound.

The mess of phrases and syntactical mischief which crawls across their album sleeves; the unlit gloom of their production ambience, a quality which compels the most detailed and attentive listening; the shadowy and ill-formed ensemble they make up in a stage performance; the nagnagnag quality of restless irritation, caught up and articulated in words that demolish rational symmetry and song structure that ignores sweet light and dark — the totality of The Fall is a rejection of visual falsehood. The Fall's rise is the ascendancy of tribal man.

The beautiful irony, then, is that this scurvy music constitutes some of the most pure and unconfined expression you can expect to hear from a group born out of a pop culture. This is why 'Hex Enduction Hour' is closer to the raw and unrefined emotion of a genuine 'new wave' masterpiece like Albert Ayler's 'Spiritual Unity' than is any of the more easily digested exhilaration of a troupe like Rip Rig & Panic.

"IT'S GOOD, ISN'T IT, this death of the new wave? I'm trying to get it over to the group at the moment, how Britain's changed a lot. But I'm still trying to put me finger on exactly how."

Mark E. Smith and Kay Carroll are sitting with us in the smallest pub in Nottingham, a couple of hours before The Fall are due to play in the University refectory. In one of the last few weeks of the year, The Fall are taking their customary brief winter solstice at some of the country's less familiar venues.

Why have The Fall survived?

"People try and pile us in with all that and say we're dead too. But we haven't done what we have to do yet. As long as it's still there to be done...this death is none of my concern anyway, Richard. We've never had a hit. Because the 'new wave' is dead it's better because we're not tagged with it any more."

"There's too much information," says Kay. "The way new wave things led to people becoming aware of all the manipulation around them made ordinary people very very cynical."

"You still," continues Smith, "get people calling out for old numbers but...it's all a matter of taste. Sometimes we still do them. When we started this tour we threw one in from 1979, 'Dice Man', right in the middle of a set of all-new material. But they didn't call out for any more."

Part of a pop artisan's burden, surely. Although The Fall might never be disarmed constituents of an obedient popular culture wouldn't they disown the status of ignored outsiders?

"What it is —" Mark draws on a pint and thinks it out. His features indemnify the Smith persona, moist eyes, cheeks drawn tautly back, barnet a clumsy sheepdog thatch. It is a face that it seems nothing could startle, full of intent but often so motionless that it's hard to imagine how R. Totale's spasms of rage could have come from it.

"We're like a law unto ourselves, and that's something that's very easy to slip away from. Like at the start of this year we were everybody's darlings — we'd had a big upsurge, big audiences that we'd never had. I'd had enough of it. Then the Australian tour came up, so it was good to get away for a bit. We realised the value of Britain again after that."

Unconcerned at a policy that would leave rock businessmen weeping, Smith cracks a grin that makes him look boyish — he is, after all, still a very young man, despite his veteran status as Fall leader.

Why is it that The Fall is so completely Smith's vehicle — why does the rest of the group seem so anonymous?

"You've met musicians, for God's sake," bursts in Carroll. "It's like, he plays guitar really well and Mark plays his brain really well."

FUTURE WAITING FOR THE REST OF THE ROCK UNIVERSE TO CATCH UP
IT'S A PLACE WHERE THE GROUP ARE TWO YEARS INTO THE
RICHARD COOK TAKES A JOURNEY INTO FALL COUNTRY
PHOTOGRAPHY: PETER ANDERSON

He manages to register no surprise in his voice. But there are more recent undertakings to discuss — The Fall's Australian tour, for example.

"We played about 26 gigs in seven weeks. Yeah, we're known out there — I think we actually had more fans before we went than after we came back. 'Totally Wired' was a big number there 'cos it's what Australian beer's all about.

"The country was like a perverted Britain. They have rock shows on TV every day, hours of videos from Britain — we took a video out there and they showed about ten seconds of it because it was technically so bad. Like, it's either A Flock Of Seagulls or Simple Minds or heavy rock as an alternative. The Aussies were expecting a British new wave type band and they didn't get on with what we were doing at all.

"The best thing about it was getting away from this scene. Their music scene is all smug and sewn up — expatriates from London rule the roost and all the people who work for the companies are the laziest people under the sun.

"But New Zealand was dead good! Everything's so slow there, it's like 1954. We were in the fuckin' Top 20 there, which means about 600 records sold, but it's a big thing. It was full of surprises, y'know. I mean, there's loads of skinheads there. You always class them as the same as Australians but they were really different — like Scotland and bloody England."

MARK THINKS OF SIX years outside the Top 20, watching Manchester bands like Buzzcocks and New Order become cossetted babies of acceptance. Of course, those groups could have come from anywhere, as Ray points out.

"You've only got to look at the music papers I've read lately," says Smith. "The bands now presenting an 'underground alternative' sound like our interviews did two years ago. All this thing about being from the North and slagging everyone else off — it's all old hat. This is where Britain's changed.

"I live in the future in a lot of ways. I don't care what anybody says, The Fall are always, like, two years ahead. That's why the 1980 Fall attitude is prevalent now. People always say we're old-fashioned, two guitar line-up and all that, and that criticism comes from people who are being us as we were. It would be safe for me to just slag everything off in that way because everyone's doing it, even TV with Channel 4. It's not relevant any more."

Will there come a time when The Fall has run its course?

"Obviously, yeah. I keep thinking it's going to happen but it never does. When I've had time to work all that crap out I come back again. It's not something you band about, y'know?"

"I disagree with your point about The Jam having our audience. If we had that audience I'd top meself, y'know. Have you ever seen a Jam audience? Pseudo-mods. They're not even teenage lads any more, they're people who used to buy Virgin albums, Ruts albums with nice covers. They're like, dullards. The Jam did get a lot of disaffected youth but what does that fuckin' mean?"

"Our audiences get a lot better. I always think they're like a good comedian's audience. It's the first time we've played Britain and people have gone, *that was really good to new stuff.*"

What would happen if The Fall got a hit?

"We're never going to get a hit because you've got to be some sort of bullshit before you're even signed up." Smith's patience is exemplary. "You start putting your energy into courting bloody cretins.

"One thing the lads make clear is that we separate ourselves from *everything!*" He growls the word with a laugh. "What is touted as an underground, an alternative..."

But that leaves you completely isolated.

"Because we are a law. And influential. People keep coming back."

Mark doesn't smile. He knows they will return.

Does topicality still fuel his writing?

"You can be topical and subtle at the same time. Like that track 'Papal Visit' on 'Room To Live' was completely different from what you'd expect from the title. 'Marquis Cha Cha' is still the best song written about the Falklands.

"I'm dead proud of that record. A good cleaning-out of the system. It got misinterpreted a lot. We wanted to get 'Marquis Cha Cha' recorded and out in a fortnight as a single (*it was subsequently pressed in small numbers and never actually released*) but there were too many fuck-ups and we dropped it. The curse of The Fall!"

Perhaps that curse has lingered too long — in this long series of intentionally grey recordings and deglamourised presentations, maybe this lever out of convention has itself become a rut. Perhaps the time has come to ...

"Go for it!" barks Carroll.

"It's not a question of going for it, Richard," murmurs Smith, "it's a question of distorting it and making it interesting. We haven't really touched on the production thing yet. The raw sound is something we can fall back on because *no one else has that sound.* I thought me ears were getting jaded but when I put Radio One on I can't tell one song from another.

"The sound I'm trying to perfect...even if it takes records to come out — when it gets there it will control everything. But you can't just do it. The great thing about 'Room To Live' was that it got slagged off and interest waned a bit. It gave us time to breathe."

One of the most striking aspects of 'Hex' and 'Room To Live' is their truce between livid spontaneity and an organisation indexed against chaos. The Fall have evolved a method of rock playing that is close to the troubled world of improvised music.

"A lot of these alternative bands think you can just go up there and do it, and I fuckin' detest that attitude. It's the sort of thing you can do in rehearsal but my lads won't do it on stage. It's best to sound bad than do the smug improvisation thing. I get sent loads of records full of that sort of thing from people who shouldn't go near a studio.

"I've heard some good things — some of the stuff on the German label Zick Zack is really good. But not The Virgin Prunes and all that shit. The secret of improvising is you can't just improvise. John Lee Hooker was the best improviser I ever heard."

BACKSTAGE AT TRENT University, The Fall have assembled to despatch their duties. While Smith sits with me his colleagues huddle around another table and giggle into their canned lager. They resemble, with their babyish faces and shapeless clothes, schoolboys plotting a rag in the dorm. Only Karl Burns looks in any way wizened by his Fall years. There is a distant din from the support group.

"The thing I appreciate about Britain is that nothing comes easy. You miss the sense of humour when you go away. But I find it sinister at the moment, it's like a foreign attitude is taking over. What I was trying to say on 'Hex' — not that I'm a patriot or anything — is that sarcasm is going. Everything is taken straight. It came up with the SDP and all that shit.

"To me, people like Culture Club want it both ways. You'd think they were a Rough Trade act. When people say they're not pop stars and then put themselves up as *these figures* it disgusts me."

Mark's chatty, low-pitched tones don't change with his language.

"Patronisation of minority groups, like Musical Youth. It makes me sick. There's a good thing in the provinces about this — about going to Middlesborough and finding they're all savages."

Around us, England's far-flung lands twitch and scowl to the beat of their own tribal hum.

"I saw Culture Club on *Riverside* and 'e made one good crack about journalists wishing they were Ernest Hemingway. I've met loads of people like that. Instead of going grape-picking in France they form a group and see how it goes. Do you think this is a breakthrough in the pop scene? If I were 14, 15 and buying records I'd feel swizzed.

"It's been going on for a bit, but people want to hear what makes them most comfortable. Why do people like Status Quo? Because they remind them of them. You ask why The Fall don't break it out, it's because The Fall don't remind anybody of themselves."

And when those people slip Fall records into the cosy 'anti-rock' slot in their collections, what then?

"The establishment, the cultural base shifts. I've always based my work on that. We've changed with it. I don't feel *the need to go on* like I used to. I've thrown out particular topics, Richard."

Smith goes off to a quiet corner to prepare for the set. I watch him from the other end of the room: he takes out a cigarette, hunches forward in his chair, taps a finger on the tabletop. The crush of ideas wheels in his head. His eyes stare like those of a carp. The lads continue their chatter.

In The Fall's performance all this bulge of unsentimental inspirations is discharged like a vast bilious cough. The sound system is foggy and Smith's words are more often than not lost in the gale of noise the players muster. Sometimes a phrase will spit out of the amplified clouds and trigger an association: usually, it hurts in some way.

Instruments mesh and split apart as if in constant mutation. The guitars gag on the point of breaking into solos and settle for needling little repeating figures that bob jerkily over the two drummers' exhaustive crashing. Organ and harmonica sounds poke through like the mewling of tiny creatures.

Where once I would have been unmoved by the wilful, bucolic frenzy of it all I must now accede to the almost untarnished beauty of a sound that thrives on the importance of its own ugliness. In its utter rejection of melancholy or the flabby fist of revolt this exceedingly pure music is very close to the truth.

Whatever qualms Smith may have about it, his group cannot be too far away from the correct, the ultimate sound of The Fall. And however much they disavow the era of their birth, the fact is that this is the only group from that time whose continued existence is imperative.

"The only time we're going to make it is when we do something that makes everyone else redundant. Accidentally."

This is the country of The Fall.



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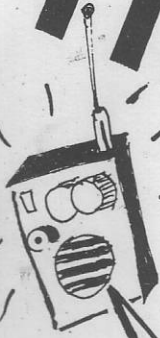
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HAIL THE PILGRIM OF PARANOIA

THE FALL



3

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'I don't know
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But IT's
WEIRD and
very pissed off' *

JACK BARRON STUDIES
THE DREAMS AND SCHEMES
OF MARK E SMITH



gone, and Smith filling in with snatches of improvised keyboards, the Fall touch a new raw beauty.

Comparisons with an ugly, dense, primeval Magic band flashed through my mind often. But really comparisons and intellectual rationalisations are redundant when dealing with the unique. So let's just paraphrase a quote from 'The Thing' and get on with it — "I don't know what's in there. But it's weird and very pissed off."

MARK AND his wife, Brix, had been up all night with Nick Cave when we finally met for a talk in a West London hotel. My plan had been to investigate some of the thinking behind the Fall's forthcoming album. In the event, this work was so fresh that Mark hadn't even received tape copies from the studio. Still, he's never a man lost for words and there were plenty of other subjects to cover.

Do you get pissed off being an enigma. I wondered? This led to a discussion of the definition of enigma. I thought it meant a puzzle. Mark 'an underground legend'. In many ways the same thing.

"Yeah, sometimes," Mark agreed, swigging on a tube of Red Stripe. "It's too romantic for sensible conversation with some people. That's the only thing that pisses me off."

I hear echoes of Captain Beefheart in the band's rhythms at the moment?

"Craig, the guitarist, has an interest in Beefheart. And I used to like him a lot. I still do really, though not his recent stuff. 'Lick My Decals Off' and bits of 'Trout Mask (Replica)', they're fooking good. But I think Beefheart was more important in the early stages of the Fall.

"You've gotta watch it or you get into a thing of just like having very smart rhythm changes. Not to knock the Magic Band or anything, it's quite an easy thing to do, although they never did it easy. But as you know, there are a lot of Beefheart sound-alike bands, and that's a bit of a dead end really."

There's a marked difference between the Fall's live and recorded sound. The live sound is in many ways more accessible because of its sheer intensity, an intensity missing often on the records. Does it bother you that there's that difference or do you think the two mediums should be treated separately anyway?

"Yeah, I think they're separate, they're millions of miles removed. But it's a big thing, I don't understand it or know why it happens. Like we did an LP last week. Before that we'd been playing in Europe (and America) and all the songs were great.

"Then you get into the studio and songs that were really vivid on stage start going like this (makes horizontal movement with hand). So you start arising round stuffing drums into corridors and things like that. We eventually got it right in a rough way, but you really have to fight. I like to blame it on the spread of technology in studios."

The members of the band have remained virtually unknown to the wider public. They sort of flounder in the Smith persona's wake. Doesn't it piss them of something chronic?

"No, not at all. I'll tell you a funny story actually. Helen Fitzgerald, who used to work for *Sounds*, was obsessed with getting an interview with the rest of the band.

"So I set it all up. . . When she came to do the interview, two of the band had forgotten about it and driven home and the others had all gone off for the day. . . She ended up interviewing Karl (Burns) and the driver. All she got was three hours of Karl calling the driver a fucking Jew, grabbing the guy in a neck hold and just being really horrible. . .

"You see, Jack, the thing is all the questions they get asked

are about the words for some reason which puts them in a very bad position."

On stage you're possessed by what I assume is concentration and comes over as deadpan. Does it worry you that you might be seen as smug?

"Yeah, I mean obviously, but there's no'owt I can do about it. Everyday I try and be cheerful about it, but it's concentration, that's all. People used to complain about me turning me back to



the audience. I did it because it's a new song and I'm looking at the faces in the audience I get distracted. I mean, surely you don't have to smile to prove you're enjoying yourself? Surely that's just a sign of sloppiness, although I do hate miserable bands."

'Room To Live' had a pretty all round critical panning. How do you feel about it in retrospect?

"I was mad about the album at the time we did it. Then on second thoughts I realised it was a big mistake showing it out as an album. It was supposed to be a big single, but the record company (Kamera, the band are now back with Rough Trade) mucked it up. So did I because I should have sorted it out.

"I played it a week ago for Brixton and it sounded good. I liked the change in it. I wanted to get music that wasn't in time for a start. After 'Hex (Eduction Hour)' everything around sounded like a bleedin' metronome. And I wanted to get songs with no drums, where previously there'd been two drummers, so things

could speed up with the emotions of the songs. . . To try and capture a rawness, to make a picture of the songs so they would stand up. . .

"That's what I tried to get into the group's heads by throwing in people who'd they'd never worked with before. I mean I played the same trick on the group as the people who bought the record really. . . I like strong lyrics and it's pretty irrelevant whether it's jazz behind it or whatever.

"I don't think there's much art about. Take music, there are a lot of good songwriters, but it's not art. With the Fall I think it's something we get and loose a lot. It's good that we loose it."

NOT WANTING to dangle over the pretentious pit of 'art' any further, talk turned to the reason for Kay Carroll's — always more than a mere manager — departure from the Fall's fold.

"It wasn't doing her health any good," Mark continues. "On the American tour she found a place in Boston and decided to stay. It was a bit of a shock, but we've heard from her and she's doing okay. . .

"I find that being the manager of the band now is a good mental rest for me. It's a bit of discipline so I don't have time to get worried about small details about the music before a gig. It stimulates you, you return to a purpose."

Do you find being a bunch of cults stifling as far as creativity goes?

"No, surely it's much better," mused Mark. "Because if you make any mistakes you've got plenty of room to get around it. That's what a lot of people didn't understand about 'Room To Live'."

"I've got a right to do that. It's not as if we are the Police and are crushingly disappointed if a record is not selling well on a Friday. Mind you, the opposite is true as well. You can get so big it doesn't matter either. The Police are getting away with murder right now."

In *MM* a while back you said 'It's a good thing Mark Riley left because there was too much melody creeping into the Fall', or something like that. What irritates you about melody?

"It like pins you down with lyrics, and pins all the band down. Mark is great, but I felt really restricted by the tune patterns and the pop song idiom which he was injecting into the group. Once you start revolving around the axis of a tune, the rest of your stuff is fucked. There's no way you can vary round it."

Your latest single is called 'The Man Whose Head Expanded'. It sounds like the title of a horror film, so I ran to my Halliwell's to see if it was there. It wasn't. Tell me a bit about the song.

"It's about, like, this fella whose been fucked up by too much misinformation posing as real information. And then it goes into this thing which is an obvious paranoia trip where he thinks this bloke from a soap opera is ripping off his lines and writing them down. But his thoughts are too intense for him to do anything about it."

"That's why the vocals are going *Burrrrrrr!* and the song is very untegether. I'm a bit pissed off that people find the song undecipherable. I find it pretty clear."

"I enjoy the line about the 'Sociological Memory Man'. Did you ever hear those sports memory men who used to stand up and people would shout at them 'Who won the World Cup in 1920?' Now, like, you get sociological guys telling you about how many people didn't have houses in 1945 (laughs). But, ehrrm, we had a good tune, got rid of the melody and put the lyrics to it."

Does death worry you?

"Nah," flies back the immediate reply. "When it comes, peace will be very welcome."

AS A kid I used to be obsessed that like I was reincarnated from the trenches of the First World War. I used to think one day I would open the closet and a load of war dead would pour out all over me.

The other dreams I had were the usual child terrors about tripping over or dreaming that you were going to school in your vest. Things like

... as I grew older, me parents got better off. I wasn't spoiled, nor ever want for anything. But I always used to be called a f*cker.

See, I come from a strange family. They're all like that, the same, in Salford. They always have the weird car in the road, a battered one. It's like appearances are death to them."

Looking at the particular Smith in question, one Mark E, central nerve of the Fall's cortex circuit, things haven't changed that much.

While the pop world's mannequins suffocate under ever more freakish sartorial excess in a vain attempt to camouflage the sounds of clinical souls slobbering, Mark wears...

Trousers — dark; shirt — sort of brown; shoes — black... beneath a face pasty and blotchy framed by lank hair of an undifferentiated style. Pretty average, really.

Such seemingly petty details, however, reflect an irony which would be fiendishly funny if it wasn't so irritating. That is, as hopefully you know by now, Smith and the Fall are the antithesis of average.

It takes time and patience, but focus on the Fall's sporadic brilliance and most, though by no means all, (Madness for example), of pop's bubble bands wither to grey dust. It's like the difference in impact between a Don McCullin monochrome of starving Biafran kids and a high gloss fashion shot.

Mark's lyrics — shredded stimulation triggers — and the band's

starting grasp of The Three Rs he rapped out long ago — repetition, repetition, repetition — represent one of the few successful creative thrusts through rock's hermetically sealed borders.

Successful is the key word. Personally I love melodies, tunes you can whistle, and am deeply suspicious of noise masquerading as art. Any mobile wanker can set a sequencer in motion, screech out feedback, wallop things and wail. Just add a name like Pale Blue Fit and the Exploding Intestines, or whatever, and you're bound to pick up the entrails of a following.

The bottom critical line, as always, (especially in a live context) is does the band massage your spinal pleasure centre? In the Euro-rock genre, U2 and Big Country manage it because of their expert manipulation of mainstream clichés, Costello never fails, and the Fall just get better.

The jump between harmony and cacophony, illogical? Probably. But we're talking about the evoking of emotions, not misleading head-games. At the Ace in Brixton last week, the Fall were the most intense I've ever seen them. With Mark Riley

THE FALL wake up



April 9, 1983 SOUNDS Page 5

Stones' sixth member' Ian Stewart who'll be guesting with the band.

Heading for a Fall

FALL member Marc Riley has left the group after nearly five years with them. In a statement last week he said: "Things were beginning to get a bit stale and not quite as productive as they might have been. The split is therefore seen by both parties as something long overdue and hopefully highly productive."

Riley is now going to record a solo album although he intends looking for 'suitable partners' to work with in the future.

That's Life

TRUE

All Fall Down



PROZOVICH HERBER

DEED



RAFTERS CLUB is typically nondescript, the kind of venue where everybody is involved parading a variety of styles that eventually form together as a single anonymous lump as the evening reaches its climax. The disco is trotting out the usual selection of new style music which nobody dances to while outside a guy is selling Clash and Buzzcocks posters from some dead, dark age.

I feel lost in the faceless throng, I have come here to arrange a meeting with Mark Smith the voice of The Fall and to also catch them in action at the beginning of their latest tour. As I've never been personally introduced to Mark Smith everybody in the club takes on a resemblance to the pictures I have of him in the folio of press cuttings I have been studying. I decide for the time being to lay low and say nothing.

The disco squawks to a close and a group called 'The Smack' appear on stage to perform a set which is a mixture of heavy metal, west coast doodling and Mancunian cabaret type humour, in short it's as far away from The Fall as you can possibly get and as such deserve more than the brief mention I can give them here.

Let me say though that they provided an entertainment that was by no means unpleasant to listen to and if only I wasn't so concerned about getting tomorrow sorted out I could have been more attentive towards them.

It transpires later that my failure to track Mark down was due to the fact that he was at night school attending his course in English Literature before eventually taking the stage

for that evenings performance.

The Fall play a set of mostly new material with a few 'oldies' thrown in for good measure, requests are ignored but no one's complaining, The Fall are changing shape yet again. The whole Fall sound is not, as some seem to think, a musical kickabout but structured and complete.

The Fall are a rhythm section tight and disciplined, a well tuned dance machine in the truest sense of the word dance, a firm foundation is created to give Mark the freedom to let fly.

With such a band behind him he can get on and do what he feels he must do without worry, it is their strength that provides the empty canvas for Mark to paint his pictures of words.

It is the contrast that makes The Fall's present line up so great. The tight structure of the music topped with the seemingly crazy lyrical whoopings and static noise that Mark shoots into the air using every breath like a drowning man bent on survival.

At one point Mark moves down to the stage floor and picks at a guitar laying there. The tiniest little noise comes out of it over the thundering rhythm section, the sound a small animal probably makes before it is torn to pieces by a larger adversary.

My first meeting with Mark Smith is back stage at Rafters. Hardly knowing what to expect and feeling very vulnerable I approach him like a matador. He's just standing there sipping from a wine bottle, letting the feel of what he's done on stage die down, it's like he's reeling in his ectoplasm. My tension goes as soon as we exchange handshakes, he scribbles down his address, apologises for his tiredness and I leave for my hotel room soon after to think about the nights events and the day to come.

MY SECOND meeting with Mark Smith takes place at his creaking flat in Prestwich, Manchester along with The Fall's guitarist Craig Scanlan and Kay Carroll The Fall's manager and true believer

A number of influences and connections are run through during the course of the conversation, subjects as diverse as Mark's pen pal relationship with journalist cum Blue Oyster Cult lyricist Richard Meltzer, the work of such authors as Manchester's own Anthony Burgess, Colin Wilson and the Horror and Supernatural stories of M.R. James, Arthur Machen and H.P. Lovecraft all of whom have had an influence in the songs and thoughts of The Fall.

Will you tell us about your writing, for instance 'The North Will Rise Again' from 'Grotesque' what's it about?

"Well firstly it's a story, there's a case point for breaking down that sort of stuff where you can make an extreme statement and it can mean exactly the opposite or it can be an objective statement.

'The North Will Rise Again' it's like the South will rise again and we're all Rebs. That would be really good if a Rockabilly band from the South did a big story about how this Reb got involved with somebody else, which is like Country and Western is really, it's all stories isn't it?

"But as I've said, 'The North Will Rise Again' is a story, there's bits about the Arndale Centre and the 'Totale' mythology engrained into it which fits in with that Lovecraftian thing."

Lovecraft's 'Cthulhu' Mythos you mean, is the 'Totale' thing an offshoot of that then, what are its origins?

"Totale started out on 'Dagnet', I mean these things can't be connected but you've heard 'Underground Medicine' on the first

album which is very Burroughesque. William Burroughs had apparently written a lot of stuff on the same theme 'Underground Medicine' going along in circuits of body abuse and body benefit and therefore you can survive forever.

I sort of visioned this thing where there would be a book called 'Underground Medicine' which would be just statements and so Roman Totale comes into that and he's a voice that the band can speak through, This is a cliché.

"I don't want to give too much of that away, because I think that's part of the attraction, but anyway I killed him off. But the rap on the back of the 'Fiery Jack' sleeve is the manuscript that Roman Totale left, he was born in Lancashire and fled to Wales which all fits in with the Arthur Machen influence, it does fit in with Lovecraft's 'Cthulhu' Mythos too, It's just dead strongly influenced.

"R. Totale he was an ex cabaret artist and an underground being. He's got tentacles that's why he had to go underground, it's like his face started leaking. I've always imagined him as some sort of a Big Youth character cursed with this mystical insight."

With R. Totale killed off does this mean his son Joe will be taking over as The Fall's mouthpiece?

"Joe is sort of half way in there. We don't know whether to carry on with him or not, because a lot of the new stuff we're doing is very hard hitting, realistic, class orientated stuff."

"Totale was always The Fall's escapist bit which I thought was really healthy but this is when we disagreed with the heavy realist image that was perpetrated about The Fall all that reality of unemployment sort of crap that was connected with us, factories and all that but Totale was a difference from that image. I am a dreamer sort of person and I used to resent being associated with realist bands I didn't like that at all.

"Then this fantasy thing happened in the music scene where it's all escapism and of course I reacted to that which is where Joe Totale, R Totale's tough son who's an M.I.5 agent comes in. 'The North Will Rise Again' is just like Joe narrating how his dad came to a bad end because he was still naive enough to believe in people."

The conversation takes a turn to the subject of the 'art' cliché.

"I'm a firm believer in the cliché 'art'. When people say about me 'Oh he's just lecturing again!' it just really upsets me because I know I'm damn well not. I mean anybody can go "It's fucking shit, it's fucking shit" that's the punk thing which was relevant for a while but I've never gone along with that, to stimulate is what it's about rather than lecture.

"This group sent me this tape, it's just a jam and in the middle of it is a speech by this Irish girl who must be an I.R.A. activist or something because she's going on about British brutality and it's like intelligent Crass it's horrible but if you can look at it as art it's really good, if you can disassociate yourself from the political message it can come across really well. That's what I'm trying to get with The Fall, to operate on two levels.

I listen to Crass quite a lot, I don't like what they say in their lyrics but the way they just use swear words in speeded up rhyme it's quite innovative and not like say the U.K. Subs who are too earthbound. But there's something off centre about Crass that appeals to me, there's something about Johnny Cash that appeals to me that's off centre and with The Fall I'm trying to get along those levels and put my own thing in as well."

We now get to studying The Fall's punk in present rock standards, the direction of the Fall in these tempestuous times.

"The reason for The Fall uprising at the moment is that people are getting more and more disillusioned with the standard rock stuff. People say "Oh you're taking off you must be really pleased" and Kay is turning round and saying "Yeah because there's nothing else left." The public have been through it all.

"Like Adam and the Ants, the backlash against them on the part of normal people is incredible because of their surrogate image. But it's ironic because Adam and the Ants are a really good group in my line. I think what they are musically is quite interesting, it's like an early rock n' roll T. Rex sort of thing, it's very perfect. All that ruins it is him trying to act like a fucking old rock star which puts the fuck up it, all those clones and clan thing he doesn't need it but he doesn't see that, I feel sorry for him.

"Every three years you had a Slade and three years later a T. Rex then you had a Bowie but now there's one coming out every three weeks, which is why T.V. rock and your standard album Top 50 is such a load of fucking junk. The things that could be used there!

"These bands that associate themselves with The Fall but they couldn't play dance music. They are all *individuals*, people like Wah Heat and wankers like that. They think The Fall are all about going on about 'We're all *individuals* and do what we fucking like' but it's not. If you want to create something you've got to have a bit of discipline about it, if you're going to do music, because without discipline it's just a morass of rubbish.

"If The Fall are going to be about anything it's to be the best of both. Maybe I just want to go out there and read my *poetry* with guys jamming behind me which is what people think The Fall are about and people who try to imitate The Fall form bands like that, but that's not what it's about, the band has got to stand up as a band.

"The Fall could go out without me and just play instrumentals and it would still be fucking good. I think it's great to understand the trash aesthetic which is what we were trying to get on 'Totally Wired' and the colourful aesthetic which was 'Elastic Man'. The way people said 'Elastic Man' was about the music business, it wasn't anything to do with it, it was about a writer freaking out it was almost Lovecraftian like somebody I imagine Stephen King to be, everybody saying to him "How did you write The Shining?"

"But I got people saying (adopts thick northern accent) "Uhhh Nawwthurn, Rockerbillly, goin' on about t' Naawwth! "It's a definite lack of intelligence that it's

It's mainly worth your attention for the first appearance of The Fall on record. 'Steppin' Out' sensibly opens the album — it's the best cut — with muscular modern dance. Hypnotic tune, electric piano fills and growled lyrics: 'I used to believe everything I read (X3) but that's OK 'cos now I'M STEPPIN' OUT! I used to stay in the house and never go out, but now I'm STEPPIN' OUT'. 'Last orders' likewise shows the signs of greatness to come, in its formative stages: 'Everybody's in prison or in the army, all sincere, all phoney, reading all their books, taking in the news, they've just given me their last orders!' Now, if they make a movie

KAY: "I think The Fall are going through a very watery, fluid thing at the moment, I don't think we know what we want to do, I don't think we're all that bothered, but then we're very bothered about not being bothered and it goes round and round and round but we'll get a niche on it I'm sure.

"I think it would be great to get somebody like Jonathan King or Mickie Most to do a number with us or an album that would be really interesting. But then you ask yourself, is that being... and you're there again... It's like trying to find your own personal vein when you've got 25 million of them, which one to choose? The Fall are getting very spiritual to me at the moment, very Third Ear Bandish."

BEFORE I leave to catch the milk train back to London, Mark tells me a story of how he once confronted the ghost of a friar in the park near where he lives. He told the story very matter of factly without any hint of drama which almost led me to believe this sort of experience happens to him all the time. When I expressed my interest he said he would go down there and check it out again for me sometime and send me a report. Any uneasy feelings I may have had about Mark Smith are non-existent now and like Lovecraft's Dunwich Horror the Prestwich Horror is also the invention of a fantastic mind.

QUESTION MARK

Acker Plus One gets down to it with Mark Smith and Kav Carrol of The Fall.

TA: Were you ever involved in something like this before?

KC: No, I didn't have a clue. Mark just said that I could do it and I believed him. He saw something in me that I didn't see.

TA: You've been with them

KC: They'd been gigging about nine months when I came in. I just thought they were a joke, never heard them or anything, went and saw them at Nottingham, thought they were fuckin' great.

MS: We started in January 78.

TA: Friday the 13th.

MS: Supported Sham 69...

TA: What was that like?

MS: A nightmare.

TA: What did you do before you got involved with this lot?

KC: Psychiatric nurse.

TA: Bet that comes in handy...

KC: It's pretty much the same, yeah!

TA: What did you used to do, Mark?

MS: Me? Used to work with me dad all the time, he's a plumber. Then I worked as a shipping clerk for 4 years, from 16 to about 20. The first year of the band...

KC: You were working when I met you.

TA: Then you had to give it up?

MS: I didn't want to give it up, I was sacked. The job I had they used to give me a moped, y'see, and after about three years they took it off me cos I got promoted sort of thing, so I had no transport to get to work, and where I used to work was near where Manchester United's ground is, about ten miles away from me. Anyway I was always late cos I had to catch two buses, like, and I can never get up properly in the mornings anyway.

TA: When did you first go on a weekly wage with The Fall, then?

KC: Xmas 78, just before Karl Burns left.

TA: Were you still on the dole?

MS: No, we came off the dole and then went on a wage. Ten quid.

TA: How did you survive on ten poun a week?

MS: The Social Security said to me 'How do you live on ten quid a week' when they were giving me eight quid!

TA: What do you do in Manchester?

KC: We go to the pub and watch television. Things like that.

TA: You don't go out and see groups then?

KC: No, can't stand it, never have been one of the gig people. The only gigs I go to are The Fall. Went to see The Birthday Party, enjoyed that,

but I mean I'd much rather go to the pub. For a lot of, if you like, 'punters', there's a magic with the stage. Once you've been behind it and you've worked it all out, there's no magic there anymore. D'you know what I mean? Mark's

after a new audience really.

TA: Do you look on it as looking after the Fall or looking after Mark?

KC: I look after Mark first. I'm a mother, right, I'm just a mother!

TA: He needs looking after then?

KC: I know what's best for him really. It sounds really bad but it's true. If Mark left, I'd go with Mark.

TA: Why does he always seem such a loner? IS he a loner?

KC: Yeah, he likes his own space. Yeah.

MS: The best way to lose your friends is to form a group.

TA: Does he write a lot?

KC: Yeah, he writes all the time. Tapes me around the house and things when I'm arguing with him.

TA: Are you still friends with Dave McCullough?

(Silence):

TA: Not at all?

MS: Not at all, no. What it was...if you want the whole story...the main thing was, when Curtis died he did this ridiculous article rip-off with my lyrics, he used 'In My Area' and 'That Man' y'know, whole verses, and I read this, like tripe and I get to the bottom of this tripe and all my fuckin' lyrics are there as if I've sanctioned them off which really annoyed me. So anyway I was writing to this Dublin magazine at the time, Vox, and they asked me to do a page, so I did a page on the

Curtis thing saying what happened to me and all that. It was really heavy for me cos I'd talked to him a few months before...I put things in this article like how it's just like Jimi Hendrix, all this bloody gush about fuckin' nothing, and all this romanticism y'know, and can't anybody see that the scene screwed him up, cos that's what it was. Apart from his personal life, he also had the Factory scene. It's a fuckin' very cold callous scene, I mean it is, a very evil

scene... and that's partly what did it.

I mean two days after he died we played with Crispy Ambulance in Liverpool — Crispy Ambulance used to be a Sex Pistol type band, now they're a Joy Division type band, — they're all like, clean-living guys — and this guy, this DICK, was doing all the actions and that, blatantly imitating him on stage, and I thought 'Fucking Hell!' And I wrote all this in the article anyway, saying Morley's article was a load of shit and how McCullough's was the final...for me personally because he used my lyrics. So

stopped mentioning us. The thing that must be made clear here is that McCullough tries to make out that he dropped us when in fact we dropped him.

TA: You don't play that many gigs, do you really?

KC: Well I don't know. When you think about it, I mean you pick the paper up and there's all these bands in that paper every week and like, say, Adam And The Ants, they don't work any more than we do really, its just that they make a big song and dance about it.

TA: What do you think of Mark Smith copyists??

MS: They can copy but I teach!!

THE ACKER PLUS ONE



LOOKING AT THE

GUISE

MARK SMITH doesn't like looking back.

Mark Smith the married man, sitting with his wife in this horrendous rock musician's hotel in West London is quite happy. He's doing what he most likes doing: talking, drinking, smoking and revelling in the absurdity of his surroundings.

He's feeding off the energy of the capital and watching it with a distanced and amused loathing.

The horrible has always been an inspiration for Mark, whether in the fictional setting of an EC Comic strip, or in the events he sees around him.

Apart from the Columbia Hotel, the prospect of a Northern soul night in the high-tech surroundings of the Hacienda is something which has recently aroused the sharp Smith sense of the grotesque.

"It sounded great," he glories, "I didn't go myself, but apparently it was just like a procession of corpses, the DJs didn't know what they were doing, and they were just playing all these horrible Tamla Motown imitations. It must have been really disgusting in The Hacienda. I'd have loved to have gone."

YES INDEED, the horrors of life hold no fears for this man — except when it comes to looking back. His hatred of it extends almost to phobia level.

"That was half the reason that Marc Riley had to leave," he explains, "because he kept on saying, Ah, it's not as good as this or that we did a year ago, and that is just not the point of The Fall at all. If we've ever had any videos done I've tried to keep the lads from watching, so that we're always looking towards the future and never towards the past."

Why this memorophobia? It could be the fear of the retrospective disease that it swamps British music; the apparently endless need to resurrect anything from the late '70s backwards. Or it could simply be that this new, smartened up Mark Smith, in his tab collar shirt and neat black suit, doesn't want to relive the greasy haired prole with the elephantine lapels in front of Brix, the sultry, blonde LA punkette he married on The Fall's last American tour.

Whatever the reason, it makes my task more difficult; that task being to take a journey through the whole career of The Fall, to sort through the six albums, eight singles and a 10 inch and answer the question, just what the hell are The Fall anyway?

Prole art aesthetic boot boys, or the vanguard of a new sound radicalism? Humorless industrialists, or directors of a comic theatre of real life freaks? Most of all what is this secret of The Fall?

All of these questions may be answered in due course, but first we must ask where to start?

For so long The Fall seem to have simply been there that establishing a starting point is as difficult as predicting where they might end. The Fall have been that necessary touch of evil, the band who took a step sideways, and from their altered perspective sniped at the custom and regimentation which resulted from it.

They were these enemies of culture who sought to question everything, to destroy established values and replace them with... well, nothing.

The Fall, although pinned as an alternative band, always fell shy of actually offering the alternative that was claimed for them. Behind their iconoclasm there was a frightened vacuum; nothing to latch on to and no readily assimilated images. They disturbed the equilibrium and, from the point of disruption, it was up to the listener to find his own way out. It was a challenge which many found offputting.

But what is the secret of The Fall? It's an age old question which the mystery of the sound has seemingly created. Amongst the majority of disciples and dilettante observers alike there is a seemingly unshakable conviction that behind this ramshackle organisation, there is a mysterious message, buried in the repetition, repetition, repetition.

Yet the only invocation of this repetition is of a Buzzcocks date in the Spring of 1978 and hearing that sound for the first time, on a pre-release tape bridging the departure of Subway Sect and the arrival of The Buzzcocks.

In that context, the sound of The Fall was an immediate shock, hovering between a mood of the moment and a biting parody, perpetually on the edge of a self-consuming burst of hilarity.

At the time that seemed to be the most important factor in The Fall. They were wallowing, as we all were in the same rock and roll nightmare, but they were among a select breed capable of seeing just how funny this whole thing was. "Blank generation/ Same old blank generation," they droned, as you looked at the vacant faces lining the front rows and mucus-dripping Shelley squealing "Don't spit, don't spit" you knew exactly what the voice meant.

Perhaps punk had meant something to mark when he first started writing in '76, fired by a vague energy from a distant source. But by '78 there was nothing to glory in save the ugliness of the spectacle. And that was something to which Mark Smith was highly attuned.

"We'd always be laughing up our sleeves whenever we played with any of those old punk bands. Most of them were so bloody awful," he now says.

The art of The Fall, though, existed in feeding on the basically grotesque and distorting it to horrific proportions.

"Play something that sounds like The Beatles," Mark would instruct the group of North Manchester semi-musicians he'd collected. Then, as the mad orchestrator, he would pick apart the noise, emphasising this, excising that. Thus they arrived at The Fall; the ideal of prole plagiarism, a band whose identity derived from obsession and parody. Distorting and distending they arrived at a manifesto...

"We've repetition in the music and we're never gonna lose it. It's not so much of a motto now as when it was first written," Mark comments, "I mean, repetition, they've got machines for it now, haven't they?"

REPETITION, repetition, repetition. And the secret is... there is no secret. The Fall are as meaningless and as magnificent as a Buster Keaton sketch.

As Mark says, "People always reveal more about themselves than anything else when they write about The Fall."

Thus, the above words probably reveal very little about The Fall, but more about me. The Fall are essentially a mirror to your own obsessions: Barney Hoskyns found a strange and poetic course of cultural revolution; Richard Cook discovered a man with a long term fixation with the sheer power of music; and when I looked into the mirror of The Fall I discovered what... A Northern boy with an obtuse sense of black humor and a fascination with comics and horror films. Strange that — The Fall as some cold-war science fiction film monster, that penetrates the identity of the observer and confronts it with an image of itself.

When 'Repetition' finally appeared on record it was the B-side of their first single, 'Bingo Master's Break Out', a song Mark had written while on an excursion with his parents. Charting the decline of a bingo caller, it opens a poetic relationship between Smith and the Northern traditions of his upbringing that always contained more hate than love. Yet in the South, it was taken either at face value as a faintly charming Northern song, or it was canned off stage.

"That was where 'Witch Trials' came from," Mark comments with ill-concealed venom. "Because at the time I was always being attacked onstage for not being a punk. Here were these kids who had been heavy metal fans six months before and they were now attacking me for having long hair. And it was mainly in the South where it happened. People always forget that now we're liked so much down here, but in the beginning they used to really hate us. They were all into Chelsea and Generation X and crap like that."

The Fall were sniped at as outsiders, only partly by their own choice. Before 'Witch Trials' came out, though, there was a second single. The A-side, 'It's The New Thing' merely consolidated their position as the parodists of the scene, but the B-side, 'Various Times' revealed the full extent of the literary potential hinted at in 'Bingo Masters'.

A Dr Doom tale of Nazi Germany, it packed all the atmosphere and the violence of a Heinrich Böll

FROM 'BINGO MASTER'S BREAK OUT' TO 'KICKER CONSPIRACY', DON WATSON TAKES A JOURNEY THROUGH THE FALL'S NORTHERN LANDSCAPE WITH MARK SMITH. PHOTOS: BLEDDYN BUTCHER.



Mr and Mrs Smith — Mark and Brix.

novel into a single song. "1940, no money and I live in Berlin/ I think I'll join up become a camp guard/ No war for me/ An old Jew's face dripping bread... Everyone I meet now's the same/ No brains/ A good case for the systems we want, we get."

It was their ability to embody hatred that revealed the hard line anti-humanist streak revealed by Barney Hoskyns in his 1981 live review. They set themselves up not against the Left, but against the libertarian tradition that surrounded it, displaying an ability to penetrate a phenomenon rather than mouthing platitudes about it. Inevitably this brought them up against the small minded sections of the political community.

"We had all these fuckin' feminists who'd come up to us and say, 'You're sexist for wearing a leather jacket; or You're fascist for singing about Nazis. And now, exactly the same people come along and fawn and slobber all over me, and they've all got dyed hair and stuff. The people that are behind this new punk thing. It's all very sinister."

"Even now we still get idiots ringing up and asking us to do anti-non-vegetarian benefits, and you can't understand why if they'd even listened to The Fall."

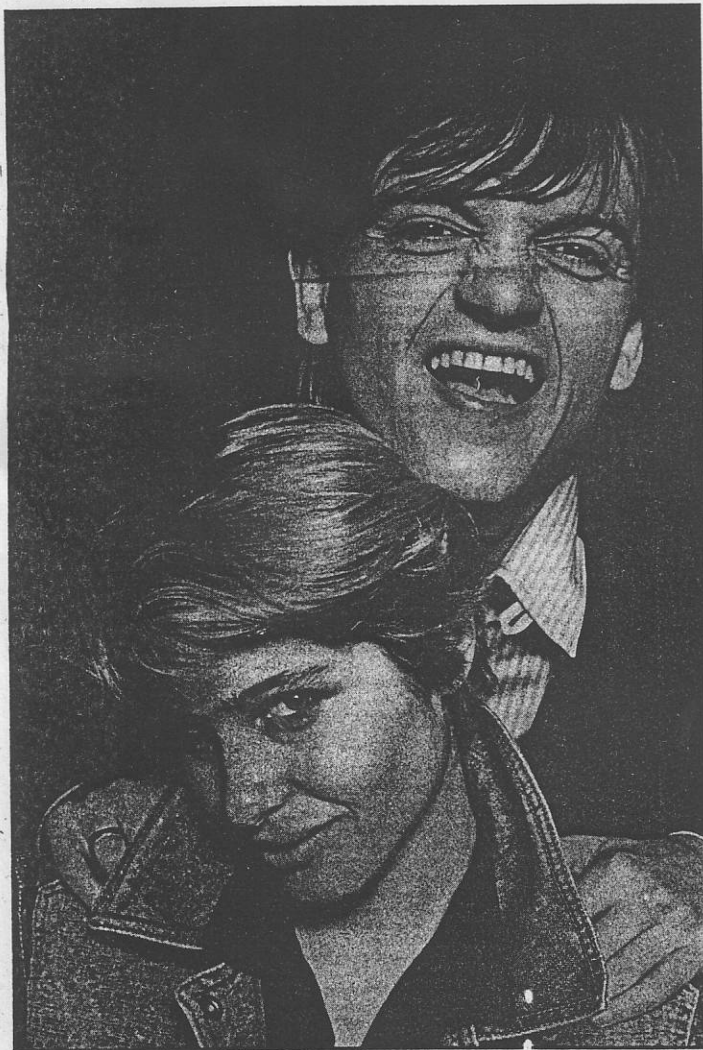
THE SPIRITUAL continuation of 'Various Times' came up as the very first track of the 'Live At The Witch Trials' LP ('79). 'Erichsen's'...



possibly the greatest speed song ever written, an enormous swell of elemental instrumentation tensing behind a cracked vocal that alternates somewhere between object paranoia and sharp edged ejection. After the uneasy high, 'Witch Trials' dissolves into a shambolic mess of parody and humour; a wonderful disorganisation in the midst of which a jukebox develops a mind of its own, and the prevalent industrial clichés of the day get a neat drubbing. It's an LP of stunted growth and seminal emissions, crap rap and sharp traps—a trash classic in glorious monochrome.

"Well, I'm glad you see the humour in that LP," says Mark. "A lot of people genuinely didn't. Even I sometimes almost forget the spirit in which the record was made. I mean I thought they were really funny ideas at the time, but then when the LP came out in the mainstream of all those rock albums it seemed to take the edge off the wit of it."

"Witch Trials" was actually a pretty bad time for me, because we had a democratic band at that time and it was produced by Bob Sergeant and all that. Basically, it was a bloody good job the thing never



took off—that would just have been the end of us straight off."

Mark was more pleased with the follow up 'Dragnet', although it's a grey affair in retrospect, remarkable mainly because it first introduces the rockabilly motif that led to 'Fiery Jack' more than for its single tone dynamic. Its saving grace is 'A Figure Walks', perhaps the funniest of Smith's distortions of industrial clichés—"a song written during a long walk home wearing an anorak which restricted vision by two thirds." It sounded like urban paranoia revisited.

"If you actually listen closely though," he points out, "it's not a human being at all that's following the character, it's actually this monster from outer space. I like to think of it as my big Stephen King outing."

But the rockabilly rumble that worked its way through 'Dragnet' was not to have its full effect until the following year (1980). And 'Fiery Jack', a pair of popping eyes and a couple of scorched nostrils

above anything on the second LP, picked the brain of the sharpest snag The Fall had fashioned, and ushered in an era when they just might have become pop stars.

The next two singles—'Elastic Man' and 'Totally Wired'—both featured hooks of equivalent strength, if not the same madcap hustle that had made 'Fiery Jack' so wonderful. By the time they'd reached the last of the three, though, the production seemed to have become deliberately impenetrable, giving a rusty edge that maintaining the interest of the converted, but simultaneously killed off any commercial potential present.

"I suppose that's because I think anybody can write hooks," Mark comments blithely. "If you can get a Top 20 hit just by taking a title like 'Crushed By The Wheels Of Industry' and putting a toney voice on top of that dullard's version of that whole north-will-rise-again crap... it just shows you how easy it can be."

"I reckon, though, if something like 'Totally Wired' had been properly produced I would have heard things missing in it, like crackles which I thought out to be part of the sound. Actually, originally that song had the 'Grotesque' production and it was really clean—but then we re-mixed it to sound horrible," he ads with a grin.

At this time The Fall had split wide open. They were a contradiction: a band rotted in the North, reflecting its decay but at the same time detesting its stubborn intransigence. The only solution was a break-up; not of The Fall, but of the personality of Mark Smith, who developed the alter ego Roman Totale.

"I just wanted some character that I could talk through without it actually being Mark Smith talking," is the only comment Mark will make about the now deceased Totale.

But in his time, Totale was more outspoken about Mark Smith: "I don't particularly like the person singing on this LP," he said on the sleeve of 'Totale's Turns', "that said I admire his guts."

Totale was the old fashioned Northerner, the traditionalist in Smith, but he lasted only until the last track of the fourth LP, 'Grotesque'. A rambling play on flat words, flat caps and flat beer, The NWRA (The North will rise again, or possibly North West Republican Army) catalogues the white crap Northern attitude, part romantic rebellion and part stubborn call a spade a spade and yourself a peasant pessimism.

In the climax Roman Totale inglorious snuffs it. Somewhere in this loose brick and broken glass scenario the prole art threat was conceived, a couple of images born of confusion and reflecting contradiction. Here was where The Fall genuinely did pass all understanding and step over into the realms of the sublime.

The 10-inch 'Slates' extended into pale faced pictures of dramatic dance hilarity. For the first time, the lyrical power shot out on its own on 'Slates', leaving the music disjointed and splintered in its struggle to keep up; which is probably why Mark still listens to it now.

What is often ignored again is the *humour* of the artefact. 'Pink Press Threat', in particular, is an hilarious tabloid satire that got taken straight.

"That song actually started off as a play, about some commuter type bloke who flips out on leftism and gets caught up with M15 and all that. I just compressed it and made more of a joke about it."

At the time, you could have been excused for thinking that Mark himself took the Prole Art Threat seriously.

"It was really an attempt to get through to a lot of people that tend to get just ghettoised into Oi music or something sad and pathetic like that because bands like The Fall never make any attempt to reach that sort of person. What we were really trying to do was break away from the raincoat brigade."

It's the irony of any parody where, as with the Alternative Comedians of the Comic Strip, the audience is comprised primarily of the victims of the joke.

"Yeah, it's quite dangerous really 'cause if you're not careful people start cottoning on and stop coming—then you don't eat."

However parodic it might have been, the fascination with Northernness continued with 'Lie Dream Of A Casino Soul', released with typical timing, just as the laughable London fashionmongers had all discovered spontaneously that they'd always been into Northern Soul.

"That song actually did create quite a bit of resentment in the North because people thought it was being snobby and horrible about the old soul boys, which it was never about anyway. Because I was brought up with people that were into Northern Soul five years before anybody down here had even heard about it. But they've all grown out of it, which is what the song is about, but it wasn't putting them down at all. If anything, it was glorifying them, but not in the format of, where are those soul boys that used to be here?"

"There are actually a lot of old soul boys who like The Fall, because that music was always offbeat

and it gives them a feeling for the sort of wackiness that you find in our music. It's really funny because Dexys bust a gut trying to attract that audience and never even got close. All the kids I know just thought it was pathetic 'cause they were wearing the clothes they'd been wearing six years ago and ripping off all these horn riffs that they knew off by heart from the originals."

FROM THE power of poetry on 'Slates' and 'Lie Dream' to 'Hex Enduction Hour' is a long way indeed, as the musical power takes a peculiarly timed quantum jump. Suddenly it's simply the sheer immensity of the soundtrack that reaches beyond the words.

Recorded partly on an empty stage in Hitchin and then in a rock walled studio in Heykewick its sound is a radical shift, a hard nose to the windscreens burst of acceleration backed with a double drum line up, featuring Karl Burns from the 'Witch Trials' era in tandem with Paul Hanley. It was intended as a hard hitting reaction to everything around, and it was a huge critical surprise success. Just the same, Mark regards it as a dangerous period.

"I felt we were in danger of turning into some sort of big band, like the sort of epic rock sound that the Bunnymen were moving towards at the time, and that's never been the idea of The Fall. That's why 'Room To Live' was such a necessary album."

'Necessary' probably sums it up. It's by no means as bad as Amrik Rai (or indeed most of us) thought at the time; but if it is not uninspired it at least lacks conviction, with the air of a clear out rather than the energy of a strong restatement.

With that lapse, Riley gone and the failure of 'The Man Whose Head Expanded' to match the brilliance of its conception (a science fiction vision of an overload of books and films), you could so easily conclude that The Fall have run themselves into the ground, rotated so fast around their widening circle that they've ended up dizzy and done for. And yet this would discount the ability of the monster always to rise at the least expected point. Like the maverick villain in a tense pulp masterpiece, The Fall will always strike when they seemed to be dead and buried.

This time round, their hand reached from the grave at the Brixton Ace with a formula familiar in its basis but more startling in its effect than ever. Now they've hit the point home with the hard leather thump to the gut of 'Kicker Conspiracy', a new single that shows a bitter power where we might have expected complacency.

Mark may be happily married, but he's far from settled.

"We've just seen too much, right from the early days of idiots like Stiff Little Fingers shooting way up beyond us where you could see they had no real ability, now dullards like Heaven 17 hitting the heights with most pathetic versions of what The Fall did years ago. I do hate looking back in the sense of glorifying the past, but I do think you have to be aware of the fact that The Fall have always been ahead of their time, because it's realising that which will give us the impetus to move forward."

And this is precisely the virtue of their past work: not a call for The Fall of 'Repetition' or of 'Pink Press Threat', but a recognition that there is more to the repetition. The Fall's masterpieces are valuable because they were intended at the time to be so transitory, like the genius that sparks in a throwaway comic.

"On the new LP we've got the words 'We are The Fall' he continues "precisely because we've seen so much dross in the last couple of years and we've appeared to stay in the same place while all these morons have risen above us. Now I'm trying to instil some pride in the lads; just state that we are The Fall and be aware of what that means."

So as The Fall continue undefeated, darkness falls on the tidy world of a West London Hotel, and from out of the deep there echoes a strange disembodied laugh...

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THURSDAY MORNING: warm and sunny, deliciously quiet. I can't get the bloody door shut. Slattery's down below, whistling, recovering, blissful. The door won't shut: it hasn't a handle and my nails have to dig into the thin wooden panelling to try to draw it closed. Even as I do it I know the symbolism, the corny metaphor: I am closing the door on the Fall! That *IS* trite! But true, at the time. I'm turning my back on the Fall, bang, goodbye. And the door snaps shut. The Fall are out of my life.

WEDNESDAY NIGHT: oppressively hot, the evening before. It came like a thunderstorm or a tidal wave, the change of attitude. It built into a tremendous climax as the night drew on and the heat became fiercer and the gig was done and Slattery, the innocent, was fittingly swept away by the gods, drunk and dead, to an adjoining room.

A big black cloud, heavy with mystery and purpose, had been mounting above us all day long, ever since we'd arrived in fact. Mark Smith and Kay Carroll (a 'sort of' manager, more a cuddly tigress) weren't there, they didn't bother to meet us. And me, a Fall veteran, used to loving arms and hunky dory nice words, real cosy like! A word here, a word there, something was wrong, they'd changed, for God's sake what was it, Mark and Kay?

It didn't dawn on me for more than two days. I left Prestwich, Manchester, depressed and a little shattered, thinking the Fall had turned sour and over-cynical, that their revered severity had

become an hysterical intolerance, that this feature must of necessity close doors on the Fall, certainly *MY* door. This article could so easily have been the total reverse of the other week's Beat story; the Fall were in for a largish panning.

Bono of U.2 mystically appeared on Friday, Martian-like, from nowhere, feeling the same way about Lydon and PIL, saying that Mark Smith too had probably been banging against the music business walls too long, that he was spent and tired because of it.

And I believed the good Bono and my own intuition until I listened back to the tape. It left me shocked and feeling happier than I've felt all year. I felt ecstatic! Listen to the raps that went on all that uncomfortable Wednesday night and make up your own mind:

INTERVIEW RAP: the entire band is present, somehow that seems ominous in itself. Mark Smith (and this is a friend talking to me): "I love doing interviews with the press . . . Why? 'Cos any publicity is good publicity . . . God that's cynical. 'No it's not . . .'" Etc.

I can't believe this. I only get this kind of pseud hassle from the Slits. But I told you it'd been building all day. The silence is deafening. The rest of the band act like redundant sheep farmers at a wake. Mark Smith (with sore gums or something): "It's like an old English club in here. Nobody wants to speak. I really resent the way the rest of you vamp on me and expect me to talk."

Mark Riley, big-kid bassist: "But you do interviews on your own don't you?" Smith: "This is exactly *WHY* I do interviews on my own. But I think the rest of you have something to say . . ."

That's precisely it; the word is *TRUST*. A new stage in the Fall. In the past the atmosphere between Mark E. and the rest of the band smelled of distrust. Now, whether it's just symbolic that

Mike Leigh has left (and surely it must be more than just coincidence), you can feel the signs of a whole band, of a *COMPLETE* Fall, for the first time coming through. And the root of all this new approach is trust, throwing away, as Kay calls it, the 'silent democracy' that once predominated and quietly gave spokesman chores to Mark Smith.

Moreover, the Fall, as Bono guessed, have hardened, they are more severe, but they haven't gone over the top, they're still aware of keeping a balance (and Mark uses the word a lot during the night), a balance that stops clichedom (viz. 'hooray for the revolution, down with the music business, let's make tee-shirts out of it, guys'), a balance that permits continuous re-assessment.

The hardening-up is obvious. Mark: "Every gig you go to there's 10 fanzies who want interviews and they've all nothing to say. And they get freaked out when you say you don't want to talk to them . . ."

Earlier he'd told me he can't tolerate kids coming into the dressing-room these days looking suitably bleak and industrial or appropriately Mark Smith-cloned ("That's the most disgusting thing of all . . .").

LEADER RAP: this is the crunch. That night, before the interview, the Fall were on stage in Manchester and you could see the change. Mark Smith is less out front, Mark Riley's keyboards and the guitar/bass flank him with equal and often greater prominence. They've seen the danger and, literally and not cowardly, retreated. The result is more confidence all round.

And hence Mark's prompting for action from the others in the interview. He succeeds only partially; a kind of natural shyness I think covers up the rest, but the intent is there and it will work.

No bashful school-kids anymore, no silent sheep farmers, no introverted drinkers. Like Mark Smith subtly stresses, the Fall aren't a small band anymore in the correct sense; they've more or less

picked up the following they've long deserved. Their new album, 'Totale's Turns', is an instant Alternative Chart-topper. But how do I relate all this to the Fall I knew, images that fired my imagination from the beginning and shape everything I write and you read in these pages, the ideas that are the only true, real r'n'r about today because they've gone back to the beginning, to the roots, and found a way to begin again totally outside and paradoxically inside the horrific sham of A Music Industry.

Look, Paul Slattery is one of my best friends, one of the best rock photographers there is and I feel defensive about him a lot. Mark Smith attacked him, he physically *HIT HIM* with a newspaper (not as playful as it sounds and Slats knew it) because Paul was talking about front-pages and other rock trappings and, Mark Smith was right, it *IS* ruining the very idea of creativity. It is not a pure creative thought to take photos of any band: it is a search for money, a by-product of an industry that criminally distills creativity on record.

The result? You feel guilty and very uncomfortable, like we did. But that isn't the point; what is the point is the search, the going forward, the striving and not the pretend-sham of a Pretenders'-world or a Rejects'-world or even a Fall-as-hip-revolt world.

With the latter in mind, the Fall have grown-up, shedding the cult/outsider badge and moving towards the centre again, where they should and must be. Mark E.: "You're getting to the point where it stops being a laugh and you've got to get some kind of order. And that kind of re-adjustment takes a hell of a long time. You can't carry on doing things you've been doing for two years. I've done gigs and it's been fun, but it's not fun any more. It isn't . . ."

He brings up an idea that hung about the interview and the raps like a main theme: ageism, growing old.

"You start by being a young rebel and then you start being an eccentric . . . You've got to start

living it instead of mouthing it. You've got to be an underground racketeer who goes out every six months to do an interview. You don't even feel like you're doing it. You're already feeling all the time . . ."

And that's part of 'Fiery Jack'. Kay says later: "I think what's happened is: 'Oh when is Dave McCullough gonna do another Fall interview?' And that's too rosy. I think it's bad . . ."

Mark Riley: "It's like at gigs people coming up self-righteously and asking really pseudo questions, saying things like 'Oh we think agents are a load of crap and we don't like record companies', it's real bullshit, it's so naive . . ."

Kay: "It's not being yourself . . ."

And 'being yourself' is what the Fall are about, if they're about anything as basic. It's no altruistic question of 'audience betterment', of 'teaching' an audience, they leave that to Jimmy Pursey and the Cure, the great patronisers. No, the Fall are a window, a clear path to yourself. The danger was/maybe still is, that people, and I'm including myself, are making Mark Smith into something he isn't, something which can only block that window.

TOTALE'S PRODUCTION RAP: the Fall have found a kind of near-perfect balance with their records now. Whereas 'Witch Trials' was a huge explosion of energy and material, the music recorded is more considered now without losing spontaneity.

Mark: "I'm getting very arrogant, I'm getting very sapped. It's like Norman Mailer said, you can give all your best ideas away in interviews. We could have done an album with all the new numbers, but I wasn't going to do it. There was a lot of pressure to do it. Which is great; instead of going on with the market you're actually living your art, and art can wait, art when it comes out is great. We don't have to do that anymore . . . the Fall don't have to do an album in a day any more, that would be as much of a sham as anything else."

I ask if the production on 'Dragnet', or the lack of it, was an accident. They disagree, but they really say the same thing; that 'Dragnet' was half-accident ('Grant-producer-panicked . . .') and half-planned, but it definitely wasn't a lazy piece of luck.

Mark Smith: "It's a matter of pride, people say 'Oh you did Witch Trials and Dragnet in a day', like they were thrown together, but they weren't. There was a lot of thought gone in there about the balance of the whole thing as a work of

creation. 'Totale's' was like that too . . ."

The production of Fall records is miles apart from anybody else; it makes other bands sound like the same tame mediocrities that they really are on record, like they're all working through the same high-tech syphon, all on the same wall-to-wall-production level. Like schoolboys afraid to step outside the norm, the mean average, which is disgusting and frighteningly shortsighted. Imagine reading books that have the same plot all the time!!

Mark Smith: "If people can't see it, it's their fault. That's the trouble with the music industry, they employ mechanics or psychotics. You get people producing albums trying to get the best out of every track, they just try to get the best out of everything, which is boring . . ."

Kay, dead right: "It's silly talking like this! It's everybody else who is strange! Everybody's over-producing and they're the ones who're wrong . . ."

Craig Scanlon: "Most bands listen to too many people. Bands are insecure, so they over-produce . . ."

And you wonder why there's no 'soul-music' anymore? It's because you're listening to well-made ice-cream. It makes you sick after a while.

FALL HAVE MATURED' RAP: Mark Smith says, trying to make a general point: "The reason for this attitude you're hearing now is that we're dulled by it. Like I said, we held the best stuff back from 'Totale's', you know? A lot of bands don't do that. The Fall have grown up . . . the people aren't really ready for what we are going to do. So that's why 'Totale's' was a step backwards. It *WAS* a step back. That's probably why it's in the charts. Get my drift?"

Yeeuch, that's patronising is it not? "Mmm, not as patronising as everybody else . . ." But it's still patronising. "It is patronising, yes . . ."

He can see I'm shocked and he goes on: "What I'm trying to say is: we're not going to screw up for you. Cos I don't think you're worth it yet . . ."

"I'm sick of laying my heart on the line and getting it stepped on. And, like, two years later, some band rips your ideas off, waters them down and gets in the fuckin' charts. I'm only rapping with you, Dave, but what do you think of that?"

I think it's awful. "It's bad? Well, it's not your body and brain, is it? No, I mean, 'Totale's' is great, there's a lot of sweat and pain in that, it's great. But what I'm saying is: we're not blowing our fuses, in fact we're becoming compact. . . it's not as diffuse as it was. Like, on 'Witch Trials' you have this energy flying about, well 'Dragnet' concentrated it and 'Totale's' is a further concentration. I'm reaching for the perfect in a way, and I'm going to get it. . ."

You talk about THEM OUT THERE. . . Kay: "How long have you got to stay in the damned thing to realise that 99% of the scene is shit and somebody has to stand up and tell them. Really. What do you want it to be, 'Oh good old Fall, they'll do it for us', you get sick of it, cos it's bullshit. . ."

Mark Smith: "The only alternative is to end up like everybody else. A creepy parody of yourself."

The danger is to look on the Fall as an idea. As a set of ideals or ethics or morals, an exclusive club that's good to visit but you wouldn't really want to live it, to walk it like you talk it, now would you? That is dangerous. So if I look deep into my soul I've got to compromise with the Fall and for the Fall, because the Fall flame is so worth keeping alive.

When I left the flat and when I got home I was angry because I felt let down. The *IDEA* of the Fall had turned bad, it wasn't immutable and well-defined anymore and I didn't like it. What's happened to my stone platform? It had become plastic, twisting, conning, gyrating, it wouldn't keep still for me, it had lost its pure lineation, it's fiery purpose.

What trash! Keeping the Fall in that tunnel-image would only have killed them off. It's better that they're insidious; it keeps that edge, that rough spark, that surprise in the band and in the music. All rock bands are Teddy bears, but the Fall are a snake. You handle with great care.

ANGRY RAP: I was worried by the notion of balance because I imagined it meant the Fall becoming moderate, insipid, less spiky.

I needn't have worried. The music still bites. So did the raps that came at the end of the long night, when Paul, the new fifteen year-old (and



KAY CARROLL: a sort of manager.

best yet) Fall drummer had fallen asleep, and I was almost likewise.

The Fall moderate? Take this for size, about 'That Man'. Mark: "The main point about 'That Man' is to me, like, you'd listen to a punk song and you'd think it's so good, and it'll preach to you. Which co-incides with what 'That Man' is about, the song is about phoney preachers, and what is the difference if you listen to (e.g. punk

songs that preach) and this song? The next step for that song is that in ten years time you'll have new wave Jesus bands. You will. The U.K. Subs do it now on TV."

Then on to 'Fiery Jack': "One of the points of 'Fiery Jack' is agisim. People go round and think they're smart when they're 21 but these old guys you see have been doing it for years and a lot of them have more guts than these kids will ever have. It's like skinheads throwing cans, they know fuck all. I know twenty times more than them, and I could knock them over in a pub if I wanted to. Everybody's as good as each other, there is no tough fighter, there is no 'Young thing, everybody's as good as each other. Everybody KNOWS that, but everybody keeps living it out and it makes me sick."

More about the superb 'Fiery Jack': "I mean that song's about twenty things. It's about anti-left-wing. Also the Transmitters did a song called 'Free Trade', saying 'this is mine, which was so hypocritical. Also, in a mystical way, Fiery Jack is the sort of guy I can see myself as in twenty years."

Talk moves to their ideas of a Northern/Southern division. Kay says: "There's been no northern culture put into rock music since the Beatles and it's disgusting."

Mark Smith: "'Tornale's' was part of this, this is what we had to fight, that shit in *Melody Maker*. . . mention this! *Melody Maker* is so Tory, so prejudiced, so against anything outside of London."

He talks about a review (a very bad one) in the insignificant *New Music News*: "I was really in a rage, because this girl put us down for being Northerners and praised the Cure for playing this weirdo shit three years after it happened."

... they're still wet behind the ears these little art college wankers! A friend said, "I'll kick her in the crotch when I see her, and that's right, that's what you have to do with people like that, perpetrating the class system! Talking about us like we're all mill workers, like Mike Harding, he's a dick too!"

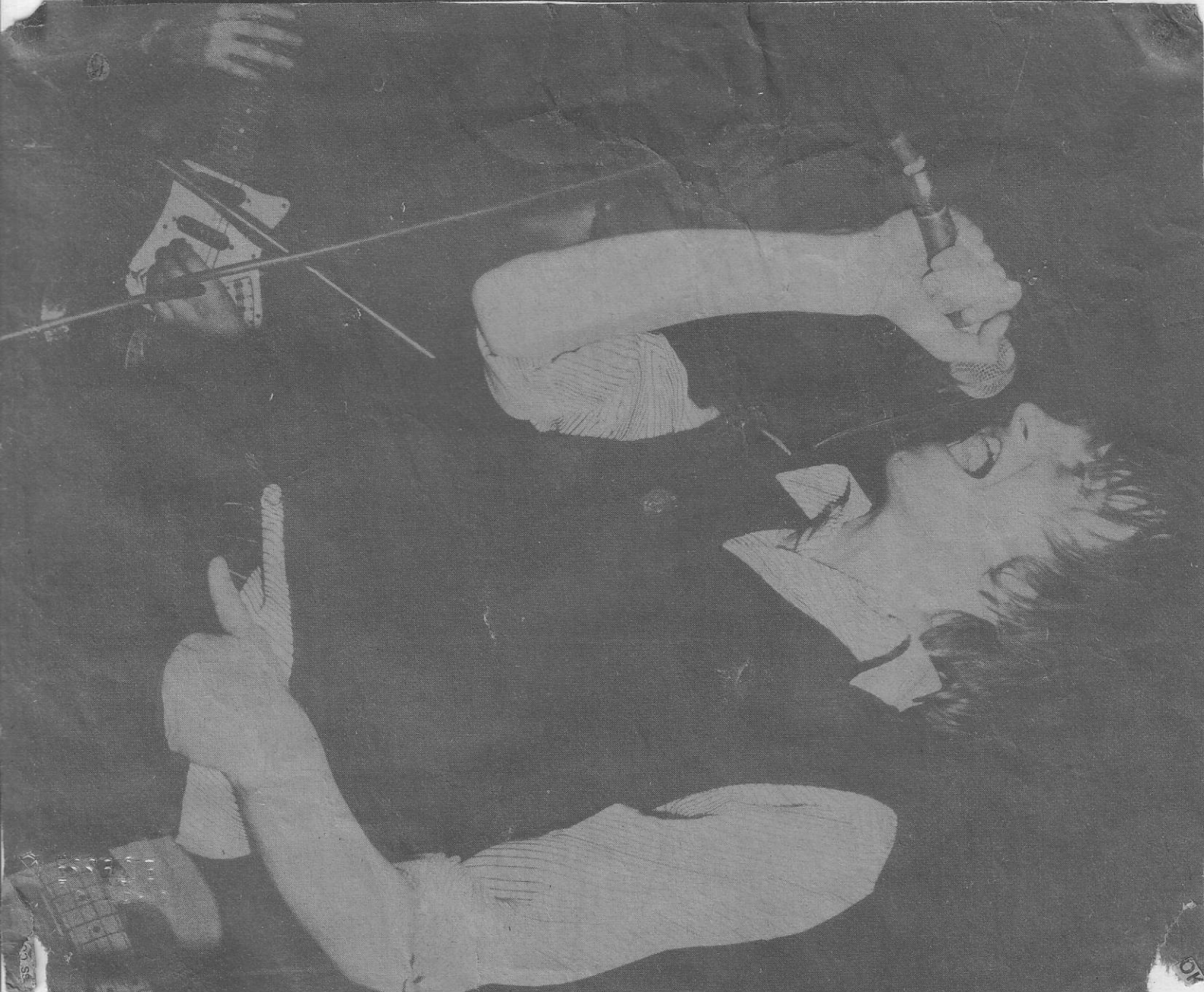
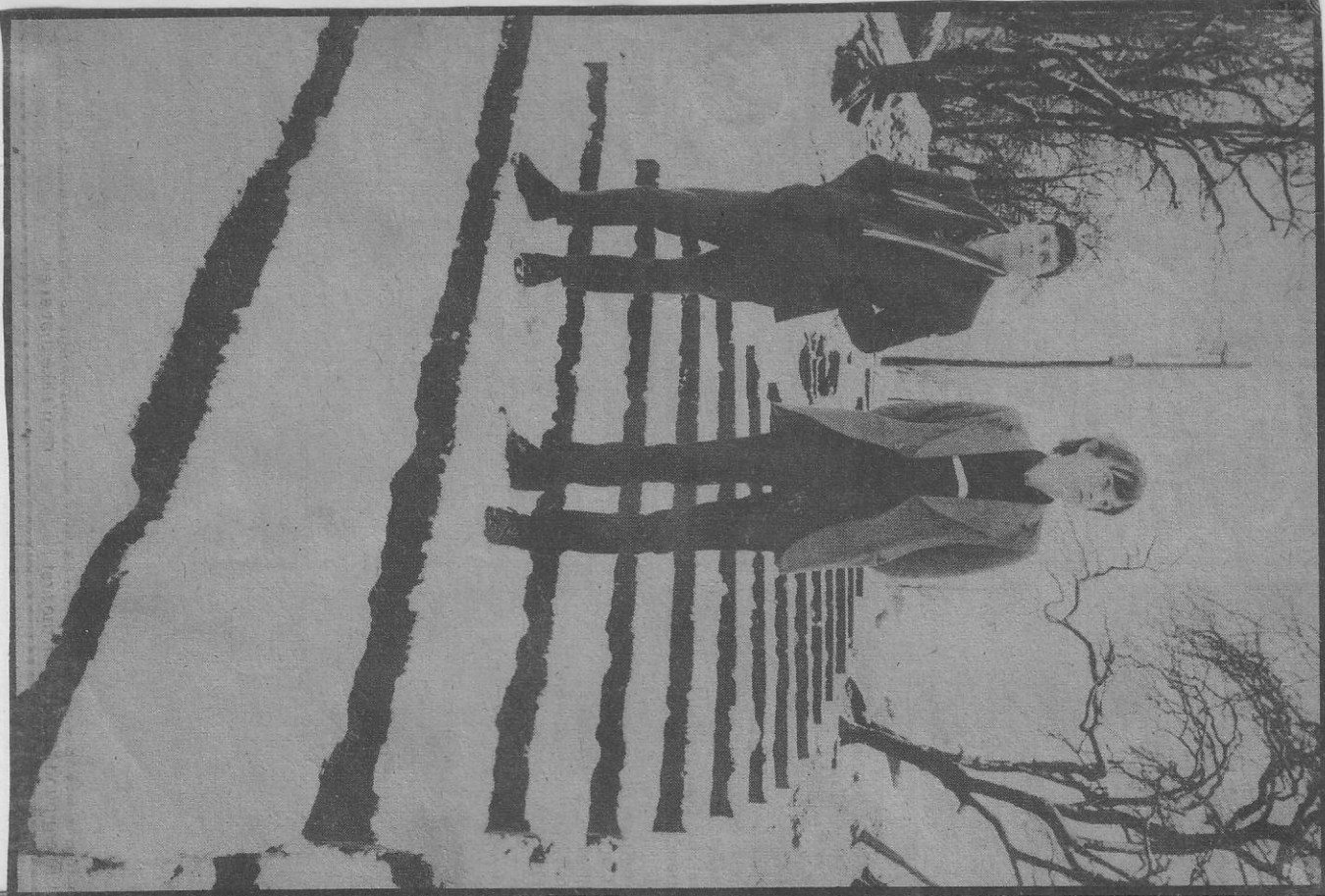
"It's always the grammar-school kids that perpetrate the northern cloth-cap attitude tool! If we'd have been a reggae band and she'd written that, they would have been up for race relations! It's never the Cockney Rejects sound like Max Bygraves, which they fuckin' are."

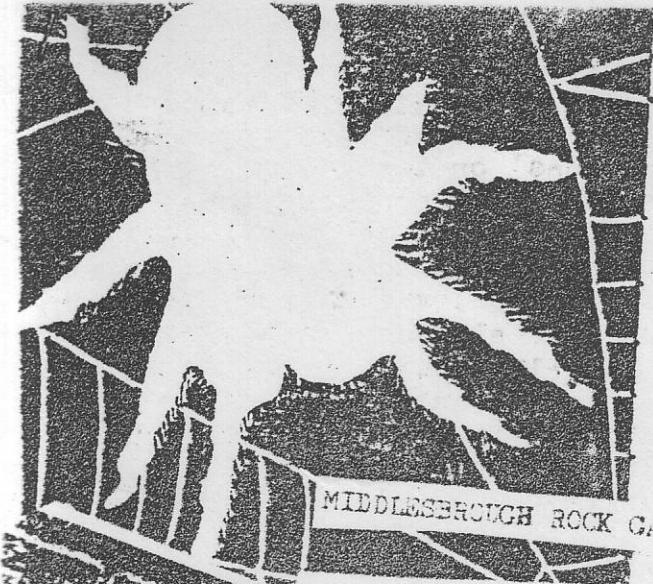
MONDAY MORNING, the following week, I've just finished transcribing the tapes of the interview. The phone rings and by some miracle co-incidence it's Mark E. Smith on his way to the dentist(again). He sounds just like the anoraked schoolkid that wrote to me and changed my thinking three years ago.

We don't say anything, we just chat, but it cheers me up, like I now KNOW the Fall haven't been de-rallied or diluted.

Those tapes had a message: don't fence the Fall in, don't build boxes for the Fall, or for me. We're one step ahead, we're part of the same snake. The door won't close that easily yet.







MIDDLESBROUGH ROCK GARDEN.

Sat. 15th. NOV. 90. Pt two.



G-GARY WIDOWFIELD
J-JESUS IDIOT
M-MARK.E.SMITH.

WITH MARK.E.SMITH AT MIDDLESBROUGH ROCK GARDEN.

M= MARK. G= GARY WIDOWFIELD.

J= ME - this is PART TWO - READ ON

G-I hear you were writing letters to teardrop explodes and echo and the bunnymen.

M-yeah

G-Whats happened between now and then, their seems to be a bit of aminosity, or what, is their?

M-I still think echo are alright, we just write each other, cos you see, ian and julian used to roadie for us believe it or not. The coat ian wears i gave him as a gift, very trivial detail. I think that teardrop explodes are a fuckin disgrace.

G-A disgrace?

M-Yeah, i mean theyre really fuckin bad, their attitude is really middle class. It stinks.

G-The singles, you must have liked them but then the lp came along and that was a sort of turning point.

M-No, i mean its just their attitude, theres no heart in it, theres no dedication, its fuckin academic.

G-Theres people who discuss major issues in their songs, then theres you.

the fall, you do stuff like fiery jack. Why do you choose for that style?
J-To me, i think of FALL songs, theres the type, like you said fiery jack, others mainly about dope like rowche rumble, and then theres pop stock and printhead. Your either about dope or anti-rock'n'roll, the rest i cant really relate to.
M-Er..yeah...well, i dont know really, i dont know what your getting at. I just wanna write stuff that will really stand up. The stuff i write should be like, i think it should be heart stuff. It should be stuff that lasts as writing, not as reading or you say it like a poetry book, but stuff that is happening to me and is happening all over. You know, like a lot of our stuff is pathetic man, like witch trials stuff we did that in 78', most of the fuckin bands are churning that out now, the depressive stuff like 'frightened' and the poppy stuff with the keyboards. I was doing that years ago, and dragnet is the same, all these banas coming up two years after weve done it, not that that makes any difference. If i write a thing that sounds similar to a thing i've written earlier i rip it up, im always looking for new subjects. The only thing to do is strive in your music, and in your lyrics, strive, not like fuckin fancy work but strive and keep it turning over so your always turning up new things. I met a load of guys from perth last night and they were really into the witch trials period. They got a mini bus to come and see us in edinburgh and i had a really good rap with them, like they were saying 'that totales album really fuckin puzzles us, and thats it, and dragnet, thats really bad production and i said yeah its making you tick over and thats all you can do, i mean thats the only point of it. If people 'like' you it doesnt mean anything, people like loads of bands and it goeson. but people go like..this really freaks me out, i dont understand why theyve done this..its making people tick over and thats its worth, its proved its point already.
J-Another thing i wanted to know was when you were releasing singles, i dont know if it was intentional or not, but you wouldnt take say a single from an album like the uk subs do and bands like that. Then all of a sudden you released a live album, fair enough its live so its different, but why couldnt you put all new tracks on it? (P.T.O.)

M-As you say, i dont want to become predictable, on totales turns loads of people sort of said..fuckin hell, the fall, the guys who dont put singles on albums are bringing out..but i mean totales turns was an album of atmosphere. It took us an hour to compile, i didnt pick out all the stuff that sounded good i picked the stuff that sounded interesting. 'no xmas' on that album is about the worst no xmas weve ever done, but i thought it was interesting, thats the point of it, bringing out stuff thats interesting, youve got the fuckin power to release records and thats when you should start fuckin doing things like that, not going oh yeah this is a lovely version of xmas, even better than the recorded one, put that on. Totales was a document, live albums stink and that was the point of totales turns, if you want a live album heres a fuckin live album. That struck me with the pil thing ive only heard one side of it but it sounds to me as tho the bass has been done in the studio, overdubbed you know. Its very neat, but totales was just like Bleaurgh. The first side of totales was the worst gig weve ever done, even worse than tonight.

G-Did you actually play working mens clubs?

M-Yeah, thats the attitude behind it. As i was saying for totales, i had loads of tapes and i even had arguments with the band about that, like from m'bro rock garden last year we had some great versions of fiery jack and no xmas on cassette and the band wanted to put them on and i said no its not worth it, youve already released no xmas and it was ok so bring out a version thats urgh.

J-One thing ive noticed in the media and stuff like that is most fall reviews of gigs and records seem dead favour-able, you seem to have a few freinds in the press. They put what they think half a page on you are, and the last couple of singles reviews have said stuff like..this for the fall is i hope a hit.

G-Well, i dont know, elastic man

M-Oh yeah weve had a few bad reviews.

J-But 99% of them seem to be in favour of you.

M-I know what you mean, but i think thats frightened of us, the press.

G-I think there is a lot of people

M-They do, sounds, theyre really down on us, Mc culloughs started disliking us and theres nobody in sounds who fuckin likes us, its really funny, it doesnt matter to me, but the press, im sure of it, im sure a lot of its cos theyre frightened of us, i mean they cant fall us for anything, no way are we gonna get it together as stars, thats the way we are, its true, even if we were millionaires i dont think we'd come over like that. So you dont get into the old british thing of build em up to knock em down, they cant fuckin do that, they cant say oh yeah the fall said this three years ago and now theyre on a big label, we havnt gone on a big label.

G-Its not that sort of material really.

M-What were trying to do now is get out of the rough trade angle, but we all know about rough trade, we all knew before they did. A lot of press are frightened of us and i think its really good, if you ever notice our bad reviews youll see theyre really confused, we get a lot of bad stuff like that lately.

J-I think the same applies to crass really.

M-Yeah crass are really like that.

J-What do you think of crass?

M-I dont agree with the political things but i think the music is great, i really love the cheap way they use the drums and that. I read an interview with gary bushel, did you see that in sounds?

J-Yeah, ripped off from mazines.

M-That was really good. We used to play with crass years ago, we got on with the really well but they got into this anti bomb stuff. You get ruckin guys... (PRO)



the fall



..throwin glasses at us and theyve got crass on their fuckin backs so you sort of go "crass, ergh", but you meet them and theyre great, i mean i wont live on a commune or anything like that, i'm dead anti-socialist me, but i think it's great the way theyve done it without any fuckin help, no record company help, its an amazing phenomena really.

G-It is cos kids, it might be due to a fashion you know, but its worked tho thats the point.

M-Yeah, if you go round where i live you see 'crass' you know, i mean its not crass who've done it its the kids who are into it, and its good. And their stuff theyre really honest when they record a live album, i mean, i think the lyrics are really funny sometimes. It's like black sabbath, when i listen to black sabbath, i like listening to black sabbath now and again, theyre so honest in a way, they are layin their heart on the line, ha ha ha ha, crass are like that you know.

J-One thing i noticed, that dissapointed me when crass played here was you could see all these kids with crass armbands on y'know and they are getting exploited by the cash merchants, crass can see ~~these~~ these kids, but they dont do anything about it. If that was me and they had things on with our bands

name i would say, what the fuckin hell are you wearing that for, talk to me and get involved not just get ripped off by someone, but crass didnt say anything and i was pissed off with that, how would you feel if they started selling fall silk scarves and things?

M-Yeah, we try and get away from things like that but theres not much you can do about that. You can see, especially with crass, thats one of the faults if you go with an independant label and you disregard the press, so i mean crass arnt going to have guys working for them, theyre not gonna pay guys just to do their t-shirts and badges, like adam ant is really getting into all that stuff now, controlling it. If crass saw, like we did, and dont associate with all that shit, then you get some sharp guy, you can go to them guys and say, like we have done, say 'your making fall t-shirts and fall badges, fuckin stop it', right, but then they say ok we'll stop it and they do, but people are buying them.

G-can you control it or what tho?

M-it's like everything else, its like you cant really knock fuckin top of the pops cos people are into it, the top twenty wouldnt exist if people stopped buying singles, this is where i disagree with crass and the pop group and people like that, you cant knock everything cos the people are into it, its no use saying, the bands are full of shit, this is what puts me off bands, bands are always going its the record companies and its the business and all this fuckin shit cos they couldnt operate if the bands didnt co operate could they, i mean could they?

J-I believe in bands trying to set up their own alternative labels.

M-You have to have a lot of capital, i mean, weve never done it weve fuckin been poor, rich bands, its always rich punks who set up independant labels you find.

J-We were thinking about a flexi disc, three songs on one side.

M-Its a fuckin hard thing to do, ive always been dead cynical about the independant scene, i always was from knowing the buzzcocks, that new album was financed by pete shelleys dad, to claim that was like proletarian to the fuckin movement is crap, all independant bands means is theyve got loads of brass. You notice all the working class bands sign up to big labels, you cant blame them..

...uk subs and echo and the bunny men, theyve got to do it or they starve which is what we went thru, but were in the position now where we sell enough thru independants to eat off. But it took like a year of hardships, im not going to whine about it but it did. You gotta stick by and not take money that you havnt earned, which is what the record companies do. They give the bands loads of money and theyre continually in debt, like when your in debt to someone you do as your told or your taken to fuckin court.



I-And you get manipulated
I-Right, yeah, all these bands who get £100,000 advances, teardrop explodes, u2 and that, i think theyre good but theyre destroyed by going round the country and playing to a hundred people who dont really wanna see them, and the more they tour, they have all the roadies the pa crew the more theyre getting into debt and the more theyve gotta make a good single, the more theyve gotta make a smooth album, it just escillates, you can see how it happens.

I-Why dont you put the lyrics in with your albums?
I-I think it takes a bit of the fun out of it.
I-Thats right, ive listened to somebody and ive seen an lp with the lyrics and its been pretty dissapointing, when you listen to a record, you look at them anyway and you thing oh yes, so and so, so and, so, you lose it.

I-Yeah, your not listening really are you, theres loads of kids who write "i like that verse" and they write this verse out and its totally different to what you wrote and you think fuckin hell thats great, i mean its really good, the things that theyre coming out with, people are ticking over.

I-You should write back.
I-Yeah write back and say your lyrics are great ha ha ha ha.
I-Then you were on step forward, you know that "two steps back", was that some kind of a jive at them or not, step forward and two steps back.

I-No.
I-Have you been offered any big money deals by cbs or anyone like that?
I-Virgin were after us at around witch trials time.
I-Its quite amazed me how the fall have got on commercially really, cos at the start i thought you were pretty vague, nothing really. Its just developed.
I-Do you think you would enjoy it as much if you caught on like say crass?
I-Theres a bit of a buzz about us again, there always is.

I-The fall are quite like crass at the moment, you had a big audience here tonight for one thing.

I-At leeds the other night people were Qing outside and for leeds, we fuckin hate the place, weve hardly played there. The guy was saying they had twice as many people as theyve ever had, fuckin wierd. It dont bother me, i think there was more people here tonight than last year. Its funny how people are influenced, there again its the peoples fault, its funny how they are influenced by a little snipet in t-zers or an album review, it will make them go to a gig.

I-Most people when they look at these reviews look for exquisite or brilliant, its normally terrible what they write in these papers.

I-We played edinburgh last night to 600 people, double weve ever played in edinburgh and weve played their a lot, they just sat staring and then went fuckin crazy when we went off, it, suspicious, more chance taking..
than tonight.....(read on reader,, eds.



.....G-How do you decide these concerts to play, why come here again, last year i didnt think it was that revourable.

M-We still need to do gigs to eat as well you know we do need the bread. This is where i fall out with the left field bands, im not ~~xxxx~~ into that, like pil and the pop group, they always play london and they play fucking birmingham and they never go to ass hole places where the people just get into 78'. Gits a joke when you go to these places and its half a laugh, do you have half a laugh?

M-Well it was pretty intence tonight it was fuckin really heavy especially going round the pubs tonight and seeing all the kids there, seeing what they were into.

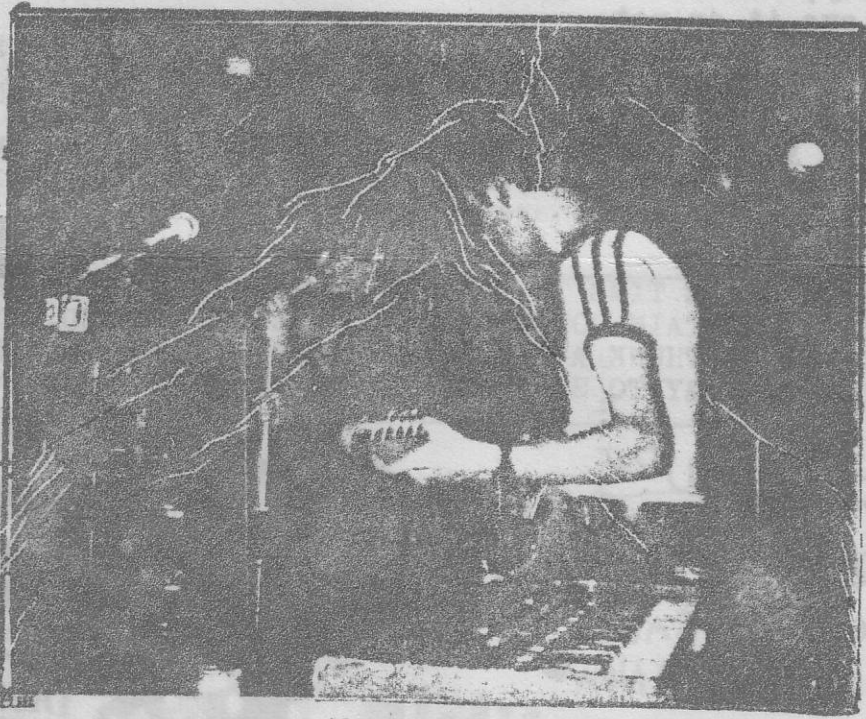
J-I enjoyed the gig, but not the crowd.

M-It was the whole atmosphere, the whole town was like that and i mean i'm not going to fuck off from it. Like the liverpool bandas, im not trying to knock liverpool, but they just piss off down fuckin south, its dead easy playing the south.

J-Yeah, like were both in local bands and we do gigs around the area and you find your playing to the same old faces, but them people really care about what your doing.

M-Yeah, its right that, thats how we started out we just played berry and blackburn and chorley, and we still do. Its worthwhile doing stuff like that, you go into some towns that are a bit out of touch and they appreciate anything so theyre dead recptive. I mean like tonight, thats why it was so different to a year ago, now theyve been taught about ska and skinheads, like

you say theyve been avenued, like a year ago they were just into the music and theyre dead receptive, i always did dig that. Its great i mean we played chorley which is like a real people are all into bread, the things like that and everybody looks the same in the ramily and its fuckin amazin like we were going like "ah, a fuckin witch they were all town", we thought crass and try going to be into things like that and kill us and great, there was old rellas there just into rock music, you shouldnt leave people ov t like that, its easy for people like pil to say fuck it.



benefit gigs i like the idea of giving the money away sooner than get it all myself.

J-We did a few and one for oxfam of giving the money away sooner than get it all myself.

M-Oh i think thats a load of crap really.

J?-Also if we got a record out i'd be happy breaking even.

M-Well. Why not earn money out of what you do, what you put into things, why not earn money. This is where the record companies really screw bands, cos bands say im just into the fuckin music', its crap.

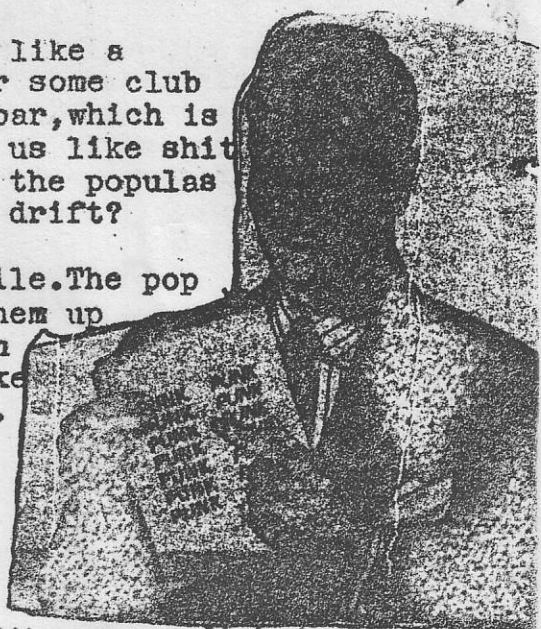
J-Well thats one thing i like about crass, they seem to have brought record prices really down.

M-Thats a good thing, like, you gave the money to oxfam its not going to the starving kids, like the anti nuclear thing. you do a gig and earn £200, that goes towards secrataries booking more bands, and anti nuclear badges, its a waste of money. Musicians a really hungry i think thats why musics in a bad state. theres bands who would give there left arm to go on stage and the club owners know that all the way along. People say why dont we play glasgow, cos the glasgow club owners are criminals who are used to getting half famous bands down for say £60, get loads of kids in for two quid a head, making loads at the bar, "fuckin hell yeah im really into rock music". I wont go out of my house unless im going to break even im not going to tisk getting bottled and all....

22

....that shit just to break even,i'll do it if its like a youth club in chorley but im not going to do it for some club cunt so he can make a load of fuckin money on the bar,which is why we went on at half eleven tonight.They treated us like shit stuck us in a little room,im fuckin wise,id rather the populas reject me than be a fuckin party to it,dyou get me drift? G-Wellllllllllllllllllll.

M-Youve got to think about these things after a while.The pop group ~~it~~ would play here for £50 if the guy rang them up they think theyre causing a revolution,crass fuckin played here man what kind of a revolution is that,keep the door prices down so they jack the door up. I went to see crass in manchester and there was a load of skin heads and nf there,getting in for 40p you go down to the lowest common denominator and you get the lowest common denominator.Theres the pill attitude which is like charge a load and rip the bastards off there all stupid,which i dont agree with.Theres the crass attitude of which is like every dick in the street is like a great person which is a load of crap as well.



J-When you first started off in the fall,did you have any aims,did you get into a band thinking i wanna do this i wanna do that.Or did you get into a band thinking i wanna be in a band and be on stage,or was it a mixture of both?

M-It was both really,i was writing,i was a really frustrated person,a bit of a trouble maker believe it or not.

G-The things you go for now are different tho arnt they?

~~Ye~~ M-Yeah they are,i mean him saying,i started off like that,thinking like that why doesnt everyone play for nothing,but ive always been pretty cynical all thru my life.I think youve gotta be your own judge,youre your own fuckin man and thats the only answer youve got,what other people think is irrelevant.

G-Its purely chance how you get there tho isnt it?
M-Yeah its all fuckin luck!

TA FOR MARK TAKING THE TIME TO TALK TO US.TA TO GARY FOR HELPING OUT.I WISH I'D DUG DEEPER AT CERTAIN POINTS THO WE WERE TOO PISSED.I LEARNT A LOT FROM THIS CHAT AND IVE RE-THUNK A FEW OF MY ATTITUDES.~~THE ONLY WAY TO STOP CORRUPTION IS TO GET INVOLVED.JEEZ ID.~~

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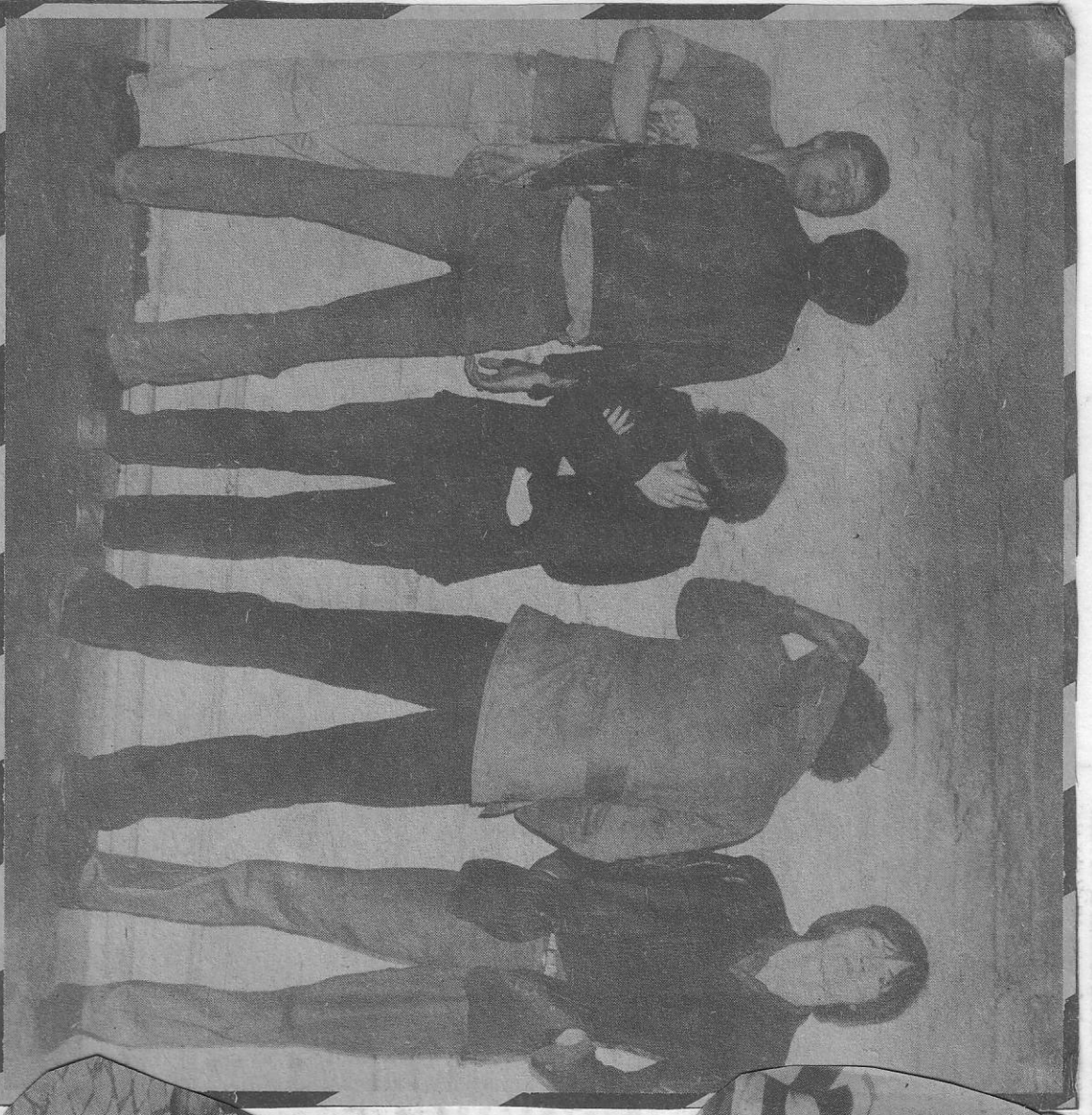
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THE FALL
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T H E F A L L



PHOTO: ANDREW HARRIS/REUTERS

in some way progressed, like The Clash have practically gone to America, Devoto's gone Bowieish, The Buzzcocks poppy . . .

"Now there's this big vacuum that all these bands, like the Members, are filling up . . . three chords for the people who are two years too late, man. Which is fair enough; my attitude is I'm TOLERANT of your music man, but I wouldn't do that."

Mark stares me in the face, embittered and angry (yeah, like that guy from Pink Floyd or Sham): "If I ever saw Stiff Little Fingers again I'd just walk away. Y'know, WE broke it for you people and now THEY throw cans at us just cos you're two years too stupid . . ."

THE THING that I felt uneasy about at The Lyceum was the attitude of trite sympathy they got from a wide section of the audience: you know, the mechanical, lazy 'Oh, I say, we can't let THAT sort of thing happen' pretence that's just as repulsive as the can-throwing.

"Yeah, that's why we didn't do an encore, and Mark (the bass-player) said 'Should we go back?', and I said 'No way man. They didn't do anything when they were throwing cans.' We gave . . . but they haven't given enough yet."

And so falls the difference between The Fall and any other band you care to mention at the moment. They break The Rules: there are no 'have to's' or 'must do's' in this regime, no slippery trips along the rock and roll gilt-edged ladder to stardom, no compromise.

There is no question for instance, of putting singles on albums. The two singles, 'Bingo Masters' and 'It's The New Thing' will never be the subject of sly deletions where the record company waits for the most profitable time to 're-release' The Product (something they ensured was written into the contract with Step Forward).

It's quite astonishing too to think that 'It's The New Thing' which must rate among my top ten favourite singles of all time, reached as high as the middle sixties in the charts without so much as an advert in the music papers, publicised solely by favourable critical response.

And that trenchant fastidiousness has been carried through on to the album. It's quite simple and, in Business Terms — as no doubt Nick Jones of Step Forward would tell you if he was VERY drunk — quite mad: the band are touring at the moment on the face of it to promote the songs on the 'Witch Trials' album, but really and actually playing sets that consist of at least three-quarters new material, and often totally given over to items that have nothing at all to do with the current album.

When's the last time you can recall a band spurning such easy access to your senses?

Falling about the place

Page 4 SOUNDS April 24, 1982

THE FALL, who are currently playing a series of European dates, return to begin the second leg of their British tour this weekend.

They start at North London Polytechnic on April 23, followed by Colchester Essex University 24, Reading Top Rank 25, Oxford Samps 26, Bury Derby Hall 27, Derby Blue Note 28, Retford Forthhouse 30, Southampton University May 1, Manchester Band On The Wall 3-4-5, Manchester Fagin's 15, Burnley Football Club 17.

Apart from the North London Polytechnic date, where they are supported by **Motor Boys Motor**, they'll be joined at all other gigs by Icelandic group **Purrkur Pillnikk**. The Fall also have a new single out this week on Kamera Records called 'Look, Know', which is not available on their latest album 'Hex Education Hour'.

THUS WAS the case at Eric's last Friday night, the band's second gig after the Lyceum 'happening'. The Fall, 'up north' are an astonishingly different proposition from The Fall playing anywhere in London, where their early anti-image (aka Buzzcocks cloth cap, 'all very nice northern ladz together, tee hee' self-consciousness) still appears to be a communication barrier which London is, by its very nature, equally responsible for.

Eric's, however, was a different proposition. We spent most of the afternoon in squalid cafes and pubs awaiting the band's arrival and keeping track of the bizarre Liverpoolian lunacy (weird ideas, weird clothes, dead straight attitudes). Finally by about 7pm two figures came trudging up the road, two outcasts from a Lowry sketch who wouldn't keep still, the two nuclei of The Fall, Mark and Kay.

At the sound-check Mark leans against a pillar and watches his four comrades, picking out the bones of Fallsongs. On the floor looking up at the stage guitarist Martin Bramah picks a dizzy path through his crazy upside-down instrument, the guitar seemingly a concrete and most biting witty parody of everything The Fall fight against, namely the preconceived and the standard.

Bassist Mark Riley stands solid, a big-boned husky sixteen year-old who used to roadie for the band and still seems to smack of the sheer pride of The Fan that's now on stage.

At the side, keyboardspayer Yvonne Paulette crouches humbly, a shockingly sussed young lady from Doncaster and another erstwhile Fan. She looks like Sue from the Sooty show.

Drummer Mike Leigh, the newcomer, resplendent in sequined waistcoat and loud jacket sits silent, like a great proud rock and rolling walrus. Mike's role in the band is strange; like his predecessor Karl Burns, he represents the trained 'musical' base of the band, the one person in the ranks who's both musically and if you like, psychologically on a par with yer average believer in the rock and roll myths. He is in many ways the gauge by which everything else, songs, attitudes, policies, is measured, the constant, necessary intrinsic mirror of aesthetic re-evaluation.

Back in the dressing room, Mark Smith ruminates over the new drummer's arrival: "He's great, dead confident, a real Leo. He's been in sort of loser ted bands all his life and now he's in something people care about he can't believe it, he's been used all down the line."

The difference to the band's sound that Mike's inclusion has wrought is the obvious, superficial change of direction the band have made since the making of the album. The base has shifted to an ostensibly lighter but stronger, more flexible texture: the difference between Leigh's drumming and Burns heavy, sharp style is the distinction between HM drumming and say, early rock and roll records. It's a much more subtle, but just as fundamentally aggressive an approach that's spread to the band's general sound.

THE NEW songs, displayed at Eric's and throughout the tour reflect this change of emphasis. The set kicked off with the pure satire of 'Intro' where Mark spits out the three rules of rock and roll (No requests 'cos the band doesn't get paid enough to play what they don't want to play . . . etc.). 'I Go to Pieces' follows, second only to "Steppin' Out" in the set as The Fall's complete mastery of the accepted r'n'r style (ie, 'Anarchy In The U.K.'), an achingly 'commercial' topsy turvy r'n'b flavoured rocker that's scheduled for the next single choice.

The rest of the set centred round the caustic humour and intriguing shifts of shade and light of songs such as 'Mess Of My Life' where the whole band clamber along after Yvonne's creepy slant-eyed keyboards, the whole sound, powerful and terribly 'new', stopping the Eric's kids in their tracks.

'A Figure Walks' is for me the stand-out new song, a weird, fragile skeleton of melody and a pumping bass-line. This is the song that induced the kid at the Lyceum to leap on stage half-way through, at the point where the lyrics describe the man being followed and turning round and seeing the figure behind him, an eerie assassination point and no mistake.

THE FALL (above) continue their "inimitable ability at creating satirical and lengthy declamatory stories in their music" (well, that's what their press officer says anyway) and release their fifth album at the beginning of March on Kamera Records (through Stage One). Called 'Hex Education Hour' it lasts for one hour exactly and has 11 tracks, including two recorded in Iceland no less.

And for those to whom one hour (exactly) of The Fall is insufficient there's a cassette called 'The Fall Live At Acklam Hall' being issued through Total Chaos (through Virgin shops). A chance for the band to demonstrate visually their inimitable ability at creating satirical etc will come at the end of March.

BY THE end of the evening, as we speed home to Manchester in search of sleep and child-shops, the band are early-walkers, satisfied with their currently steady upward course. Mark speculates on the future, the months following the tour when the band will be having a lengthy rest from gigging. He talks hoarsely of "not making martyrs of ourselves."

But The Fall are still in the middle of the r'n'r battle, early and late, lonely bastards to a man, the disciples of primal scream, vowing 'WE WILL FIGHT THEM'. The Fall have been sharpened

The set was electric. A magnificent union of tired old rock and roll tricks turned on their heads and plugged into The Fall's vision and frightening insight.

JUST ABOVE my typewriter on the mantelpiece is an eye-catching tube of 10 orange flavoured effervescent tablets. Each tablet contains 1g orange flavoured concentrated Vitamin C, or, more exactly, 1g ascorbic acid BP (Vitamin C) and flavouring.

The trade mark is *Redoxon*: these tablets were *Made in Switzerland for Roche Products Limited Welwyn Garden City England*.

Earlier this year, Mark Smith added an "ouch!" to Roche and The Fall released a single, with one side called 'Rowche Rumble'. "The doctors need prescriptions / The wives need the pills / for Rowche Rumble."

The Roche pharmaceutical company are also into the manufacture of 'anti-depressants', you see. I'm told they're the biggest in their field.

And I'm not sniffing anymore. So it goes.

HERE WE are again with the problems of producing music, hearing music and writing about same. Here we are again with The Fall, and the problems of writing about their particular point of production. Here you are: not the definitive article.

"With print you substitute an ear for an extra useable eye."

Here we go round the rocky music business, trying hard to distinguish between 'it' as an institution — looming large and obviously in our day-to-days — and its events: when 'it' happens and what we think.

"Do all these musicians have a social conscience? / Only in their front rooms."

Hear we the rock and rockier roles of the interview again? Time to quote Samuel Beckett, maybe: "Starting from a given theme their minds laboured in unison. They had no conversation properly speaking." Throw in a bit of Burroughs, just for good measure? Well, it is The Fall we're listening to: "... grey and spectral and anonymous, they don't see him and think it is their own mind humming the tune."

Is this, in short, another branch on the tree of showbusiness?

Smith's voice of Fall answered. The weight of the dreary grey matter fell on his shoulders, fallen from on high, through a checkenwork of starchy, showy leaves. And the Fall's voice, though distorted and begrudged, tidied and reviewed, began to make sense.

I sat down and I heard. The tape spools went around and around and we whistled in the dark, went off for an evening's drinking, smashed some mirrors and sped home to some *Roche*.

This white crap, this Fall, do indeed talk back. Up in their North, there is no shining EXIT sign; no chips in the wage packet. Another dusty Autumn, another loving Winter, another... The Fall. Five times Fall. Times various signs. Signatures, in fact, of those things I am here hopefully to cross through if not out. Falling through a very short space of time, through times of haste. On. Over the printed furrows; our face in creases.

Quite an expressionless face. But at the same time such an arrogant one. Hard to ignore, very hard in fact. But then, most people only know this face's publicity, not its endearing turns. Nor its vulnerability.

And here issues forth a description, though I must say I am continually quizzing myself — and others do it for me, also — as to the relative worth of (such) description.

This has recently come close to putting me off altogether. Pressured into explaining, describing, listing, transcribing, putting oneself at the centre of, bemoaning, becoming, being. Bored. Oh, to rise above mortality, this scuzzy business of employment, or rather, of being employed in

the busy business of enjoyment. Up, up and away into the urbane reality of the written and how it is 'actually' read.

Listen. You hear? On the one hand, a proposition such as The Fall, on the other such doleful music press hacks and cultural consumerist quacks as practice little more than daily breadwinning, more concerned with the width of a riff than the quality of language. Eat your peanut butter boogie, go on, I don't care.

Ach, but I do! "But I push push push / Roll the bones and the poison dice / No time for small moralists." Or smug, ex-Art

minimalists. Or furry socialists. Or matching moods. For the rest... let hear / see who will. Behind you, always, perhaps, some... "The old golden savages / Killed their philosophers

/ Their thoughts brought the drought about / (Something followed me out)." In other words...

The conversation at this party is always so choc full of Old Age Popsters: a conversation in cold storage, "still the spirit of '68" as sez PIL, same old anecdotes, dozey notes padding around and around and around and around. Same home movies, week after week, and they don't even move, that's the worst thing. Same scenes, same dialogue, same ways of seeing the world: interview, meeting place, watering hotel, etc. Popster script writer meets Popster singer singer fax info gee you don't

say... very much... do... you?

"I used to believe everything I read / But that's all changed / Now I'm stepping out."

Maybe we'll actually get rid of the '60s in the '80s.

Pix: Anton Corbin

"**D**ETECTIVE vs. Rector (possessed by Spectre) / Spectre blows him against the wall. Says: / Die wretch this is your fall / I've waited / Since Cascar for this. Damn Latin my / hate is crisp / I'll rip your fat body!"

There could be displaced themes in that. My interpretations could be along the lines of: the "Detective" stands for an investigative, empirical world view; i.e., a journalistic approach, wherein asking a question and that question answered is a process which automatically signifies the 'truth' about the proposition being dealt with: print and digest: don't digress.

The "Detective" / journalist has its place in contemporary mythology: hard bitten existential hero: independent, ethical, alone, cynical. But, obviously, it relies entirely upon other people's private life to make a 'living'. The fabled 'romance' of this occupation is a hollow one, especially when you work for multi-national corporations and not in Philip Marlowe's office.

"Rector possessed by Spectre" is musical space, potentially in the grasp of innovation. "Damn Latin" is journalese, a decrepit kind of linguistic communication only kept alive in certain inward-looking, backward-thinking, self-righteous establishments.

"Spectre vs. Rector start one. The Rector lived in Hampshire. A spectre was from Chorazina. Evil dust in the air. The Rector locked his door."

This is my Fall...

**"These new bands are a disgrace
his albums, he mumbled words."**

NOT THE Fall located purely, obstinately within rockin' role's 'natural' ideological scheme of things, which is endlessly traditional, a practice that works only within the limits of some loosely assembled "reality" — not what ought to be, only 'what is'. The specific activity of most journalism being not an adjustment to a perceived equilibrium, but the maintenance of existing equilibrium within a set traditional framework... "Swedish singers / With D.L.T. / The energy vampires / More hands on the tranquilisers / Unholy alliance / Jokes about rape / Fog bound roads / South African heroes..." a static, immobile "reality", rather than a relation of forces in continuous motion and shift.

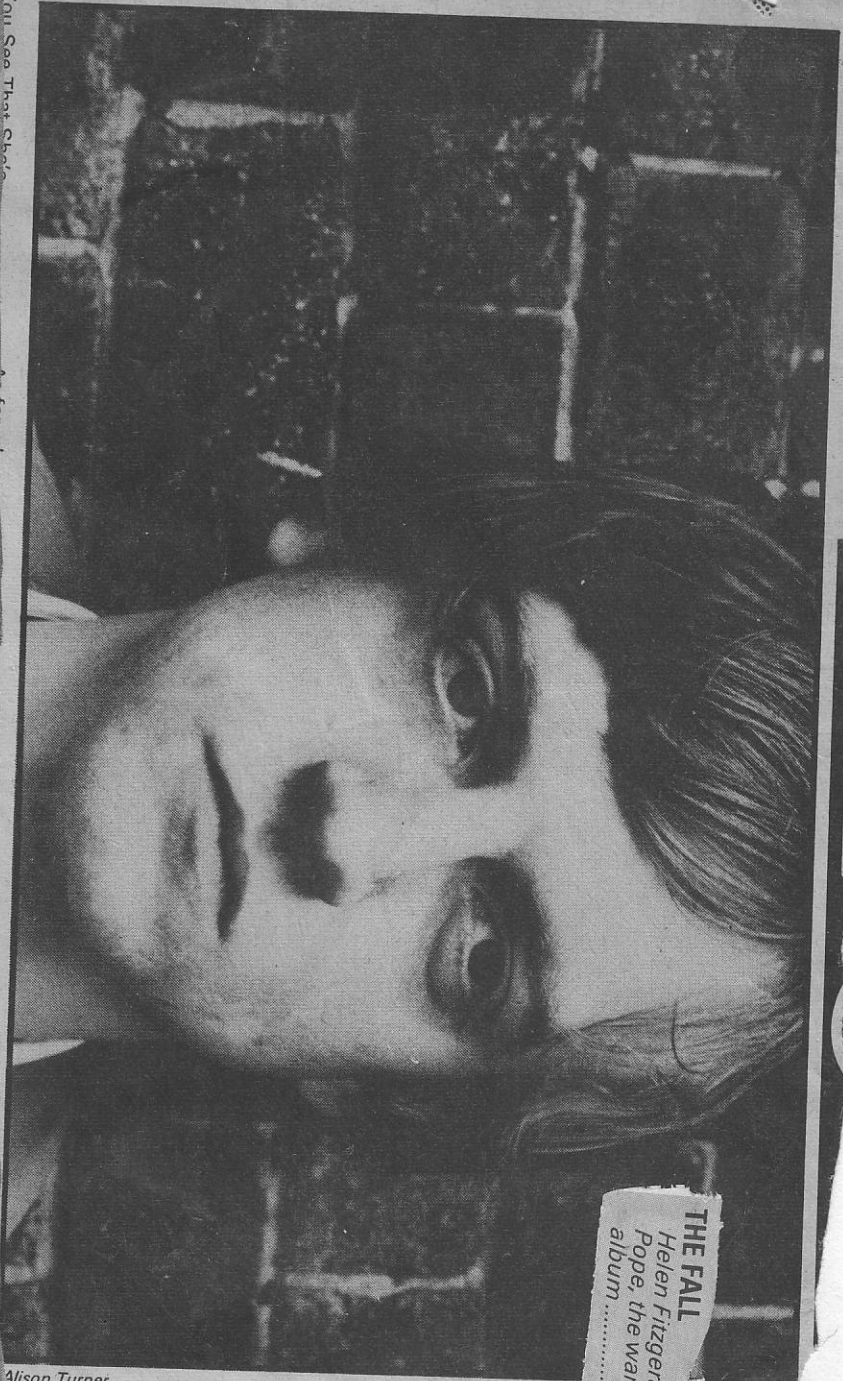
Right. I've over used my words. Thus to pieces of conversation. Convention. Interests directed toward musical production that necessarily include pertinent categories of knowledge.

Right. I've cluttered that up. Thus to people in the conversation. Five Falls and a manager: six, like dice. Some people have been 'in' The Fall longer than others, but only in an extremely formal sense is there a 'new lineup'. Following the departure of Martin Bramah and Yvonne Pawlett, The Fall could be seen to consist of: Craig Scanlan (18 years old); electric guitars, left-handedly. Marc Riley (17 years old); electric guitars from bass ones. Steve Hanley (18 years old); bass guitars, few words. Mark E Smith (22 years old); words, voices, shouting, taping, playing tapes, kazoo blowing, the dirtying of coats. Mike Leigh (23 years old); drumming from bouncing. Kay Carroll (age not known); keeps managing. Right. Start talk. Futures and pasts. Last band, to this. Last first, Smith?

"It was too fussy, music and relationships. That Lyceum gig" — the supposed 'Gig of the Century' with Fall, Human League, Gang of Four, Mekons. Stiff Little Fingers — "I could see it going then, a definite split. Martin was on a different road. Mike was like the strength we needed, we always needed. When Karl (Burns, ex-drums) left and I wanted Mike in there was a lot of opposition, 'cos Mike doesn't play conventionally, he plays his drums, he doesn't knock shit out of them."

"Then we had the six piece (Pawlett still on keys) which didn't really work either, but it was a considerable improvement. The night it came together was at a recent Marquee gig —

You'll See That She's



Alison Turner

THE FALL

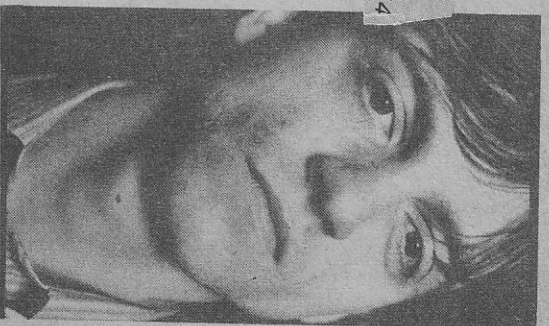
Helen Fitzgerald listens to Mark E. Smith bemoan the Pope, the war, Australia, and then gets onto the new album

14

4 CHARTS

6 THE FALL

Mark Smith takes a reluctant journey with Don Watson through Fall country — a place, he claims, that Heaven 17 have visited and plundered for their success.



BACK FROM THE SLATES

The Fall are intellectually unpretentious. That's unique. Today's desert of underground mediocrity (That's the barren wasteland occupied by such tribes as Echo, Cure, Ratio, Gang Of Four, etc.) is in fact full of people who pay careful homage to Mark E. Smith whilst creating their own short, blunt success stores.

They (Most of them) hide their emptiness behind a (Wet) blanket of vagueness, never daring to wander out into the open.

Exposure terrifies them. Their interviews are, either nervously pre-meditated or full of blatant, deliberate egotism. (A tactic used by Cope to create lively copy from an otherwise dull mind).

The Fall remain the wide open originals. They never hide, they always attack and stand beautifully aloof as the business machine churns on and on, safe in the knowledge that they are truly untouchable.

Free from the shackles of fashion or anti fashion. The Fall usually work against *everything* that is current. How can they fail to be unique. The Fall are the sussed.

The Fall's background however is well documented (See 'The Dave McCullough book of modern geni'). Four years has seen five L.P.'s, six singles and a ten inch 'thing' packed with the nifty gifted ramblings of Mark E. Smith.

A constantly changing sound which has been consistently the antithesis of all (Musical) trends.

I meet Mark Smith (As one always meets Mark Smith) within the brittle surroundings of his local Prestwich pub. A hard mixture of working class greens and browns. It's a traditional and genuine pub, free from 'Welfare Rights' type trendies and lunchtime office workers.

Littered with bar-room prophets, card sharps and amazing people with amazing stories to tell. Ordinary people.

Mark Smith always appears to be more comfortable within this environment, he grunts and then laughs when the bizarre happens, and it often does.

"Hey". Screams a local, his attentions focused on Fall manager Kay Carroll.

"Hey, I was in this flat in Hulme the other night and I picked up this L.P. and . . . GOD, there was this guy drinking a pint on the back and I thought 'That's me mate from the pub'. I had no idea you was in a band, I just had no idea".

This statement, considering that it is aimed at one who is (arguably) THE most influential British underground figure of the past three years, says more about The Fall than the music press ever could. Another one.

"Hey Mark, I hear you've been to Las Vegas. That's the ambition of me and the wife. We are saving up so we can one day go to Las Vegas".

The Fall are still recovering from a massive seven week tour of the States and, by all accounts, a highly successful one. There must be a strange chemistry between the American audience and The Fall?

Mark. "Yeah, it can be very strange in the states. Like, managers of halls would come up to us and say 'God we've never had any junkies in the audience before, we've never had any whores'. Which is great because they were really into us.

"An amazing mixture actually, sometimes we'd get really straight guys, business men in Hawaiian shirts and they'd be standing there and really listening and I'd be singing about Wigan Casino or something.

"ALL THE ENGLISH GROUPS ACT LIKE PEASANTS ON FREE MILK. ENROUTE, EN ROUTE TO THE LOOT, TO CANDY MOUNTAIN". ('Stop Mithering' Mark E. Smith).

Mark Smith dislikes the English group attitude towards America, like The Clash who . . .

Mark. "The Clash HA! We played with The Clash in New York. That was a great indication of the real and the plastic. They brought this whole London scene over to America, it was awful.

"The Clash, I mean they treat people like cattle and therefore the whole audience was cattle. There was no interesting people there at all just heavy rock fans into Led Zeppelin or The Stones which is the same as The Clash anyway.

"They might as well listen to The Stones because The Clash are just a bad version, a bad copy.

"Those fans had no idea, they thought we were The Clash at first and then The Clash turned the P.A. off because we were going down too well.

"Afterwards Joe Strummer came up and said 'Hi, you're Mark Smith, you can't stand to talk to me can you?' I just felt sorry for him, he's a nice bloke but just irresponsible.

"Because of the English band attitude I go round America putting England down, if they ask me about the English music scene I tell them it's a load of crap.

are selling something special. What they don't realise is that the Americans buy it like they'd buy some sort of Hawaiian trip y'know.

"Most Americans regard England as a small European state but the English bands think they are regarded as some kind of king state.

"But, this is where the switch is, I put down the English band attitude but I, the people I want to represent are not something to be sold off lightly, England is where all the real art in the world comes from but I don't want this to come from all

these rich English bands pretending to be cockneys, its not on.

"The Clash were really selling this plastic England, they looked like English minstrels it was just embarrassing. 'Oh let's go and see those skinny limeys dancing around like idiots' that's the American attitude, cute England."

In America, Mark Smith fell victim to a vicious irony.

Mark. "Just sitting in this hotel and seeing this guy walk past with a newspaper that was screaming headlines

about the Manchester riots. "They went really over the top as usual and I just panicked, I thought 'Christ, the North has risen at last and here's me sitting in Atlanta.

"I ran out to find the nearest paper shop but in America it was like, six miles away. Then we came home expecting to see the place devastated and it was like beautiful England.

"I wasn't really disappointed but really the rioting has eased a lot of tension in Manchester. It was horrible just before we went away but now everyone seems looser.

"Good things come out of everything, like the recession. The guys in the local pub are really genuine because they have to be, without a job. Otherwise they'd be engineers and they'd drive a Ford Capri and pick up girls. That would be their entire life."

The release of the ten inch 'Slates' brought back much of the old critical acclaim back to the band, critical acclaim which was, unjustifiably, lacking after the release of the 'Grotesque' album. 'Grotesque' saw the band moving away from the traditional and expected visions.

With one exception, Mark Smith, who learnt his art from the suss of his elders and still holds this respect intact. The English scheme.

Mark. "The English way like, 'start the revolution when the pubs shut'. It's inbred, you can't change it. The English have a great suss and a great sense of humour. Like in those riots, the vandals smashed the windows but it was these guys (Indicates the pub clientele) who did the looting, just because it was there. There was no malice. That's just the English way".

Manchester, probably more than any other English city, is suspect to a moronic youth system. A lifestyle typified by the dangerously popular Piccadilly Radio DJ Mike Sweeney who glorifies a kind of false working class prosperity.

A land where the rulers drive Capris, have CB radios, eat expensive curries and fall into the dreadfully boring routine of cattle market disco chatting up.

It's a lifestyle created for them by the suss and determination of their working class parents and they are abusing that lifestyle.

The most disturbing aspect about the too quick demise of the punk movement in 1977 was the sudden realisation that the people and bands involved (Who boasted being the antithesis of this moronic youth culture) were, in reality exactly the same.

The Fall have always taken their every day experiences, fed them through the humour and off beat angles of Mark Smith and presented them as an alternative view of everyday life to ordinary people.

But as The Fall's everyday life became more and more detached from the life of their old audience, they attracted heavy criticism.

Mark. "Yeah, but there are two kinds of honesty. One is staying true to old principles but that steers close to hypocrisy if you are writing from a hotel in Atlanta, and the other is continuing to write about the things we see. This is what I do.

"I still basically live the same lifestyle at home, I'm no richer and I still feel I'm writing about things which most people can understand."

For most vintage Fall fans, 'Slates' is the most musically stable Fall record to date, the band provide a powerfully

Fall guy MARK E SMITH talks to reporter guy MICK MIDDLES

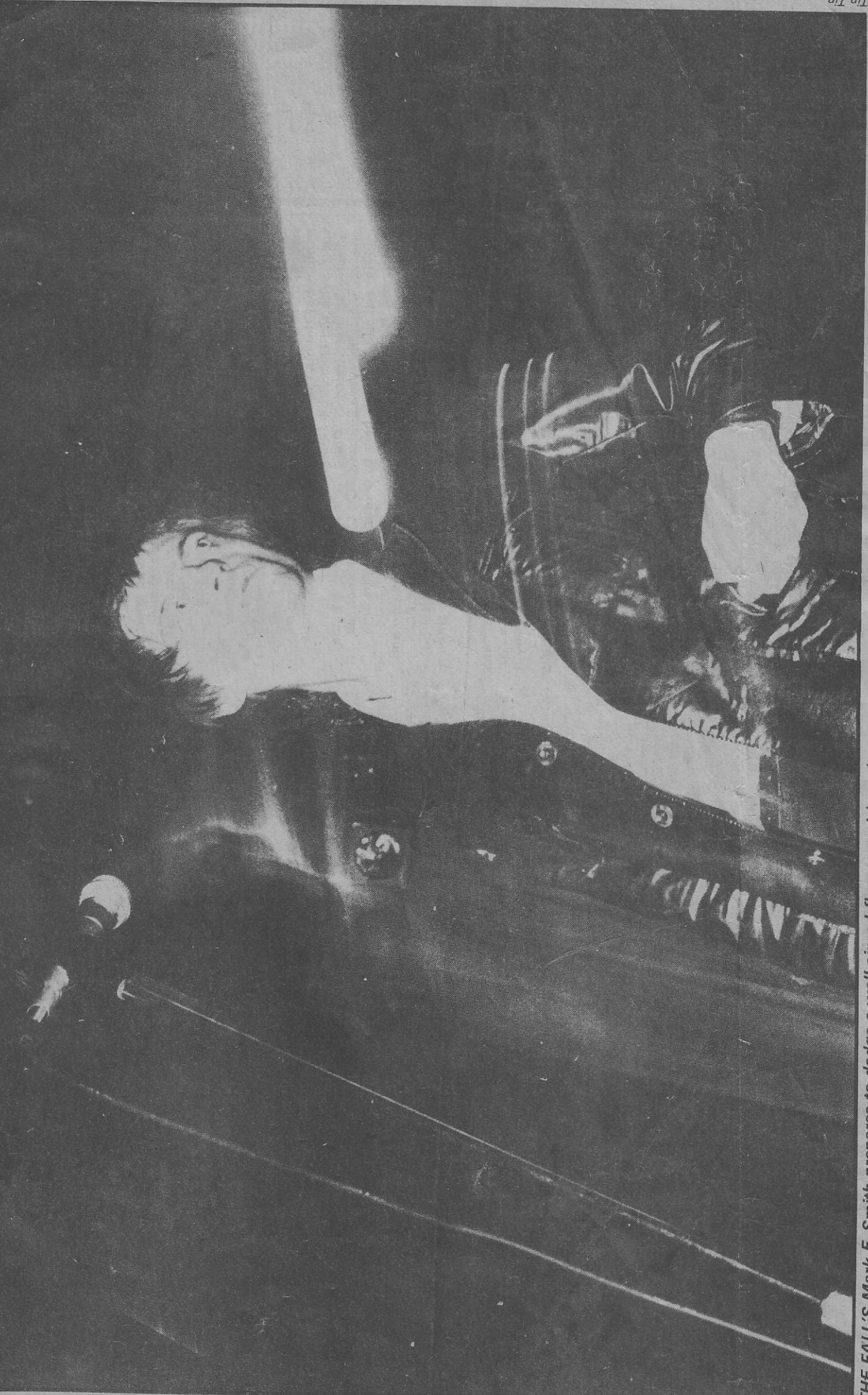
You'll also discover where most underground (sic) bands of today have made a wrong turning. For those who have followed the band through the years, get this message implanted in your brain. "LEAVE THE CAPITAAAAAAL!"

A clever and neat document and possibly the laziest but nicest way to discover (Or rediscover) the immense impact one Mark E. Smith has had on today's music scene.

or the uninitiated, I'd suggest a purchase of the 'Early album on 'Step Forward' which is basically all the early singles and B sides of the first 10 years.

Tin Tin

Room without a view



THE FALL'S Mark E. Smith prepares to dodge a well-aimed fluorescent tomato

© 1982
SOUNDS
MAGAZINE

The Fall

New York

THE LAST time The Fall played here (about two years ago) their performance was effortlessly, automatically revolutionary. How else could they come across in a bastion of rock traditionalism like the Palladium theatre? But how would Mark Smith's sabotage antics work in the atmosphere of New York's new style, state-of-the-art niteries, with their multi-screen video hook-ups, classy ambience and seemingly computer-programmed dance-rock DJ's? The answer — like a charm.

At both the Underground,

where they debuted, and the Peppermint Lounge, where the madness really came together with the method, The Fall were again an excellent antidote to the stultifying syndrome of rock groups mounting the stage like they were God's gift to Saturday night. But more (and this couldn't have been said two years ago) they made exemplary music, fascinating stuff.

The first thing that hits you about The Fall is their attitude. It's a hard thing to define precisely, being partly down to Mark Smith's casualness as a frontman and the nonchalant expressions of the rest of the band, but it's not only that. The Fall manage to project a concern totally outside the usual spheres. They're not out to entertain, convert, mystify, anger or frustrate — though they might do any of those things, depending on how you approach them.

They are extremely self-absorbed, yet this doesn't distance them from the audience, as long as you like what they're doing, respond to their groove. If you don't, I doubt any amount of showmanship or smiles would change your mind.

Which brings us to a major point concerning The Fall in New York — they divide the audience. At both shows, the set ended with about half as many people in the room as had been there at the start.

But those that stayed were entranced; jumping, smiling, couldn't get enough.

Mark Smith's deadly earnestness hasn't lessened, but his tone has mellowed a degree. Rather than harangue, he now declaims. Words pour from him in a ceaseless, torrential flow. Smith's serious case of the Young-Man-With-Something-To-Say blues is rendered less effective because his words come so fast and furious you can't make them out.

That's OK, though, because his droning voice becomes another rhythm instrument crashing and clashing against the others. The Fall's spirited amateurism has given way to a rhythmic coup that goes well beyond anything they've previously attempted. The interplay of two guitars is the central thing. Scanlan and Riley get the rhythm, tone and speed of their instruments to pull, push and fight each other. Hanley's drumming is perfect for this group. His beat surrounds the other instruments, ties them together and pushes them forward.

The Fall's style and attitude,

their determined anti-fashionability, make them seem radical. In fact, their form is closer to conventional rock than is the music of some of their most dedicated New York fans, members of groups like Information and Mofungo, who are attempting to dismantle rock music completely. But The Fall go far enough to be more than just eccentrics.

They play some new games with rhythm, melody and vocal line, take these things apart just a bit before putting them back together and letting you jump around in happy recognition. Their music tries to make you work as hard to keep up with it as they work to make it. That's a good thing.

Richard Grabel

The Fall/Danse Society/Felt Lyceum

The Fall begin with 'Room To Live', the title track of that whining apology of the most recent LP and such a ludicrous sequel to the almighty 'Hex Induction Hour'.

In fact, the songs from the former seem more fully formed in the live setting and 'RTL' itself is propelled by a severely insistent bass run executed with a measure of force sufficient to penetrate into your body and lock your biorhythms into its tempo. This effect, however, soon wears thin.

'Wears thin'. Hmmm. Now there's a fitting phrase. Going to see the Fall used to be exciting, stimulating and the best night out that dole money could buy. I was fan enough to purchase all their early records on the day they were released.

Their music was a savage brand of post-punk action topped with acid lyrics that ran their scorch marks across the memory and continually recurred as one wrestled with the mundane details of everyday life.

But like I said, all this 'wears thin'. Going to see the Fall nowadays is more of a duty that I seem somehow obliged to perform. Some of their songs seem now to be nonsense with just a vague coating of Fall-style to please their adoring cult following. I mean, a song like 'Marquee Cha Cha' is merely good for practising your tango dance steps.

The problem is that the Fall have become dependable and, consequently, predictable. You go along assured that the dual guitars and twin drums will rattle out impressive sheets of sound, that Mark Smith will provide caustic comments and that the Fall will continue to be a thorn in the side of... (fill in your pet hate).

MICK SINCLAIR

The Fall Manchester

"A BOEING 707 is about to laahnd."

Those are the words that plain Mark Smith chooses to introduce his band. Mark Smith of disgustingly tasteless dress sense and drunken-style stage presence looks perfectly at home in the dusty folk clubby atmosphere of the Squat club, deep in the heart of Manchester's University land.

For the past two hours the predominantly white crowd have been fighting for drinks at the understaffed bar, buying badges at the door and reading the hand duplicated political 'zines' that have been in circulation during the evening. This is a Rock Against Racism gig. Onstage are the stars of the night; Manchester's most original and exciting band at present, The Fall.

Tonight the band are in fine form, powered along by the very consistent drumming of Carl, the musician of the group. Guitarist Martin provides us with some of the most blatant onstage posing

I've seen since Sweet's blockbuster days, with an air of grace he stares into space, etc. The new member to the band is Yvonne, a Nico fan from Doncaster and she more than proves her worth on tonight's showing, her keyboards sounding crystal clear over an otherwise tinny PA. Then there is Mark, scruffy, mop topped, looking ultra-ordinary and yet somehow managing to retain his unique stage charisma (I reckon it's his inverted snobbery that gives him his strange appeal).

So, on to the music. Out of the new songs only 'Mess Of My' and the catchy 'Rebellious Jukebox' managed to capture my full attention. 'Rebellious Jukebox' in fact sounds not unlike Neil Young's 'Ohio', that's if you can remember that far back. The other newies sounded perhaps a trifle more 'poppy' than the old fave raves but it would be presumptuous to judge them on one fuzzy hearing.

Then along comes 'Psycho Mafia' and The Fall are playing at their doomy best: 'No Soul In The Discos, no rock in the clubs, won't let us in the clubs and the

city joys, I'm talkin' about electrodes, and the psycho mafia'.

Next is 'Frightened', slow and climatic and reminiscent of Black Sabbath's 'Iron Man'. Too true, 'Hey Fascist' follows and is ruined by the band's speeded-up version, the chant-along chorus turned into a frantic struggle for breath shouting match. Very un-Fall and probably a joke.

If I was to go completely over the top I would call 'Repetition' an unreleased classic as it is the only song of its type that I can think of. 'Repetition' spells out The Fall's strengths and weaknesses clearly, it has the ability to haunt, it's unforgettable and yet is lacking in the one thing that is missing in most of The Fall's songs. Humour, or rather apparent humour. It may be that the humour is there if you search hard enough.

The Fall are one year old, they have changed line-up and songs but they have remained the most interesting experimental band this side of the wire.

Keep your eyes glued to The Fall.

MICK MIDDLES

LIVE!

It without indulging? Of anyone I've come across, Mark E. Smith probably isn't the only rock star who really isn't a fellow, he's no Mark E. Smith. The bottom line of what I've

WHITE RAP OR RIGHT CRAP?

THE FALL

Room To Live, Undilutable Slang Truth! (Kamera)

SOMEONE ASKED me the other week whether I thought The Fall were in a rut. I don't think they are — not in a rut, as such. Y'see, what's happened during the course of the past

couple of records is that Mark E. Smith, a notorious droll, prole character, has learnt to dance and simultaneously discarded the shackles of coherent speech as well. The once pure shots of bristling invective — an exhibition of old-Fall was always at once simplistic and didactic — are now so obscured by Smith's over-riding ART pretensions that it's becoming increasingly more difficult to distinguish between the white rap and the right crap. These days, Mark E. Smith prefers to hide the old sarcastic needle, an incisive rant, well out of the reach of anyone but the dedicated, in a scrambled Scrabble style haystack of words, which

more often than not turns out to be an overly clumsy track. So what's this new seven-track thing all about then? Frustratingly sketchy, that's what this seven-track thing's all about. 'Room To Live' sounds as if they've written, recorded and pressed it and still got back in time for last orders (half past ten). Where 'Hex Enduction Hour' was a collection of immaculately neat, complete, shrink-wrapped and bouncy classics, 'Room To Live' is scarcely more substantial than a tawdry collection of scantily clad doodles. Sure, given enough time, and energy, these germs may well have the 'r' extracted, some polish applied and emerge as Fall gems but... weren't even twinks in

Smith's eye on the last UK tour (May-June). So what are they doing here so soon? With the misplaced emphasis of 'Room To Live' centred around some obscure yearning to capture the spontaneity and supposed vitality of fresh, undeveloped ideas, the overall impression is necessarily one of indecision and discontinuity. 'Jokes Hysterical Face' opens the record to the tune of a thousand guitars twanging doggedly away at a Crampsably barrage. The Fall have reverted, hopefully only temporarily, back to a one-drum-kit set-up for this record, but the guitarist obviously hasn't been informed of this slight reduction in rhythmic weaponry and continues the relentless, wayward discord regardless.

In fact, the remaining three tracks on side one — 'Marquis Cha Cha', 'Hard Life In Country' and the title track — are the only ones that emerge with any credit at all from this tacky assemblage, side two providing an indulgent hash of ill-researched experimentation, plodding basses and annoying feedback. An instance of soul-sap on us white folks by this bossa-nova crap. 'Marquis Cha Cha' fares better than most in that the guitar is chained deliberately down to pave the way for Smith to make a belated contribution to the Atlantic war effort over a backdrop of basic but intriguing bass and drums interplay. 'Marquis Cha Cha' is what The Fall do best but 'Room To Live' is way below. In fact... 'Room To Live' is right crap. **Amrik Rai**



The Fall

Pic: Bryn Jones

ANTI-SOCIAL WORKERS

New Musical Express 31st October, 1981

The Fall

North London Poly

THE FALL is a new thing to me. I know why. It's because they were never served up to me on a media platter. They never came to our shrine bearing images. The Fall fell from the north, bringing with them a prole aesthetic that seemed to come from another planet. In the south, we don't have working men's clubs; in fact, we don't have a proletarian culture at all.

The Fall is the most significant group in England because it is not a humanist group. Nearly every other group on earth is. The Sex Pistols was a humanist project, an invention of capitalist benevolence, and even more of the West's left-wing groups have played along with the humanist scheme of comfort. The Fall's anti-humanism has little to do with the belligerence and bloody-mindedness of Mark Smith. It's far more conceptual, far deeper than that.

Unlike most other Angry Young Singers, usually by proxy, Smith is not a rhetorician. He does not reduce the obscenities of the English class system to the slogans that idiots perpetrate in the name of awareness. He simply kicks us head first into the *shit* of proletarianism — booze, barbiturates, bingo parlours, slates, slags, etc. — and rubs us in it. In re-inventing the north of England, he has only shown us that it has been a grotesque fantasy all along.

Where punk was pure showbiz, international entertainment, The Fall's eyes do not seek your love. Of course, to have Fallen is a "posture" like any other, but it is not a posture that appeals by any "style". And of course, Smith is not exactly "our Mark", his is not the face of a coal miner's son, and maybe the very greasy hair and pullovers are a bit of a con. But it's important that Smith remains indeterminate, for it is his quality of alienness that is so striking. He *is* the problem, the one who fends off the images people lower benevolently onto his shoulders — all that white crap about the white crap.

The Fall Edinburgh

TO ALL men they are all things. The Fall are an inspirational force, our hope for the future and standard-bearers for the present. It's not that they are the best band in the world, though that was exactly my thought after the second encore, for how could I ever convince you of *that*? The Fall stand apart from, rather than above, all other bands. They are utterly alone and naked. The emperor has no new clothes and we love him still.

The Fall almost seem to exist as a vehicle for my own fears, beliefs and dreams to be lived out via five people on stage and a place on the guest-list. But they are too vital an entity to be jealously

one journalist, fan or elite clique. "All the new wave personalities" were there — to praise, to fawn, to *be seen* — and blind acceptance becomes a dangerous temptation. Me? I went as a total believer in the Fall concept though slightly dubious as to the musical content, and I came away with a different point of view.

You see, now more than ever, they are using the r'n'r skeleton to compete in the market-place. It's somewhat of a new game for them, but they don't stick slavishly to the rules and neither the 'Rowche Rumble' nor 'Fiery Jack' 45s are plugged, much to the consternation of a nearby dissenter.

It's the attitude, the stance, though, that singles out The Fall as unique. Within the Bo Diddley beat, they stand proud and erect, seeking no favours, only their just respect. Like John Lennon or Jerry Rubin,

The Fall are not social workers, like the glamorous Au Pairs. They are a very real group, as pure as the first Velvet Underground LP. Mark Smith is a poet who trusts no-one but spies deep under the symbolic order to grasp the *system* of prole culture as it perpetuates itself in all its pristine banality. He has even invented his own banal fictions to bring out from under its flat-cap shell the actual "fantasy" of northern "reality". The end of his 'Totale' mythos was the deceased Roman's MI5-agent son Joe narrating, as Smith puts it, "how his dad came to a bad end because he was still naive enough to believe in people. . ."

The Fall have never played at "realism", but a Fall concert is still a totally political event. Instead of singing *about*, The Fall dramatise, spin yarns, sing nonsense: a free play of cultural contradictions. Their trash aesthetic does not come from pop culture, because their trash is not disposable, it's everywhere, in false nostalgia, inverted snobbery, puritanism, and in the deadening rituals of boozing, betting, and boffing. Smith has collected his trash and treated it with a violent and discomfiting humour. Rarely is one treated to such an involved vision. Rare enough are the visionaries, to be sure.

Live, The Fall encounter the immediate problem of having to keep face without betraying an image. On record, Smith's vision surrounds one, untarnished by a visible audience. In concert, tremendous concentration is required, even though the group is superb. The Fall do not contribute to the nation's supply of strong songs and composite melodies, but they are now strong enough musicians for the ascetic trashiness of the sound to become at times almost hypnotic. If The Velvet Underground had taken more speed and less smack, and Lou Reed had been a hillbilly, this might well have been their sound.

In his unhealthy, strangulated way, Smith is singing a kind of folk music, which is why the subdued but grating rockabilly beat that often supplies the accompaniment to his voice is so opposite. In this line, 'Fiery Jack' is exemplary, and 'Fiery Jack' is the set's first song, kicking off a chain of sequels that do not require contrast from one to the next, since the impact is in their combined and overall vitality. Just as The Fall are not stars or strident "individuals", so their repertoire does not consist of classics or non-classics. The songs flow into one another until the sound — coarse and undanceable as it is — becomes literally entrancing. At this point The Fall is a frozen spectacle: Smith's indifference to his audience and neglect of stage persona mean that one starts to concentrate on his concentration, listen to his words, absorb the work of his vision.

Smith seems ancient in front of his group. He doesn't smile or nod at them, but then nor do they nod or smile at each other. They are as absorbed as we are, the very inexpressiveness of their adolescent faces is a perfect backdrop to Smith's fanatical delivery. When Mark Riley starts hitting at a tinpot organ on Smith's left, it's as mind-blowing as Cale on 'Sister Ray'. And when it gets as intense as that, the sound of The Fall is nothing short of spiritual.

By 'Middle Mass', they have instilled the desired transformation in their audience — awe and silence. Mark Smith cannot be loved, for what he signifies is the death of the working-class and the destruction of the "traditions" it has maintained to justify the wrongs it has suffered.

Barney Hoskyns

Mark Smith does not bend under pressure. He attacks! The white crap talks back — and what big mouths they have!

Swiping at inefficiency, avant garde elitism and anything else that strays within his indignant reach, Mark Smith nevertheless retains a casual ease of one at home in his own living-room.

And in a sense, the stage is his home, as the 'Totale's Tu'n's' live album powerfully demonstrated. If he doesn't always live up to the sparkling wit and perception of that artefact — remembering it comprised selected highlights from a string of gigs — there were still enough off-the-cuff jibes to keep the masses amused/confused. No rehearsed dance-steps or preconceived raps. Surely you haven't already forgotten what spontaneous emotion and reaction is? At least if The

from a healthy frustration. True gut feeling from within.

A one-man show no longer though. These days the Riley/Scanlon/Hanley trio plus a drumming schoolkid force the issue with rock'n'roll. They made me dance — a suspect activity — and even laugh out loud. Since Evonne Paulette's disappearance, the band have developed a tougher, more rigid back-bone. Decorative elements such as wailing kazoo and keyboard cacophony remain wonderfully abrasive and sloppy.

For all that, they are more accessible than ever before. Prospective fans should immediately grab a listen to 'Cary Grant's Wedding' or 'Muzorewa's Daughter', while long-time aficionados are earnestly advised to ignore malicious rumours of "mellowing out". Cult Street is a cul-de-sac and The Fall don't live there any more.

The power and the passive

The Fall North London Polytechnic College

IN THE realms of dynamic Fall performances, there is only one thing worse than an audience that gives them a hard time — and that's an audience that *doesn't* give them a hard time!

Combined with a cavernous hall, the like of which usually hosts school assemblies, and an early erratic sound, the dull Poly crowd seemed unmoved that the first three songs gave off the stale aura of a routine sound-check.

Occasionally the band themselves just looked tired.

The material was drawn virtually *en masse* from the

'Hex Enduction' lp, lacking the light relief/instant appeal (ie easy way out) that a 'Totally Wired' or 'Rowche Rumble' might have brought to a set that once or twice threatened to be submerged by the same severe intensity with which serious young men with poetry books and Mark Smith haircuts so identify.

Radical Hip Priest
Discovers Devoted
Congregation Are An
Almighty Albatross!

'The Classical' crashed in on a rumbling, rough-edged bass gutter-swipe, guitar and keyboards alternating, now Toytown, now jugular-savage, with the wordSmith ranting/incanting/chanting "I've never felt better in my life" as that rollicking, tumbling dual-drum pattern smashed around the hall, a

distant echo of Adam and the bloody Ants' once vitality. And it was brilliant!

Unless I collapsed through dance-fatigue and missed them, they didn't play 'Jawbone And The Air Rifle' and 'Who Makes The Nazis' (as they did at Hammersmith Palais only a month ago), but new outside-chance chart shot 'Look, Know' surpassed the recorded version and set me up for the marathon nerve-jangling finale of 'And This Day' which, quite literally, seemed to go on for ages and no-one wanted it to stop.

Throughout its coarse course (ten minutes? half-an-hour?), it spanned the horrendously mindless thrash and the hypnotic relentlessly involving vortex

of careering walls of noise, a Fall exhortation/exultation becoming increasingly ludicrous, Smith playing guitar, Riley wailing harmonica, me shouting and dancing . . .

It seems incredible that the Fall still haven't had a hit single or broken up. They've harnessed the Big Beat that now demands the former, but seem to be losing a degree of the caustic humour that has prevented the latter. The band/audience tension that used to be so electric is being replaced by a too-easily conferred passive awe which might soon see the band back in Hammersmith, at the Odeon!

Strangely enough, I've a feeling that's when the fun will *really* begin!

JOHNNY WALLER

rehearsal halls. There wasn't a rock network. There was nothing to help you make it work so no one ever thought of going out of town. And then, for a lot of people, whatever they do is only worth doing *in* Liverpool.'

Liverpool kept Julian, Mac, Wylie and the rest in its thrall. But the city's self-satisfied air was aided by the purist standards left by the first flush of punk. Julian and the Bunnymen didn't really believe in gigging, the charts, or any of the rigmarole of rock and roll. They remained under the spell of The Fall's Mark Smith, punk's most uncompromising anti-star. Julian and Mac both saw The Fall about thirty times in this period. Mac slept on Smith's floor when he went down to Manchester to see The Fall play at The Factory club and still regards this as an honour: 'I still have Mark Smith at the back of my head, I wouldn't like to do anything he really hated.'

Will Sergeant agrees: 'He's great, Mark Smith, one minute he's up there ranting with The Fall, the next he's collecting glasses or something. I don't think he's making an anti-rock star pose; I just don't think it matters to him, he's beyond that.'

Mark Smith remains a puritan and priest-like figure, determinedly Northern and determinedly ordinary. If he remains the conscience of Julian and the Bunnymen, he and his music no longer prevent their own identities from coming through. In 1978, The Fall ethic was so relentless in its rejection of the London rock biz, major labels, the charts, and the rest



The Fall Manchester

LET US all get together and cry for rock's little problem child. The Fall are a damn nuisance. They are continually prodding the music media, asking awkward questions and laughing out loud at the absurd replies.

Two-and-a-half years on and Mark Smith still remains unsatisfied and gloriously alert. He still whines during the night. Musically, the Fall have repeatedly shied away from any traditional or logical progression. They take the advice of their own healthy mistakes and blunder onwards without caring whether or not they are losing contact with the bulk of modern rock and pop. They seem content to remain a shambles spurred on by their own uncontrollable arrogance. They are easy to dismiss but the purity of their music and the biting honesty of the lyrics places them in an untouchable position. Mark Smith is but another journalist, laugh with him, not at him.

Manchester Polytechnic is the only regular venue left in Manchester. A disgraceful situation and a crippling one if it fails to improve before the

usually hectic spring season. Some people are trying to rectify matters, in fact tonight's gig is a benefit for the well-intentioned (if a trifle elitist) Manchester Musicians' Collective, whose main aim is to keep the city active. So, it is indeed a worthy cause and who better than the Fall to supply the entertainment. Fresh from their recent adventures in America and eagerly awaiting the opportunity to play to a sane English audience once more.

Once on stage they are immediately confronted with all too familiar difficulties; poor lighting and lousy sound are the problems for today and the 'really healthy' Mark Smith isn't at his happiest. The guitar sounds stodgy and the drumming is dulled. Consequently the normally powerful 'Psychic Dancehall' loses its initial sharpness. But the disaster-ridden Fall continue and matters improve considerably by the time they slide into the aggravating 'Dice Man'.

The trouble is that The Fall are something of an acquired taste. A genuine home made curry as opposed to the more popular Vesta trash, if you like. But once hooked, the thousands of musical and

The Fall Venue

THE PREVIOUS night I had awoken from troubled slumbers drenched in a cold sweat, from a nightmare featuring The Fall at the Venue. A procession of Mark E Smith clones lined the bar in a queue for cocktails. Manager Kay Carroll reserved tables for specially invited record business dignitaries, not allowing the band on until all these Very Important People had been fed. The Fall declared "forget the past, we're going for the Ants market". A drum duo was completed with the return of Karl Burns, MES well into practice for the acquisition of sea-going garb, one hand always hidden, Nelson style, somewhere in his jacket.

In wide awake reality it makes as much sense for the Fall to play the Venue as it does for them to appear at, say, some university campus, the unwholesome reek of academia being just as nauseous as the body odours of full-time freeloaders. The Fall never seem at home anywhere. So where do they belong? Not in the working men's clubs that Smith seems obsessed with, as they're far too real and potent. Tonight they content themselves with being introduced by a ropey looking drag artiste, although some members of the audience think it is Smith himself executing a jolly jape.

The music is tight and the current line-up plays far better than any past combination. In Fall terms it is a long serving team, even allowing for the welcome home of old boy Burns.

Craig, Paul and Steve lock

the tasty rhythms into gear. Marc Riley flits from keyboards to guitar, while Karl occasionally forsakes his skins for a bash on the same keys. Mark has a go too, leaning on the manual. He also (for the first time before my eyes) kneels down and reaches a hand to Riley's guitar that is standing idle against an amp. He starts plucking. It's very loud and out of key, putting a raw blister of twang on the overall sound. The result is a wonderful racket, just like sitting at home and listening to the Velvet Underground.

Other outstanding recollections? The stunning atmospherics of 'Hip Priest' being savagely pursued by 'Lie Dream Of A Casino Soul', and that in turn giving way to 'Fantastic Life'. 'Who Makes The Nazis' (I think this is the title) closes the set.

The crowd don't cheer. They clap hard, but very politely. This is uncomfortably like a reaction to seeing a Work Of Art. Not disheartened, the Fall return and give us the Dick Barton theme soundalike 'Prole Art Threat'. Then they depart again. Most of the punters exit as well but those sly Northerners troop back a second time for another one (for the road?) before a half empty auditorium.

Nowadays the Fall are a thousand times more accessible than the often sloppy noise of yore. Their raw energies, once unsteady and easily dissipated, are becoming fully harnessed. Releasing well produced records and playing the Venue (dump that it is) shouldn't incite purist sneers. Maybe they're just trying harder to communicate.

MICK SINCLAIR

tical twists contained within are both enjoyable and stimulating.

Each instrument (or torture?) is treated equally and allowed to wander off in its own direction from time to time. Only the rolling drums of Mike Lee seem to stick to any kind of consistency. Often, they will rescue the music from disintegrating into messy self-indulgence.

Somewhere in between the pounding bass and the choppy rhythm guitar lies the voice of Smith. Stubbornly pouring out words in a monotone cuteness. Contrary to popular opinion, Smith's words are more than just a vehicle for academically naive journalists to demonstrate their deciphering ability. In fact, they are simple and blatantly straightforward. It doesn't take the mind of Ian Penman to understand lines like 'I could use some pure criminals and get my hands on some royalties', or the basic questioning of rock and roll attitudes when Smith shouts 'I am the dice man, I take a chance, man, do you take a chance fan?'

The end of the Fall's set is really a climax. They tend to peter out and leave the stage quietly with just a hint of mischievous sarcasm. End of set, suckers.

I'm not crying for the Fall, in fact I envy them. They are one of the few bands in this country who set their own goals and go about achieving these in their own way, on their own terms. The Fall are happy. The Fall will last forever.

MICK MIDDLES

CHORLEY

A TYPICAL Fall gig. A small secluded community centre in a tiny town. Well out of the commuter reach of the nearest city, and somewhat lacking in night life.

The local youth of Chorley excitedly greet any and every band who half-heartedly agree to play in this unfashionable area. They aren't even particular fans of The Fall, mainly dressed in black leather jackets with a circled A neatly chalked on the back. They danced to the disco, wildly when the UK Subs are played and mildly when the adventurous DJ flips down a Subway Sect single. Most of these kids are drunk, but nicely and there is no aggravation. They are just enjoying the evening and seem completely unaware that they are about to witness something very special indeed.

The Fall operate at their best under these conditions, far away from the satin bomber jackets and the feeble stupidity of the in-vogue rock venues. Most bands are grateful to slip quietly away from this scene. Most bands quickly forget their home town and satisfy themselves by career searching in the big cities. But The Fall thrive on the obscurity of working men's clubs.

Obviously, they never patronise these crowds, in fact they are more often violently over-critical of the locals' attitude and entertainment activities.

Most of the kids at Chorley haven't got a clue. They sincerely believe that to wear a leather jacket daubed with punk slogans is to be rebellious. It is the opposite. Another fashion. More emptiness. If The Fall can manage to make one of these kids turn around and think about their superficial anarchy, then this gig will have been worthwhile on a communication level. Otherwise it will be nothing more than a night's work and a couple more meals for the members of The Fall.

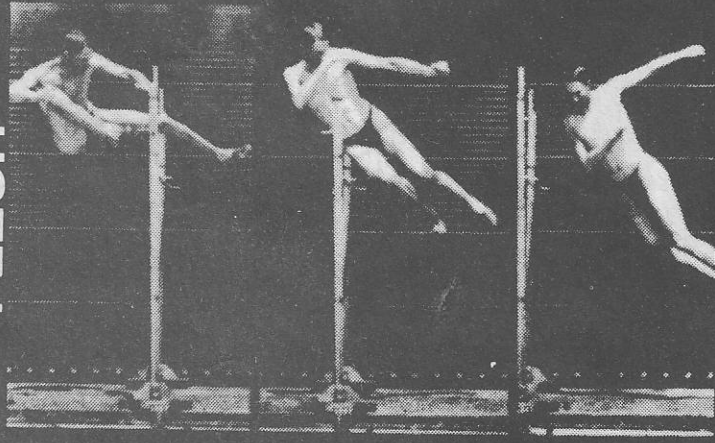
The Fall are the new British underground. It's a lonely, thankless lot but ultimately, The Fall will have created a large chunk of worthwhile musical history, whereas others only make money. Mark Smith is a writer. His writing isn't easy to understand and is often wasted on crowds like these. However, a perusal of his writing releases endless possibilities to the interested listener. For the uninvolved, the lengthy monologues of Mark Smith can appear over sincere and a little dramatic. But, like the old TV argument, nobody is forced to listen.

This is my 26th Fall gig. No two sets have ever been the same, and in fact I still couldn't recognise two thirds of the material. The very new songs have thankfully drifted away from the far too personal early period and once more, The Fall appear to be making chunky accessible music. Music that could parade under the banner of intelligent pop if it wasn't played so expertly out of tune. But of course being out of tune, or rather out of the expected norm of the word tune is The Fall's unique appeal. They may run parallel, but never do they slip into the mainstream.

They are also extremely humorous these days. Gone are the anaesthetic visions of institutionalised mental homes. Gone are the terrifying accounts of street violence, to be replaced by a deadly serious joviality that can be listened to on both levels. The only part of the early Fall that has remained is the ludicrously out-moded dress sense. Smith still wears the old tweed jacket and it effectively stares directly into the eyes of the watching harshly dressed audience who, until seeing The Fall, believe that a gaudy image creates a kind of localised stardom. Mark Smith doesn't have to utter a word to ridicule this idea. His jacket tells the tale.

Around the hall the reaction is quaintly mixed. Some dogmatically continue to dance and enjoy the occasion. The younger ones glare in admiration. The trend conscious cool type attempt to look unconcerned and sit around the bar area, thus retaining their local notoriety while the organisers mumble words of disapproval like "Call this entertainment?" before retiring home to Match Of The Day, and a cheese sandwich. The best song of the night is the new, 'Totally Wired' single, the worst is the preceding 'Elastic Man'. At the set's conclusion Mark Smith moans, "Thank you for being a simply wonderful audience. We'll certainly never play here again." And Chorley will never see a band quite like The Fall again. I only hope they have learnt their lesson. A

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PROLE IN ART THREAT HORROR

PROCLAMATION:

I MUST warn that the 45s reviewed here are taken on their lyrical angle, as it's impossible for me to be objective about same. This results in most of the reviews being double-edged, i.e. half bias, half POP EAR.

SINGLE OF THE WEEK:

THE FAMILY ON HOLIDAY: "Who's A Pretty Boy Then?" (Fabidoo). Group from Glasgow who actually sound like they are. Monstrous out of tune Radio 1 synths, John Cale Celtic vocals. "Who's this pretty boy then, and what does he say?" Van Der Graaf with malnutrition and no education.

NEAR

THE BLASTERS: (B-side) "No Other Girl" (Slash Records). **GARY PANTER:** "Italian Sun Glass Movie" (Index Records). The only "American music" in this pile of Wap. Dignity shines through on the Blasters' restrained, hysterical shot of black coffee. A-side is like Elvis film song but Purist like. Texan cartoonist Panter worked two years on this, I'm told. Stop/start effect, gets over form and image of much TV, hot afternoon with lizards in't garden, laddy. Lay down your snob brain and admit we've to learn off them again.

THE ASSOCIATES: "Club Country" (WEA Records). Maybe because the pubs are open all day, and Edinburgh has number one architecture in the country, this results in their groups pining after smelly green red light, funk discos and "Christiane F." type atmosphere etc. Amusing lyrics.

MISERABLE JOHN LVOYSEY: "Don't Let Him Be Surprised" (D-Notice). The drummer deserves a medal. The Southern sound as it should be, beautiful guitars. Classic.

QUEEN: "Body Language" (EMI). Here Queen have gone synth to keep up to date. Their covering stupidity is laid bare on this record, which is about reproduction, tanned men breathing deeply, sagging in general and the usual meat-language of risqué TV programmes or newspapers you can check anytime. Very big in South America, this disgusting singer and his bunch have no room here, hey lads?

THE CLASH: "Know Your Rights" (CBS). The Clash don't seem to realise that the more 45s they bring out like

this makes immature lads with short hair think they can do better, which of course they can. "Know Your Rights" is a shabby piece of social worker guilt. Very good music as usual.

ST WINIFRED'S SCHOOL SCHOIR: "Welcome John Paul" (Divine Discs?). This goody goody Pole is coming to the top of my street, he's the cause of my favourite park being ripped to pieces. I can smell Mostyn, Monsall Estate and Ardwick on this. Old people like children singing because it enhances their lost lust. Kids should not make records as their voices are self-conscious and directed. Royalties go to Papal Visit Fund.

NICK LOWE: "My Heart Hurts" (F-Beat). Nice. Carter family connection only redeeming quality. Lou Reed should sue everytime some weak sessionists steal the "Sweet Jane" riff: that'd cure it. Copyist goes U.S.

BOYS BRIGADE: "You Bring Out The Vicar In Me" (Rocket); **THE EXPLOITED:** "Attack" (Secret). Former is English HM go pop. It's harmless, main thought going into the title. Not bad. Latter: "PUNK ROCK CAN'T PLAY GUITAR" a HM thug said to me with finger pointed at my nose in '77. Well, things have changed now. Bad ATV, who used to get cut up for playing better than this.

These lads are too well-fed and clean to frighten, and try too hard. I sometimes have paranoid fantasies that DHSS secretly finance this stuff so that teenagers are too drained of spirit to confront the asshole clerks that institution employ. Chron-Gen and Fear Rule.

TRIUMPH: "Magic Power" (RCA); **MARI WILSON:** "Baby It's True" (Compact). The cover art dragged me in on both of these and I am deeply ashamed. See what happens when good art is passed round. First one is crap for sheep dogs pretending to be on drugs in Mill-town clubs. Second is English honky trying to be Motor City with filter disco hook. You have more style than this, Mari. "THE CULMINATION of all we've created", say Bernie and Malcolm - "what we've worked for since '75."

THE CRAVATS: "Terminus" (Glass). Great to hear a saxophonist playing riffs, and unique trebly cut. This group are vicious in their intent, yet relaxed taste abounds. Very rare these days.

SYNCOPIATION: "Marking Time" (Facsimile Liaisons). Manchester as the subsidised'd like to see it. Cannot be objective on this, as it's the sort of stuff that creeps through from next door when we're rehearsing at some damp warehouse etc. I usually

go for a drink as a result, and curse my occupation.

BAND APART: "Jaguar" (Crammed Discs); **RHEINGOLD:** "Fan Fan Fanatic" (EMI). Crammed Discs live up to name as regard press releases within cover, a 12 inc French/Belgian/US team-up, innovative synths; these Euro deserve a break for living in New York. Aston Villa fans won't like it, being smeared in sports "press" by thug Belgique police though. Rheingold are led by a man with vision. His sadness seeps through, and it's obviously taken him years to get to this. It grew on me and is perverse. Then EMI go shove some disc couple and a ridiculous neon guitar on the cover. "IT GLEAMS LIKE CHROME" they would like this review to read.

THE NIGHTINGALES: "Paraffin Brain" (Cherry Red). The B-side, "Elvis, The Last Ten Days", is much more to my taste, despite derogatory references to God deceased. As usual with R. Lloyd, lyrics excellent - sleeve includes lyric to last gem "Use Your Loaf", so buy, but this man should stop eating curries, forget everything he's read about cult-artists like me, and get some serious work done.

A FRAID OF MICE: "Transparents" (Charisma). "Mama is a jet setter/Daddy likes to fly away/Mama got a red letter/... Mama lives in Sweden." Main pun here is TRANS-parents, good song, quirky voice like Dan Friedman, great production etc. I do object to encouraging children to blame their misery and empty existence on mam and dad, though, and to hear it from an adult male gives me the creeps. But maybe that's the idea.

SOFT DRINKS: "Popstars In Their Pajamas" (Outer Himalayan Records). "The culmination of two years of fun, frolics, tension and trance" sez back sleeve - i.e. no nerve to do anything of true worth. It's too easy for people like this to make records. Their impressions are gleaned from half-asses listening and writing. A good group for SDP conferences.

THE FALL: "Look, Know" (Kamera Records). Mickey Most could get a better sound on a Lasky's £15.00 cassette recorder with his toupee on backwards. Even "OTT" get pretentious about this "North", "Coronation Street", "Repetition-ah" (delete) consciousness. B-side has Under-23 international Smith belatedly jumping on CB bandwagon with/song/about some idiot who doesn't "know" who he is. "Alienating", "Repulsive" - Bury Times Mid-Weeker.

TOADIES

PIC BLEDDYN BUTCHER

THIS YEAR, the group that sneers at laughing fate, broke down in a quaint place three kilometres outside Dachau for five days skirt and starved escaping only through the use of a bogus credit card to get to Yugoslavia, not worth it at all despite what these leftist musicians say. (Of course gigs are packed!)

Returned home to bankrupt record co, then slipped again into a more sinister one. Went abroad and developed xenophobia. Marriage saved vocalist's neck. Attacked for tax. Spurned retrospect. Future very bright, hiding retirement. Now number 6, age average 22.5.

OTHERWISE, it's the cyclical tone of 1983 that strikes me the most. Viewed through miserable eyes, much familiarity here. Music Vaudeville still. Manned as ever by cockney musicians in disguise, supplemented by Lancashire-Scottish deserters. But there's more to it. Loads of crated 'good pop' lyrics Senous, Pal, in their statement of non-conviction in this living desert etc, but subtly appealing to humanity in the same way as a hospital does. Nothing new, except this is of groups' own accord/So, I have to proclaim 1983 - THE YEAR OF THE TOADIES A good laugh though was



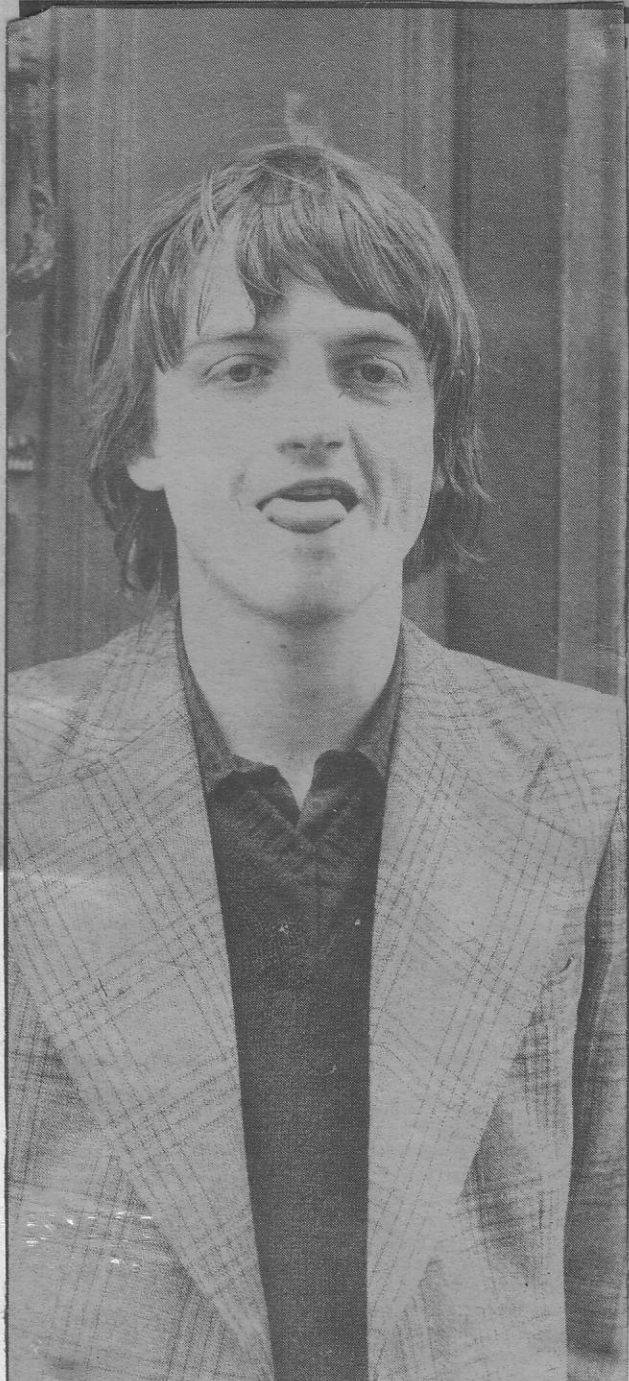
THE 1 hop, st Weller, some in the be o

seeing all the serious/literal musicians go. 'Life' (in wake of lager and cigarettes) as the scrambling for market position heated up. A musical version of the GOD-JOB interviewer hoax practiced on schools TV - i.e. declining market etc. look at so & so, he did it - this paid off to 'those concerned'. Competition fierce, and groups as clean and accommodating as never before! Independent labels feel secure enough to pick, choose and shove around even. Early snile fantasies of groups sure to be quenched for their staff, who're corny in the knowledge that the Y.T.S. of rock is the Soviet conscription-well of GB.

More disturbing was this panic hitting journalist too - semi-established hacks and even their betters fighting for and adopting name scattering with redick prose, bruise purple and its insecurity.

Smash Hits realize this I think. Also funny is the proliferation of faggots in the top pop lot. I have a theory that this is due to AIDS scare, resulting in said groups having more energy derived from celibacy.

Be seeing you. A prompting Xmas to our friends. MARK E. SMITH (for THE FALL)



The Fall
HEX ENDUCTION HOUR
Kamera KAM005

Of course, you don't actually review a Fall LP. You hover in the shadow of the aura and attempt to catch some of the sparks flying around in all directions. You grapple and you sweat and you suffer until it's time to try and con everyone else you even begin to comprehend the strange ranting mind of Mark E. Smith.

With typical perversity, Smith said recently that he wouldn't be averse to being a pop star. That may be true — and this new epic does include odd features like hooks and choruses ("Jawbone And The Air-Rifle" for Chrissakes is positively infectious).

But did you honestly expect "Hex Enduction Hour" (and I've already spent two sleepless nights and a thousand theories on the significance of that one) to be anything other than a tortured manic maze?

That's right, The Fall remain the ultimate wind-up. Ruthlessly scathing about virtually every band ever invented, Smith becomes increasingly demanding of his own audience. Endurance, tolerance and intelligence are put to ever-more stringent tests, and naturally the harder it gets, the more fanatically devoted the disciples become. Smith's vocals are mixed so low that the task of deciphering his crumbs of lyrical genius becomes a job for M15 codebreakers. And as he adamantly refuses to include a lyric sheet — partly in the belief that the musical barrage around the words should be sufficient in itself and is underrated anyway — the only clues are the garbled random thoughts

printed on the sleeve.

I doubt that any Fall fan could coherently describe what captivates them so. The challenge? The nerve? A furious charisma which offers real delusions that "Hex Eduction Hour" is exploding in front of me as I play it? The knowledge that alongside The Fall, almost every other band in the world seems absurdly trivial?

Late last year The Fall toured Iceland. While there they spent an evening in a studio and laid down two tracks for this album — the eerie stage favourite "Hip Priest" and the almost gothic "Iceland". I was with them at the time and the latter, particularly, provided an intriguing insight into their agreeably demented workings.

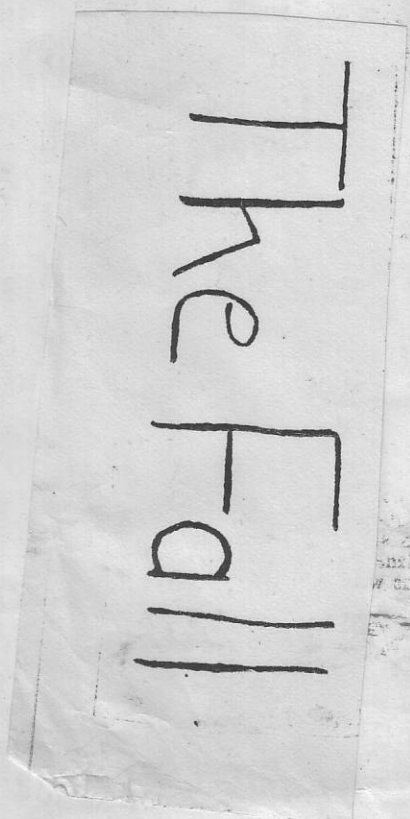
Iceland's rich history of legends and folklore fired Smith's already rampant imagination, and he'd jotted down a series of scattered thoughts, fantasies and genuine incidents surrounding the visit, while the rest of the band concocted a weirdly haunting tune in the studio. The track, opening with a cassette recording of the wind blowing outside Smith's hotel window, was done first take with the band and their leader having only the vaguest idea of what the other would be doing.

The manic maze

At worst, the maze of Mark's messages are a puzzling diversion — the sheer frenzy of the music, especially with the dual drums of Paul Hanley and Karl Burns, is enough to carry them through any fight and steamroller any argument. The climatic charge of "And This Day", for example, brooks no dispute; and embedded in the hate of "The Classical", "Jawbone", "Just Step Sideways" and "Winter" (which ends sides one and opens side two) lie some unexpected

bursts of humour and persuasively constructed songs. I'm still fighting to come to terms with the sheer overwhelming *obliteration* of "More Pseud Mag Ed", "Deer Park" and "Who Makes The Nazis?", but that's my problem.

I love this LP. It's incredibly exciting and utterly compelling. But you shouldn't take my word for it. Nor should you listen when they tell you it's crap. The Fall can never be a second hand experience. — COLIN IRWIN.



THE FALL 'Room To Live' (Kamera KAM 011)**

IT SEEMS a pity that a Fall album such as 'Room To Live' could be diagnosed and dismissed in so many words and after so many listenings, but, conscious of the fact that the group might almost certainly consider this so much myopic sour milk from an old fan, here goes:

'Room To Live', to these ears, lacks bounce and zap and this is the most important shortcoming of post-'Dragnet' Fall. Smithy seems to direly lack anyone significant in his backing group to play off. Once he had Bramah, now he has no-one.

The fault is sorely obvious on 'Room To Live'. The sole track with any real life is 'Hard Life In The Country' where, significantly, distant Distraction Arthur Cadman presents some piercing ad lib guitar that perfectly argues against the (for once these days) pithy Smithian rant. For once the Fall are stretched; most of all Smith himself sounds stretched and competing against something

other than a problematical, overpacked and underplaying backing.

At last on 'Country' there is some bounce to the music: there is some venom *outside* the Mark E. lyrics. Moreover, 'Country' is the only place on the record where the Smithian lyrics do anything original. 'Room' overall purports to be about Britain '82; there are references to Magnus Pike, Patrick Moore, Ted Rodgers; Smith writes about the Papal Visit and, generally, The Great British Decline.

This is so provincial! Strange too, seeing the Fall have recently seen the world outside Prestwich. It is almost as if

aware of his backing band's limitations, Smith reflects the

malaise by not stepping far outside his front door.

Musically, the Fall really are a mess. I suppose the choice after 'Dragnet' was whether to (continue to?) be a mess, or become polished. That they then had to *become something* is just the problem that 'Room To Live' vividly depicts.

It all rather leaves Mark E on his tod. With the temptation to *get into art*. There is an overall air here, in all the laid back drabness, of, Sit down, listen! This is Important Music, ya know...

Right about now, the Incredibly Street Cred, sleeve, the wilful underscoring inside, the whole Fall schtick seems geared, rather desperately, to keeping the group's feet on the ground, than to making a statement in themselves.

DAVE McCULLOUGH

THE FALL 'Dragnet' (Step Forward SFLP 4)*****

THESE ARE your words for today. 'Dragnet' is the modern beat, it's what you're turning your head away from, it takes rock and roll one more step away from the showbiz orchid it's become, it lights up all the mercenary eyes on every other record you listen to, it tells you something about these slabs of plastic you're so intrigued with, it takes the particular to the universal and uses a cynical intelligence to say what it's like living, loving and surviving in the late 1970's. Those were your words for today.

Of course the reality of rock and roll isn't easy to come by. There are too many people, too many 'heads' involved in the process of turning rebellion into money, and thus happily freezing the real things about the rhythm beat and obscuring them with the traditional mists and myths. Rock and roll is about banging girls, banging boys, head against a brick wall, perpetuating star myths. I mean, who do these people think they are trying to tell me that Gary Numan or Bob Geldof are in some mystical way better than day is bright that these dicks should be emptying ash-trays in some airport lounge, rock and roll perpetuating itself into oblivious self-deception while the boot-boy fiddlers play their greatest hits.

It isn't on man, it just isn't on, because while the whole unreal circus keeps dithering along, its conscience placated recently by the established 'alternative culture' sham (the Wolfie Smith cycle, sheep in sheep's clothing, that sort of thing), banging hard on the doors outside you've got bands-cum r'n'r terrorists like Scritti, Mark Perry, U2, Virgin Prunes and, at the very top of the diseased tree, the Fall.

'Dragnet' as an album fits the ambiguity of its title. It reaches in and it reaches out, it analyses the corruption of rock and roll and it seeks an audience, the dragnet goes two

ways. And, in retrospect, that's the essential difference between this second album and this year's debut Fall album, 'Live At The Witch Trials' which was a mammoth expression of tension and suffering, but in many ways didn't reach *outwards* as much as 'Dragnet' does. Here there's no mistake, The Fall have never been stronger, the sound is more concise, more assured and Mark Smith's writing has an aura of confidence and direction to it.

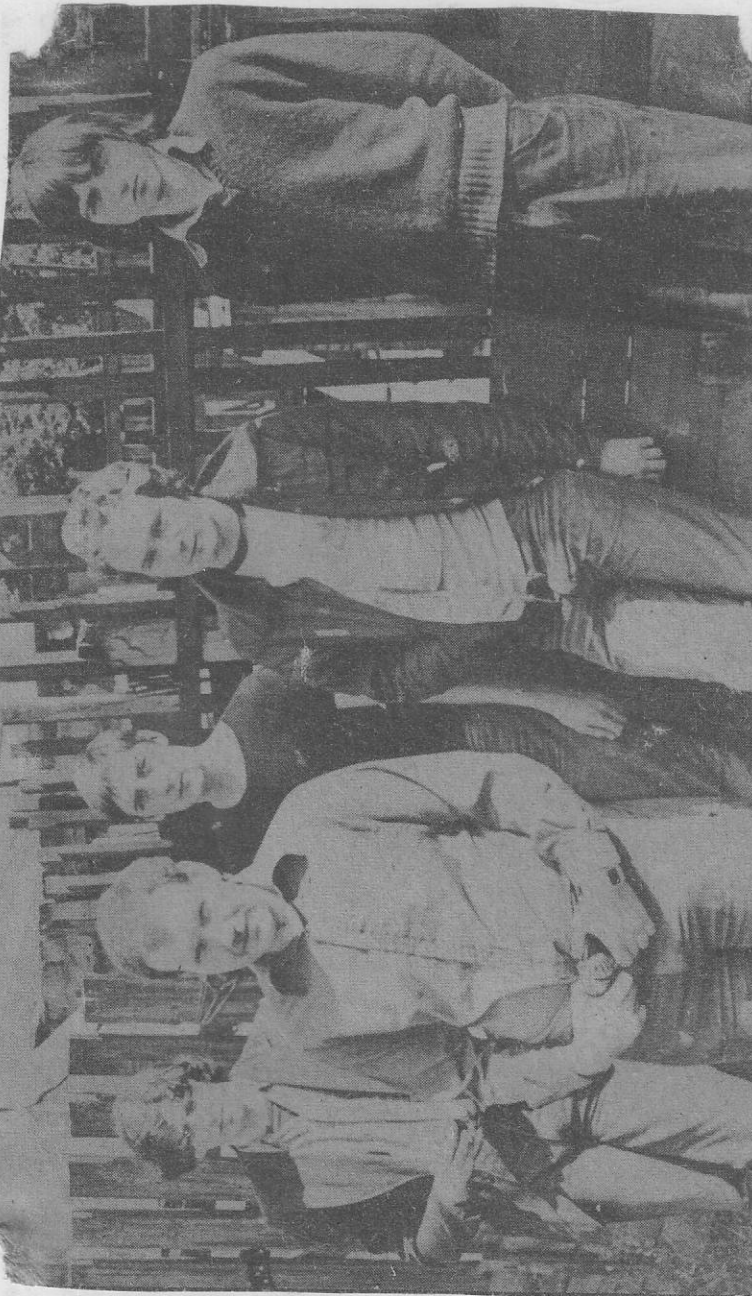
But the most pertinent aspect of 'Dragnet' relative to the Fall's other work is the production. Whether strategically or by accident, the album has one of the most extraordinary sounds I've ever heard. The production is flattened and narrow, the sound comes out on a tiny pin-head at first and it's virtually mono on the opener 'Psychick Dancehall', until gradually bits and pieces of fragmented stereo suddenly crop up from nowhere, making the album overall a disturbing, almost frightening experience, similar in feeling, if not in the fineries of sound, to early Doors and Velvet material.

I didn't care for this tunnel effect at first, mainly because I still think of these songs as they're done live and, knowing they're strong, I'd selfishly like to hear them through contemporary, standard megaproduction with lots of gloss and colour. But the band/Grant Showbiz production gives the material a rich, classic feel, and paradoxically provides more room for searching and uncovering what's buried in the murky, earthy rush of music.

The first side contains the best, most complete songs The Fall have written yet. 'Psychick Dancehall' is a coy, twisted opening flourish with a lovely kicking chorus line. It deals with mind disease and features a favourite Fall technique of juxtaposing rock and roll with psychosis, and hinting at the manipulative, psychological mind games the rock media use against the rock fan.

'Step aboard to ESP, medium discord...' rattles the Smith refrain.

'A Figure Walks' reminds me



THE FALL: the small against the industrial (honest)

of 'Riders On The Storm' for some reason. It's brooding, eerie, hypnotic and is created from the terribly Pink Floyd-like notion of walking home with an anorak on and imagining somebody's following you.

Scary and tense, it walks along the fine line between hard fact and fiction, and just manages to hang on to the real, though at last staying still open-ended and supernaturally plausible. 'Printhead' is a classic rock and roll song. The beat is fast and mean, the lyric's a penetrating satire on the music press,

Smith sneering, "We wanna pieces yea, regularly, one day a week, dirty fingers." Getting your fingers dirty reading *NME*, *Sounds* and *Monatony Maker* is a beautiful symbol, one thinks! At the end Mark Smith has a wry smile at The Fall's press misconception: "The singer is a neurotic drinker, the band little more than big crashing, beat instruments collide and we all get drunk."

'Dice Man', like 'Printhead', is a terrible indictment on those 'scribes' who dismiss The Fall's mastery of the beat form. 'Dice Man' is rockably based and filthy as they come. 'Before The Moon Falls' is maybe the least successful song on the album, though lyrically strong. The first side's closer, 'Your Heart Out' is The Fall playing straight pop, dinky guitar lines, ah-hoohing back up voices and all. Reminiscent of some early Velvet/corn circa 'Here She Goes Again'. Quite brilliant in fact.

Side the second seems like more recent material and though it's marginally harder to get into, in the end it proves some of the most moving, most relevant and most profound rock and roll I've come across. This is Mark Smith at his most visionary and The Fall at their most captivating. 'Muz, Brew, Daughter' is jungle drum, perhaps an aborigine chant, perhaps harking back to early Fall primitivism in terms of song

structure, the essence of 'Witch Trials'. 'Flat Of Angles' and the closing 'Put Away' are new Fall tricks. They're acoustic-based enigmas, the sort of thing Syd Barrett (loops) used to toy with, or perhaps the Doors on 'People Are Strange', creating the same surreal, relatively coherent effect. 'Flat Of Angles' which I particularly like, drawing up images of modernistic, storey-block paranoia. Again the feeling is of the small against the inexorably industrial, of pushing against indoctrination.

The centre of the second side is taken up by two songs that are stylistical poles apart but show how much The Fall have grown and developed in their most recent permutation. The first, 'Chock Stock', is like 'Your Heart Out' almost pure pop, though this time used as a satirical mask. You sing along, you chorus the chant 'pop stock buy my pop stock', you do everything the song tells you to do, and hopefully you think a little when you've finished. All your fave bands do the same

things and line their pockets with the same trick, only they're serious. Again, subtle satire, shifting attitudes.

'Spectre Versus Rector' is seven minutes of majestically lumpen metal narrative. Smith reads thriller novel style over a raw, intriguingly PL-like stop-start guitar backing. The effect is stunning. Like a new kind of rock and roll, though never pretentious or portentous, but full of life and hard emotion. 'Spectre' is my best-loved Fall song, and it suggests a whole new Fall future.

But you 'shouldn't have to take my word', the very nature of that argument is made suspect in the current r'n'r climate. Try the cover of 'Dragnet' out for measure (the silliest criteria are always the best in this circus), and that'll give you enough idea of the kind of transcendent endeavour this record copains. The Fall go forward. Do you want to go forward? Or do you want to pretend? Remember your words for today: I am the dice man/I take a chance baby/DO YOU take a chance baby?

DAVE MCGOUGH

THE FALL: "Grotesque (After The Gramme)" (Rough Trade, Rough 18).

ANOTHER scrambled message from the North. Somewhere in this record lurks humour, profundities, iconoclastic asides and a big beat - you find it.

This is not an easy record to listen to. It's not meant to be. Like their earlier work the music is an uncompromising barrage of overlapping, sometimes obscure, tonal anecdotes covered by Mark Smith's hectoring vocals. It can be exhausting, stark, fascinating, unintelligible, even unlistenable, but hardly ever boring.

Their deliberate amateurism - the album was recorded for around £300, although it does have a colour sleeve (Fall sell out shock!) - continues. So while the big stars opt for digital precision, The Fall settle for low-tech vision.

As when approaching their kindred spirits, The Residents, the listener is forced to weave into the music to become entangled in a dialectic that provokes an impressionistic though powerfully resonant synthesis.

Having previously eschewed the expected repetition of traditional rock choruses the album opens with a satirical punk chant "Pay Your Rates", which gives way to one of the most melodic (!) tracks "English Scheme", that is claimed to be an attack on white rastas, but seems more like treatise on anomie.

"New Face In Hell" features Mark Smith's accomplished kazoo playing while the rest of the band - now the Hanley brothers on bass and drums, guitars by Craig Scanlan, Marc Riley and Mark Smith and keyboards by Marc Riley - churn behind through an absurdly muddy mix.

"C'n' C-S Mithering" is one of the most accessible tracks. Smith uses his classic deadpan delivery under which the drums bang mournfully on between a sparse acoustic guitar.

"All the English groups act like peasants with free milk/On route to the loot/To candy mountains/Fine whacky proletarian idiots/ Californians always think of sex or death . . . on Mexican stolen land," he bleats in nagging verse.

As usual nothing escapes, including the press: "My journalist acquaintances go soft/Go places on record company expenses . . . they say I rip off Johnny Rotten/They say see you mate/See you mate."

The William Tell Overture forms the basis of "Impression Of J. Temperance", a tale of dark images and "hideous replicas", while on "W.M.C.- Blob 59", Smith resorts to his ambiguous stance on the class war, sneering. "We can lead you to proletariat visions of prosperity/posterity."

Their covert desire to doggedly remain beyond the mainstream with the North's salt of the earth - "The North will rise again" he says on "The N.W.R.W." - can be their undoing. "In The Park", for example, is so crudely recorded it's hard to imagine why they included it.

This fear of music aside, "Grotesque", with its echoes of Beefheart and cut-up verse technique is more provocative than anything else around including PiL and Pere Ubu. But is it good? Well can I come back to you on that? - IAN PYE.

THE FALL 'Hex Enduction Hour' (Kamera KAM 005)*****

'Live At Acklam Hall, London 1980' (Chaos Cassettes LIE 006)****

IN a constantly flowing stream of creativity, through each consecutive fad, fantasy and fashion The Fall have always strived to go against the grain to design music purely of their own making, Fall music, music that demands to be heard pumping through every chamber of the heart possessed with a spirit that is impossible to hold back.

In both a studio or live setting a kind of dark magic exists within the construction of the songs - and on 'Hex Enduction Hour', the first Fall collection since parting company with Rough Trade, that magic is to be found flowing with an even greater brilliance than ever before. Into this record's one hour is crammed a selection of songs that are both compelling and astonishing, deeply scored compositions that shine with inventive playing.

Central to this force, almost inevitably, stands Mark E Smith, now metamorphosed into the Hip Priest, the Big P, a character that is colourfully brought to life on a track that is a poisonous self portrait hinting at the self doubt and paranoia lurking beneath the surface like a hungry parasite ready to spring out and devour the soul. The same track also stings with a sharp humour, a mocking chorus line that bemoans the attitude of media and fan alike.

Elsewhere vast musical areas are opened up and explored in flurrying flashes, some brief others extended. 'Fortress, Deer Park' for example is given a powerful and precise guitar introduction almost shockingly 'Trout Mask Replica' in its execution but

effectively so, while in the background the twin drum sound of Paul Hanley and newly reinstated member Karl Burns hammers like a well oiled machine.

An opposite approach is found on 'Iceland' where delicate playing and percussion create a feeling of thawing ice in a song that deals with the experiences of a stranger in a strange land. A personal favourite amongst the wealth of material here is 'Who Makes The Nazis?' a track that becomes obsessive with its intriguing tape illustrations occasionally breaking into the solid repetitive mass of rhythm. It also boasts one of my favourite Big P lines as he likens the Nazi movement to a breed of hardened cattle, "A longhorn breed" as he prefers to call them. Once again that humour, the firing spark of the entire Fall operation smiles faintly from inside a complex maze of clues and cross references too numerous to mention here.

'Hex Enduction Hour' is the furthest adventure The Fall have ever embarked upon, one that absorbs and holds the listener in a grip of iron. It is also more importantly The Fall's finest hour.

'Live In London' captures The Fall in concert performing a set of songs that mainly cover the 'Grotesque' and 'Slates' periods of their work along with an early example of 'Jawbone And The Air-Rifle', a song that also appears on the new album. Taken straight from the mixing desk the recording quality is good with Mark's voice predominantly up front providing some excellent moments, notably a stunning performance of 'New Face In Hell' where Mark's vocal is mutated into a shrieking echo spitting out the words to some crazy nightmare.

Alas Chaos, who manufacture 'Live In London', only released an edition of 4,000 which means speed is suggested should you wish to obtain a copy of this enjoyable but less essential item. For those not so fleet footed your wildest dreams can be found in plentiful supply on 'Hex Enduction Hour'.

EDWIN POUNCEY

THREE FOR THE TOP LIE DREAM OF A



THE FALL Lie Down Of A Casino Soul (Kamera) Over a four or five minute single The Fall don't have time to entrance, so the vaulted hypnosis angle weakens; but

'Lie Dream' is still a devil of a record. With the production beefed up yet still retaining its crumpled cardboard texture the group wind themselves up like a ghost train bolting into the tunnel as Smith's poisoned invective boils over the top. If anything, 'Fantastic Life' on the

other side is even more dangerously involving "Fantastic life-uh!" bawls the vocalist. OH... Yer! I want it to go on! And on.

at the same time. Noisewise, 'Look, Know' is all thud and bump with a stark and springy upbeat, with Smith's sardonic drone-ah snapping at the ankles of your mind with pitiless repetition: "Do you know what you look like/Before you go out?" Your mirror's image will never feel comfortable again. Likewise, 'I'm Into C.B.' pushes a Northern non-conformist stream of consciousness around and around and the truckers' convoys piling up along the whole M6.

THE FALL: Look, Know / I'm Into C.B. (Kamera)
What is Mark Smith on about? As usual, I'm thoroughly unsure and more than reluctant to hazard a guess. What's crystal-clear, however, is that these two tracks are The Fall at the same brilliant best displayed on the 'Lie Dream Of A Casino Soul' 45, and that means welcome proof the group have hauled themselves clear away from dull ruts and the predictable "anti-fashion" trap. In short, they're sharp as ever, humorous and worrying



Reviewed by Paul Du Noyer

March 6, 1982 SOUNDS Page 31

STUNTS



THE FALL, Manchester's answer to Spandau Ballet

THE FALL
'Grotesque',
(Rough Trade
Rough18) *****

new lp, white label advance copy-scoop, scoop, exclusive, read all about it! crap/rap. twenty-four hrs is but a day, a day with new fall music, new

smith words, new ideas, enough? never enough, always striving beyond. this demands full attention, demands honest reaction . . . revulsion, laughter, concern, sympathy, awareness — you can still react, can't you? an aggressive, cohesive, strong bonded album — the most complete to-date and the most diverse. it can make you cry if you

want. (or dance.) "new lp is strange," mark e. smith, august 80. naked emotion, emotive bullshit. "my journalist acquaintances go soft. go places on record company expenses. lose humour and manners. become bad writers. don't know it." from C 'n' C

smithering. (the epic track.) christ, don't we put up with a lot of shit — none of the other bands are even trying. the fall are not the new cockney rejects — they are the fall. rock n'roll with a conscience. still a lonely bastard. hate and passion, and humour. I love it.

The Fall
ROOM TO LIVE
Kamera kam 011

The cha-cha jive and Fall-out blues

ANOTHER Fall album so closely after "Hex Enduction Hour" means Mark E. Smith is an extremely prolific writer and a man who refuses to say stay out if view for too long. Recorded shortly before the group's tour of Australia where Smith was called "a cynical, bitter critic of English society . . . rude, sarcastic and dislikable," then went top 20 in New Zealand, it poses as an update on this grubby nation's contemporary affairs.

Fall are beginning to sound terribly like The Fall. Which may sound fatuous but is more a comment on the group's inertia. For a start the cover, all crude hand typing, out of focus family snap shots, and intelligent graffiti, could be a straight parody of an earlier statement that no longer carries much meaning.

So we get a song loosely based on our heroic quest to liberate the 1,800 sheep lovers, the sometimes ridiculous "Marquis Cha-Cha", a bulletin from the industrial outback, "Hard Life In Country", and the first consciously arthouse Fall experiment, "Papal Visit".

The shabby shock of the prole art threat has merely become the trademark of snotty Northerners who know too much for their own good. No longer mischievous or challenging their artwork is just as obvious as a glossy gatefold sleeve with tasteful italic writing. It will tell their fans that this is a Fall album and little else.

Smith's biting tongue is as sharp as ever, even if this strange Northern surrealism suggests he's been smoking too much dope lately. When the disgusted lyrics are almost incomprehensible they sound good, and when they come home to the point, as few do these days, their vengeance is

"Marquis Cha Cha" is a great song, not just because of the lyrics, but for reasons that stretch right into the unusual structure of the music itself. Built round the false bounce of a gay bass, it tells the story of a proganda radio

Disregarding the "Papal Visit", as The Fall obviously did and what they got up to instead was mistakenly recorded for posterity and included here, only "Detective Instinct" manages to break out of the tried and tested style of slurred rockabilly.

Admittedly they were the first to reactivate this once forgotten style, and in their peculiarly Manchester way, but isn't it wearing a bit thin now lads?

"Joker Hysterical", "Room To Live" and "Solicitor In Studio" are all treading a well worn musical path despite beautifully twisted guitar lines from Craig Scanlon and Marc Riley.

Also Mark E. himself might do better if he started singing instead of the familiar sneer, and his avant garde violin could do with a bit of tuning.

Like the undilutable slang truth of "Room To Live", though there's nothing here that measures up to the best

fans and how far can you get preaching to the converted?

Well, to the top of the New Zealand charts for a start. — IAN PYE.

THE FALL 'Look, Know'
 (Kamera) I was actually aquiver at the prospect of having to listen to a new Fall record, but y'know it's not too painful. Perhaps they're mellowing in their dotage. Of course Mark E. Smith still can't sing but he's so well buried beneath lumbering pop themes that it really doesn't matter. I'd still rather have my teeth pulled out by a slavering dentist wielding a pair of rusty pliers than hear it again, though.

JOHNNY WALLER

ONLY AFTER DARK 'Gh...

new record releases by :



kamera records

45, ERA 13/14

DOUBLE A

ROOM TO LIVE
MARQUIS CHA - Cha

33 ERA 11,

7 track thing:

side 1 JCKER HYSTERICAL FACE . MARQUIS CHA-Cha . HARD LIFE IN COUNTRY
ROOM TO LIVE

side 2 DETECTIVE INSTINCT . SOLICITOR IN STUDIO . PAPAL VISIT ?

THE Material above refered to was recorded prior to THE FALL touring Australia and New Zealand August 1982. The Fall are top 20 in N.Z., but won't mention it ,as they in the past made jokes about past records making charts in Tibet,Ireland etc. and are now reaping the cost of same.

THE HORRID Truth - ridden idea behind the 12" was the events that hit England around spring '82.For this record The Fall denied the 2 drum kit basis they had used on past 2 recordings,and most tracks on 12" are/were new songs put down straight off.There's a preoccupation therefore with provincial events i.e. the hidden evil behind villages,that could not have been put across by the shit-hot 6 piece The Fall can be.This is no excuse,just explanation.Therefore a lot of new songs performed on last U.K. tour find no place here boy.

DEBORAH: 'What are we doing HERE ? What threat can a small upstate town POSSIBLY pose to us ?'

BENNETT: 'Have you battled the "Moon" so LONG,Deborah--Without understanding that it is within the most Verdant PASTURES That They hide their deadliest ASPS---?' - J.M. DeMATTEIS 'The House of Mystery' (D.C. Comics Inc.)

'Heranez Fiendish comes over to me/Offers a job as a broadcaster/ That's how I came to be:' - MARQUIS CHA-Cha

'And some men want reporters and no wig/I just want:'
- ROOM TO LIVE

Smith c/right F.Music Publishrs
Ltd. '82.



' (left) The Villagers Surround The House '

'Mark Smith is a cynical, bitter critic of English Society. He's also a rude and sarcastic man.----I disliked him intensely..' -M.RYAN, RAM magazine (Australia)

Song Explanation of 12"

JOKER HYSTERICAL FACE is a tale of urban pretentiousness turning rotten within marriage. This person is classless and could dig K-Tel or Kreches or house prices. Marquis CHA-Cha is The Falls' meagre contribution to the Atlantic war effort, but mainly the character here is the male equivalent of person in preceding track. 'The U.K.'s fucked' they shout or hint painfully in Australian, Asian, London and Dutch drinking places and soulless houses everywhere. A Huge Black Dog bestrides their backs, to quote a psychic.

Back home with HARD LIFE IN CCOUNTRY, a song too true to describe, except maybe to say Sainsbury's have it all Pre-Cogged and slowly creep the land while the locals conspire against each other and lie-down. This song plus ROOM TO LIVE feature the unrecognised genius of Arthur Cadman, who supplied off the wall lead guitar. PAPAL VISIT was mostly recorded less than one quarter a mile away from same visit to Manchester during it, and the birds in the trees can be heard embracing their human equals.

Smith '82.

'Thou shalt build a house, and thou shalt not dwell therein: thou shalt plant a vineyard, and shalt not gather the grapes thereof.'

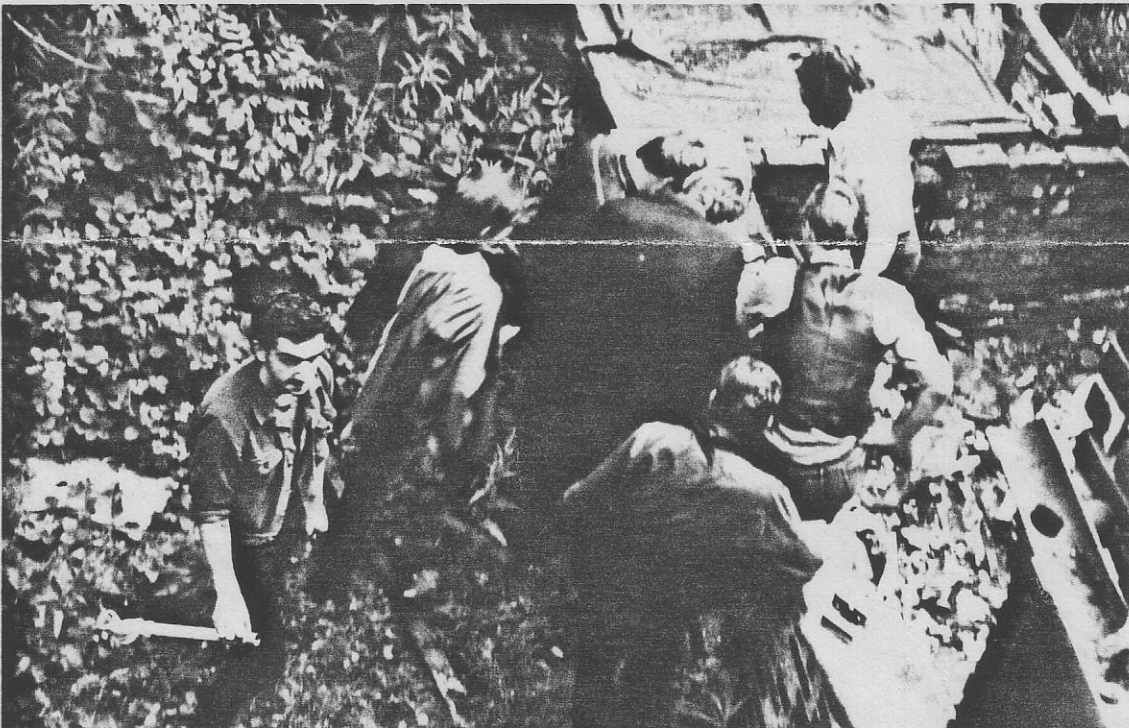
'Who are the translators?' - AND THIS DAY (-Deuteronomy 28:30
- from 'HEX ENDUCTION HOUR' (kamera records)

'Hewas a blubbering heap, he should have served himself up, preferably in a restaurant, with meat. And wit goes with:'

- DETECTIVE INSTINCT

The Fall are:

Steven Hanley, bass Marc Riley, keyboards, guitar, drums
Mark E. Smith, vocals, lyrics Craig Scanlon, guitar
Paul Hanley, drums Karl Burns, bass, drums, guitar
Kay Carroll, production, management.





ESSEITE
coprègato

è back again - the second time