



The Big Midweek: Life Inside The Fall

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The first insider's account of life inside The Fall, Steve Hanley's story unfolds like a novel; from 1979 when he joined his schoolmates Marc Riley and Craig Scanlon in The Fall, he puts us right in the heart of the action: on stage, on the tour bus, in the recording studio, and up close and personal with an eccentric cast of band mates. These vividly drawn scenes give unprecedented insight into the intense, highly-charged creative atmosphere within The Fall and their relentless work ethic which has won them a dedicated cult following, high-art respectability and a unique place in popular music history.

The Big Midweek: Life Inside The Fall Details

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From Reader Review The Big Midweek: Life Inside The Fall for online ebook

Greg says

I have to admit I've not read many musical biographies, but this is easily among the best I have read. The Fall was full of dysfunction since many of its initiators broke from its experimental heading, and many more were driven away by Mark's abusive nature. Even if you don't like The Fall, you'll consider this interesting, especially from a psychological standpoint.

Pete says

Fantastic read. Steve Hanley's tale of life inside the The Fall manages to make Spinal Tap look like normal behaviour. Anyone who has ever liked a Fall record needs to read this. One of the best books on music I've read in a long time. How those fantastic records ever got made is beyond me.

Nick McTaffy says

As a fan of The Fall, knowing Hanley was the last long term member to leave, I knew his story would be interesting. I believe every word of it. When a band is controlled by one member it never ends well. MES supposedly said that quote about 'your grandma and a bongo' but after Hanley's departure The Fall changed for the worse, IMO. Even though his tale of his time in the Fall skips and hops and seems clunky and times I found the point. His experience in the band seems bitter and joyless, but, like my experience in bands, when he speaks of his band mates, and the things they did together, I was reminded of why I spent so much time in a band: It was work with people trying to do something special together while looking at the world from the perspective of the band. It gives you a reason for being while providing a framework for measuring what's going on outside. Sure the point is making music but that time is slight compared to the time living and surviving. I believe Hanley loved MES but didn't like him. He should have fucking hated him.

Joe Rowan says

As a dedicated Fall fan and bassist there was very little chance I wasn't going to enjoy this. Captures wonderfully the madness of being in a band, especially a band as mad as The Fall. As well as the bust-ups and disastrous gigs I'm also endlessly fascinated by the everyday minutiae of how bands work, and this book also serves that obsession well. Eye-opening, hilarious and very thorough, this is surely essential for any Fall fan (and will make interesting reading for anyone with an interest in music)

Phil says

I love The Fall, but only from "Dagnet" through "This Nation's Saving Grace." The rest of their stuff I can

do without. Mark E Smith is and sounds crazy old now and the band doesn't interest me much anymore, but that run of albums is, to me, about as good as it gets. During that period, Steve Hanley played bass.

This book is mostly from his own experiences and includes very little external information, which is the main reason why I dig this book so much. You get a good idea of what it was like to WORK in this band, not what the critics thought but how the music was conceived and what the relationships were like for one of the few constants in the band.

Harvey Molloy says

Unpretentious: Hanley starts the tale with a scene of his daily life as school caretaker. The Bingo master is a drunk bully with aspirations to be a cut-up Arthur Lowe. Hanley suffers; all The Fall suffers. Looking back on it now it seems so obvious that the Bingo master is a punch drunk punch. Ah Prestwich, so much to answer for. Addiction paints a bloody ugly picture. Then you become that grotesque impression. A walking cartoon of your former self with no mates. Hey Mark, pay your rates.

Mark Desrosiers says

As befits the unsmiling quiet balding guy in all those classic Fall photos and gig vids, Steve Hanley is quite the hilarious writer and raconteur. Even when he (frequently) returns to discuss the goings on with his brother Paul at home or his father's pie shop, where he also worked during his Fall days, things can take a droll turn: "Wait till I tell [Paul] he's going to have to spend the next four hours in our parents' garden shed learning 'Flat of Angles' before he can get on with his maths." etc.

A couple interesting revelations:

:: It seems the abusive drill-sergeant style for which Mark Smith is renowned was actually originated by manager Kay Carroll, not by him. Though Hanley doesn't connect the dots explicitly, it's clear that MES learned how to control and drive the band by observing his girlfriend Carroll's "systematic abuse" in action, then copycatting it himself after she'd left.

:: Hanley mocks guitarist Craig Scanlon much more thoroughly and often as a comical snob and elitist, with the implication that the snobbery was both unwarranted but also essential to the band's sound.

Pranger says

A MUST read (caps so you know it's true) for fanboyz/gurlz of Mancunian legends THE FALL, the best (won't tolerate argument) gruppe to emerge from the "postpunk" (annoying term) scenes of the late 70s/early 80s. Steve Hanley was their bassist for 20 years before he got the boot from Mark E. Smith, lead singer/poet/mystic/capo/führer of the band, as dozens had been booted before and since. I am such a fanboy, so I had heard most of these tales related around the electronic campfire before, but there are many

tidbits/impressions of which I hadn't been aware. MES was (RIP) certainly an unholy DICK. And genius (not an overused term in this case, trust....). Is it always such? He thought so. I mean, he cultivated a dickish life cuz he felt that's what it took to express his brilliance. But I don't think that's necessarily true...it's another macho pose, imho. [You can be sweet and a genius...at least that's what I tell my own, sweet self.] And an excuse. How a dick? The usuals: unstinting criticism of his bandmates, taking all the credit, etc. And the unusuals I didn't know: skint with band funds, forcing the band to clean all the stray gaffing tape off the stage, haranguing Steve about his having kids, womanizing (well, that, I kinda could figure out...), etc. He truly had few redeeming features, except...except...he was prolly the only rocker who could truly be considered a POET. That dread, dead word, due for a revival! The word-smithery (tee hee), the textures, the presentation, the flow, the weirdness ("Lovecraftian" is not misused here), the impenetrability and inscrutability, the "a-has!" Most of all, it's la poésie on the page, too, which is *impossible* for lyricists. Fuck Dylan. Fuck L. Reed. ESPECIALLY FUCK Leonard Cohen. I dare y'all to read their lyrics on a dead tree/in bleeps and bleeps. THEY SUCK! MES is the real, real deal, here. Especially in the period 1979-1994 or so...before the DEMON RUM overcame him. SHanley's book lays bare the extent of the drunkenness. Dude was a major-league alcoholic. I always knew this at some level...but boy-howdy does this book ever explain the erratic behavior and decay of mind. The walk-offs, the pissed-pants appearance on stage, the shittiness of late lyric style. It is shocking he lived 'til 2018—had been in decline since the mid-90s. But, of course, this review is one of Steve's complaints: everything always comes back to MES. Every toilet bowl swirls down to Mr. Smiff. There's a lot more here: songwriting info, centrality of "the others" to the sound, etc. Maybe his isn't always the most artful prose, but, dudes, give a man a break. He's a boss bassist, and a charming fellow, and a dad, &c. He never claimed to be "A POET." Best book on the Fall and there's no close second. Long live the Hip Priest(s), in all of his/their filth! p.s. the ending is magnificent. No reflections, no wrap-up...shit just stops on a dime. As it should be p.p.s. the accounts of MES's attempt to "play" videogames, Athlete Cured's debt to Spinal Tap, and MOST OF ALL, MES's determination to open a tapas joint are BAWSS A.F.

Michael says

Other than frontman Mark E. Smith, Steve Hanley spent more time in the legendary (and still going) post-punk band The Fall than anyone else. His narrative of his time in the band hits a lot of touchstones for any such tale. But, of course, The Fall navigated a different path at a specific time in music history that makes this story more interesting than usual. Moreover, everyone wants a behind-the-scenes story of what Smith is really like.

To Hanley's credit, this isn't some gossipy rant, but instead a square account of what went down with The Fall. As a result, Smith's personality and his decline are revealed as part of the story, not at the forefront. Which, to me, makes for an interesting book. Considering how much Hanley was living a rock 'n' roll lifestyle (at least when it comes to libations) he seems to have remembered a lot and he certainly was a steady presence in an unsteady band. He has lots of good stories and paints a picture that is easy to capture in the imagination -- cramped quarters, odd gigs, triumphs and disasters, with more of those coming towards the end of his tenure with the band.

It's good that his book came out before Smith's own tome, as now we can have a point-counterpoint. Any fan of The Fall would be well-advised to buy this.

Joaquín Guirao says

This is a good book. Perhaps, the best book about being in a rock band. For all the bands that had coke and sex in every gig they had, there are countless rock bands to who touring was nothing more than plodding through big spaces like traveling salesmen trying not to rip each other's throats. In case of the Fall, having Mark E. Smith in there didn't help. In fact, I think I might have a bit of PTSD after reading about how was hanging out with Mark E. Smith.

Mark E. Smith was a monster. He WAS the Fall, but as this book shows, he was more of a curator and a "shaper" than really a composer in any way, but he gladly took the cheques out of their bandmates writing credits. But he was erratic, and wanted the band to be in constant chaos, and submissive. It's really sad reading how Steve Hanley, one of the best bassists in the world, not knowing how fucking special he was until he read about him in the internet.

The problem with this book is that it represents all too well how it is to be in a rock band. It's repetitive, a series of disaster recording sessions, hastily prepared tours, some childish pranks and lots of drinking. Really well written, all of that, and it never wears on you, but that's all there is at the end. Steve Hanley and Olivia Piekarski make a great team, and the writing is funny as fuck, realistic and humble, sometimes to a fault. He is quite honest, but there are some misteries in there. His family kind of dissapears after he introduces it in the book, and you wonder how his two children reacted to his chaotic and depressing life. Some substance abuse is named, but swept under the rug as quickly as it is brought out. Some interesting details are kept fuzzy even if he should have more info about them. But, you know? Steve Hanley seems to be a reserved man. He didn't have to tell everything. This is the perfect book for Steve Hanley and the Fall. Not a perfect The Fall book or perfect book, it's perfect for what it is.

Also, the ending is way more depressing than any other ending to any other rock book I've read. Absolutely crushing.

Jay Green says

A competently written settling of accounts, although Steve Hanley seems like too nice a man to bear many grudges, and he's largely sympathetic in his renderings of other band members, some of whom he is now working with (perhaps that explains it!). There are very few spectacularly exciting anecdotes, lots of tours that tend to blur into each other, no major surprises, and only one laugh-out-loud moment when an audience member ties MES's laces together, the roadie crawls on stage with a pair of scissors to free him, and MES takes a kick at him (the roadie) to get him off the stage, tripping himself over in the process and hurling himself into the drum kit.

Nice to see Marc Riley come out of it well. My cover designer, Jon Langford, gets a couple of mentions, as does Altrincham, the setting of my new book, *Fowl Play*, which you really should buy after you've read Hanley's book. Like the *Big Midweek*, it also features proletarian provincial autodidact paranoi-ah.

Russio says

This is an amazing book that just builds and builds, like a Bildungsroman, to its shattering but inevitable

conclusion, following some terrific adventures on the way. At first, young and idealistic, the band strike out their new territory. Then age brings success but with it the character flaws in the protagonists begin to develop, slowly and inexorably building to the tragic conclusion: main players brought low by their tragic weaknesses. And on the way? Mayhem.

Mark Smith is a villain of which not even the bard could conceive, his persona forever poised on the very precipice that separates genius and madness. Steve Hanley, the willing and loyal accomplice, forced by the endless turn of events to at last confront the maelstrom that is his lead singer.

This book had me in absolute tears of laughter as I read the carnage of their on tour world, before leaving me with a trace of guilt and sadness as I reflected that at times I was laughing at the players, not with them. The Fall always give you something other than what you expect: this superb book is just another example of this from the sufficiently, occasionally sober bassist who lived to tell the tale.

Jonathan Norton says

This deserves to be at least as successful as the Morrissey autobiography. The author was born the same month, went through the same formative gig-going experiences in early 70s Manchester (Mott The Hoople, then moving on from glam in to punk and New Wave). But he was never the front man, rather he was the dependable bassist holding the group together until the mission became impossible. There is love and sadness here, and even a few good laughs, even when things are quite appalling. However it looks as if there will never be agreement about exactly how and why Kay Carroll quit in the 1983 US tour.

Steven Pilling says

When i used to work in a library i used to look at the biographies/autobiographies and wonder who wanted to read some of the life stories shelved. This book might for many people fit that question , he is the bass player for The Fall or rather was the bass player of the fall.

Why should you read this , well its funny , wise , heartbreaking and offers a light on Mark E Smith which always is useful. It reminds me why i love the fall and also why every album has a few tracks that you wonder why does this exist. It reminds me a little of the bruce thomas book but is more honest , the narrative moves like a novel the sense of everything collapsing is mirrored in the tone and speed of the narrative.

Its fantastic if you dont like the fall it might be difficult to accept why hanley did all this but stick with it you will enjoy.

Highly recommended

Eric says

If you like The Fall, you probably like Steve Hanley. And this book will help you understand why.

At turns hilarious, ironic, and sad - but always humane and engaging. Steve and Olivia bring the years of working in a band creating and performing to life, hopes and crises in rapid succession.

Also, if you come home of a day thinking your coworkers are a bit nuts.... you haven't seen anything.
