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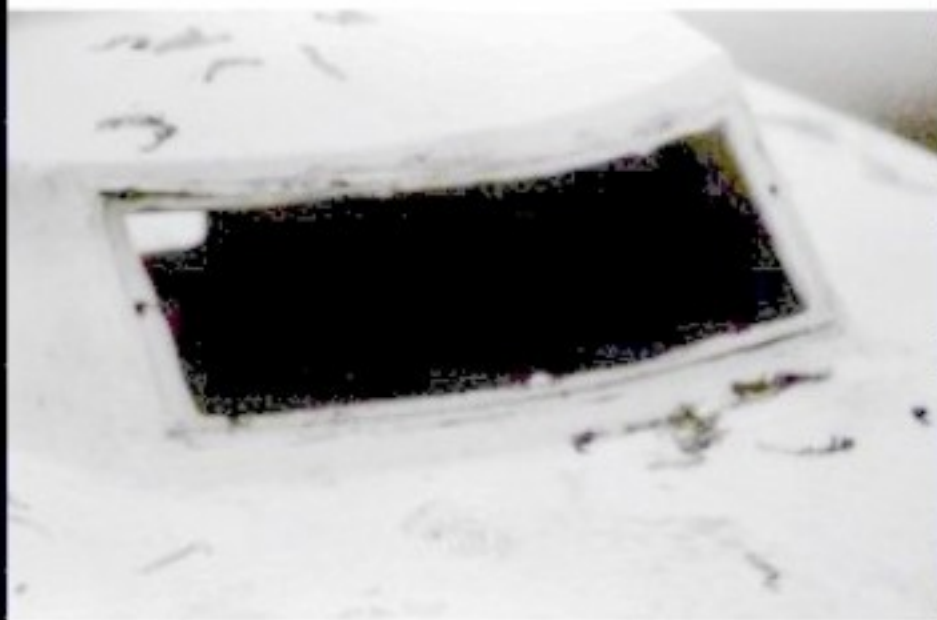
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Albums

The Bitter Springs – Everyone's Cup of Tea

Posted by Editor

The Bitter Springs



Everyone's Cup of Tea

Since forming as Last Party back in 1985, **The Bitter Springs** have released a score of albums all driven by the energy of songwriter Simon Rivers' ability as a storyteller. That's not to dismiss the musicians in the band (who also acted as Vic Goddard's backing band The Subway Sect for nine years), their input is valuable and the melodies memorable, but this album is all about the words. And there are a lot of them. **Everyone's Cup of Tea** is a double album measuring in at almost two and a half hours which, for even the most ardent of fans, is a shift. There seems no evident reason for creating a 26 track double album. There are a number of previously released digital only singles brought together with new material, but it seems like the sort of decision made by a band comfortable with their place: after all, you're not going to welcome many new fans with an album of this length, regardless of the content. Playing to the crowd is what keeps cult bands alive however, and fans won't be disappointed. Musically, it's quintessentially English – full of romanticism, upbeat tempos and brass (on the first disc at least). It is lyrically that it truly comes to life though. Rivers' caustic wit casts an omniscient eye over England, creating characters to be loved and loathed; he provides a commentary of normal life that is both warming and alarming. "I split up with my fiancée, she caught me in bed with Beyonce... Beyonce is our dog's name" is a blistering example. Or the eyebrow raising **Gary Glitter Fan Convention** which in actuality is a reflection on a failed relationship that uses the titular gathering to compare the chances of a heart being mended.

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River's delivery is that of a poet, his tone flexing for maximum effect. Think of a southern John Cooper Clark able to carry a tune. There are elements of Madness, Badly Drawn Boy and 'Modern Life' era Blur throughout.

The second side is less focussed on electric guitars and shifts the musical emphasis onto a more electronic sound, which provides it with more stylistic consistency – the first part veering in styles almost too much. It's stronger for it, and the four-part *Powerless* is a fine example of this. The pace is concentrated and atmospheric.

"With every other lamppost wrapped in a fading cheap bouquet, reluctantly we bring you sirens every day" starts *Sirens Everyday*, evoking a haunting image that is typical of Rivers' observations.

I'm Free to Kill Again is a slow acoustic number that delivers a shiver: "London is poisonous, too many choice, so many voices I can't make out. I've hidden my tablets under the mattress and I'm free to kill again" sings a mournful Rivers backed by an angelic female backing vocal.

Like many double-albums there is a feeling that had this been condensed into a single 14 track release it would have been stronger. Nevertheless, it opens the listener's eyes to modern Britain and the people who walk its streets.

Everyone's Cup of Tea is out 11th February 2013 on Harvey Records.

Words by **Kev Scott**.