

The Bitter Springs 'Everyone's Cup Of Tea' – album review

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The Bitter Springs



Everyone's Cup of Tea



The Bitter Springs 'Everyone's Cup Of Tea' ([Harvey Records](#))

Dbl CD/DL

Released 11th February 2013

I knew nothing of [The Bitter Springs](#), a fact the band will no doubt draw satisfaction from for they have been described as preferring to "go unnoticed rather than be diluted by compromise"

Formed back in 1985 as **Last Party**, the band created their own label Harvey Records and have since forged a stubbornly independent career path; they changed name to The Bitter Springs in 1986 and were able to coax **Vic Goddard** from retirement for a country duet; the 'Addison Brothers EP' with front-man and critically acclaimed wordsmith Simon Rivers, since that date and powered by Rivers innate knack for both song writing storytelling they have released a score of albums; the links to Vic Goddard have continued to the extent that the majority of The Bitter Springs sideline as Goddard's band Subway Sect.

A new album from The Bitter Springs is such a rare occurrence they clearly thought it would be better make it a double... the album features all the recent download singles on disc for the first time plus much much more, in addition the unexpected departure of bassist and original member Daniel Ashkenazy makes this his Bitter Springs swansong.

So 'Everyone's Cup Of Tea' is a double album, no doubt to accommodate Rivers prodigious lyrics – there really are that many; sadly the release only seems to be available on CD, as such the copious lyrics are squashed into the accompanying booklet when really they deserve the splendour of a full 12"sq album presentation – the total running time of the album coming in at just shy of two and a half hours, as such I doubt this will attract many new converts but will entirely satisfy the bands most ardent supporters.

If musical notation were to define a band's geography then The Bitter Springs are firmly English, perhaps even English eccentrics, both discs are awash with warm melodies, accompanying brass adding colour to the upbeat pace as Rivers takes lyrical swipes at a bewildering array of topics; 'My Life As A Dog In A Pigsty' which offers a cautionary warning against bestiality with the genius line "I split up with my fiancée, she caught me in bed with Beyonce... Beyonce is our dog's name / That was over a year ago and it was so hard to see her go / But the puppies are doing fine" or 'TV Tears' describes an appearance on The Jeremy Kyle show...titling any song as the 'Gary Glitter Fan Convention' will no doubt garner a few raised eyebrows; Rivers would not allow himself to be so crass as to discuss paedophilia, the song actually deals with entering a new relationship whilst wounded from the previous clench "My heart was broken long before I met you / Think your the only one with baggage / Look, theres no room round the carousel"

The second disc carries the sub-title 'The Bitter Springs destroyed my life' and sees The Bitter Springs shift gear to a more electronic style which I found added to the atmosphere and certainly consistency; there are elements of 'I'm Your Man' era Cohen , with the added wit of a jocular cockney bar-room lawyer – the second disc is dominated by the four-part 'Powerless' which commences in minimalist torch song territory and veers through 80's electro-pop... 'Free to Kill Again' is a pained acoustic number as Rivers character darkly discloses that he is soon to commit murder (again) "So many voices I can't make out / I've hidden my tablets under the mattress / And I'm free to kill again, free to kill again" all of which is sharply contrasted by the harmonious voice of Kim Ashford on backing vocals.

The only problem with the album is its length, the music and Rivers lyrical observations demand your full attention and at nearly 180 minutes that's some investment being demanded; however allocate yourself the time, takes the titles advice, prepare a strong brew and take in Rivers reflections of Britain in 2013...pending on your habits you may even find yourself being referenced.