



## Bitter Springs: And Even Now

Reviewed By: John Clarkson  
Label: Harvey Records  
Format: CDS

2006 was a busy year for the Bitter Springs. They released their sixth album, 'That Sentimental Slush', and also two EPs, 'Poor Trace' and 'Firm Family Favourites'. Since then things have, however, been

uncharacteristically quiet for the under-rated, but durable West London-based outfit, which formed as Last Party in 1985 and then changed their name to the Bitter Springs in 1996.

There have just been a handful of gigs, and while two new albums-the seventh Bitter Springs long-player and the first solo record from front man and guitarist Simon Rivers-have both been promised, nothing as of yet has materialised.

At last, however, they are back with a new single. 'And Even Now', which is available on download only, consists of five different versions of the same song. In other less safe hands this would be an overdose of remix hell, but, as always with the Bitter Springs, they have come up with something that is as versatile as it is original and inventive.

The first track and title song is an indie disco anthem with swooning keyboards and cascading guitars over which Rivers lays out a philosophy of intent. "And even now there is something here/that brings me back and makes me care/A freedom of movement/A freedom of speech," he sings stridently, chronicling exactly why whatever is thrown at his band, and despite it never having attracted more than a small cult audience, he carries on making music.

For the second track, 'Et Maintenant', Rivers is replaced on vocals by Parisian-born, but London-based chanteuse, Laurence David. The tune evolves into a series of slow rolling, but dramatic braces and crashes. Drummer Paul McGrath's accordion weaves in and out, while the soulful David, singing the lyrics in a French translation, has all the throaty gutsiness and power of Edith Piaf.

The third version of the song, 'And Even Now (Chug A Chug)', finds Rivers back on vocals. The tune this time has a harder-edged and rockier wah wah guitar sound.

The fourth track, 'Meme Maintenant', is another dance number. It has on main vocals 70s punk icon Vic Godard, whom Rivers and the other Bitter Springs have played with off and on for many years in his ever revolving backing band, the Subway Sect. Singing in French with exaggerated vocals, Godard gleefully hams things up, while the track's second guest, former Last Party and Bitter Springs drummer Neil Palmer, gives the song additional drive with his ebullient electronic drums.

On the brief last track, 'And Even Possibly in the Future', the band's bassist Daniel Ashkenazy takes a rare turn on lead, his vocals, slurred with raw emotion, winding both the tune and the instruments down to an evocative, but powerful close.

'And Even Now' packs a lot into its twenty five minute running time- drama, humour and poignancy. With this, their first new recording in three years, the Bitter Springs have put out a release that is electrifying as well as life-affirming.



### *EVERETT TRUE REVIEW OF AND EVEN NOW*

And just when I'm feeling low - lower than I have for weeks - Simon sends me through the video for the new Bitter Springs single. Goddamn, and all of a sudden I'm back into the reason why I am who I am once again. Pop music. F\*\*king glorious bittersweet iridescent shining glowing inspirational pop music. 'And Even Now', the 10th single from Bitter Springs - and trust me, they've had more than their fair share of unsung glory over the years - is a melancholy, string-laden, articulate, tears-choked epic, a killer pop song pure and simple: especially for anyone reared on the lineage of Godard, Rowland, Wylie. But you don't need to know all that. You just need to go watch and listen, and keep aware, and believe. "And even now/There's something here/That brings me back/And makes me care/The freedom of movement/The freedom of speech/Some of us practice/What others just preach" 'And Even Now'

Posted by Jerry at 8:02 PM  
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# MUDKISS FANZINE

**MUDKISS REVIEW 26/10/09**



**'AND EVEN  
SPRINGS**

**'NOW' - BITTER  
(HARVEY**

**RECORDS -REVIEW BY LEE MC FADDEN**

The Bitter Springs – Peel Session darlings in their eighties incarnation as Last Party, and doubling up in the late nineties as Vic Godard's Subway Sect, return with a venture that was the curse of the eighties 12" age but a positive boon to the present day downloader – the multi-version single.

"And Even Now" is available purely by download from October 26<sup>th</sup>, offering the choice of five distinctly differing recordings of the same song – or all five in one go, if you're an annoyingly anal completist like your humble reviewer here.

The track reads like a 21<sup>st</sup> century "My Way" – Simon Rivers remaining defiant to the last with lines such as "I'd jack it all, before I beg, before I crawl". The main version is probably the most ill-fitting however, as the euro-pop backing struggles to complement Rivers' gritty vocal.

Version two is the crème de la crème of this collection. French chanteuse Laurence David sings her own translation, "Et Maintenant" – and the song is transformed into a dramatic film noir, the whole treatment granting the song the gravitas it truly deserves.

Simon Rivers returns on a suitably rockier third version, but the fourth swings back across the channel with "Meme Maintenant" – the cheesiest of the backing tracks augmented with an incredible approximation of the likes of Sacha Distel & Co by none other than Vic Godard – the punk legend assimilating the Gallic tones effortlessly.

A rare vocal from bassist Daniel Ashkenazy courts the fifth take, an understated thoughtful rendering that sadly cuts in its prime.

Never a band to take the simplest route, once again The Bitter Springs offer a curio well worth investigating.

**Lee McFadden 5/10/09**