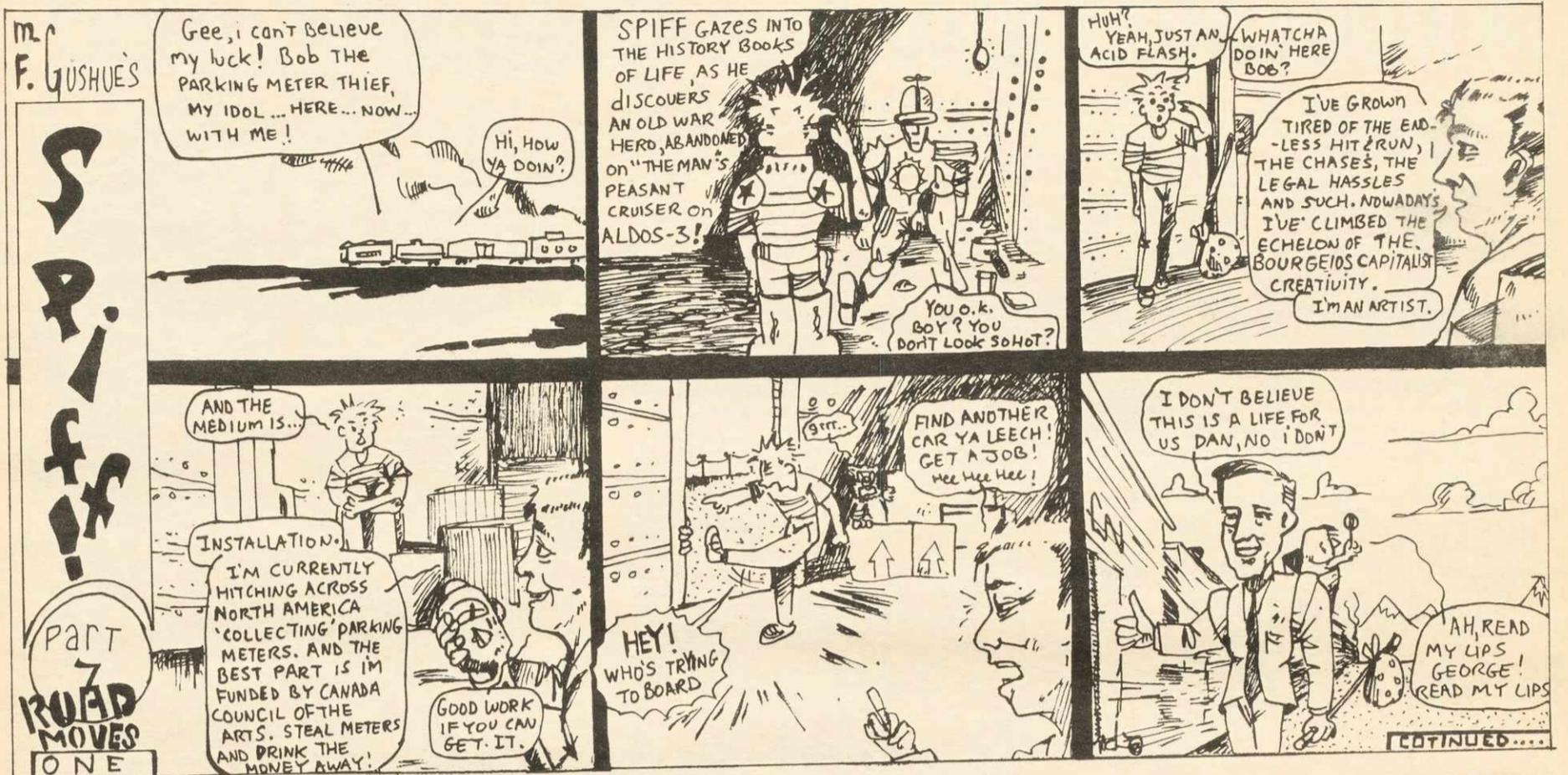


arts



Hot stuff; cold reception

by Chris Stolz

Just Buy It, the new Furnaceface record distributed by Montreal's Cargo records, is actually a 1991 recording that sold well enough on cassette to convince the band and omnipresent sonic handyman Bob Wiseman to remix it and put it out on disc. Just Buy It is a reminder of this Ottawa band's live muscle and energy, but is itself a disappointment. Furnaceface, a kind of less technically proficient Red Hot Chili Peppers, suffer from the same problem as their California counterparts - smart music comprised by simplistic lyrics and unimaginative vocals.

The twelve song disc floats off through a wash of samples which encourage the listener to unplug the phone and relax into Just Buy It. Over a funk-grunge riff, singer Badmister growls about the contradictions of selling "art" with a Big Corporation's resources. This track has the same problem as do "Father-

land America" and KKKiss My Ass": the tired old lefty cliches masquerading as lyrical insight are strangely disconnected from the kick-your-ass riffing that is the band's strength. "We Love You, Tipper Gore" is about, that's right, censorship. "Government Cheque" and "She Thinks She's Fat" both attempt to present U.I. abuse and women's self-image, respectively. The former trots out the predictable left/right viewpoints (workers screwed vs lazy bums) and in the second Badmister first tells you that his girlfriend feels uncomfortable about herself and then tells you that, even so, he still wants to get her into bed. The, uh, simplistic insensitivity of this song, however, is not entirely lost on the band, so the women have their own song in which to reply - "Fat Reprise" - but the whole thing comes off as a calculated and shallow attempt to Make A Point.

Overall, this disc disappoints: the political lyrics are forced and simplistic, and strangely enough

more conscious of American politics than those of their home country, and the music, grunge-funky and danceable as it is, reminds the listener that the band are essential Peppers devotees without the technical chops. Furnaceface, like most bands of any era, aren't quite in tune with the structure of the rock world. Rock music is no longer meaningful as an us-versus-them way of describing the reality of being younger than your parents. The best music these days doesn't make grand claims or statements that speak explicitly for "us" about "them" - which singer these days can claim to be "talkin' bout my (or your) generation?" - it makes claims for the singer, the performer, the "me" in songs. The ferocious Nevermind and the subtler work of newcomers Walt Mink are successful documents because they are vivid examples of what goes on inside one person's head, and through the inward side of existence the less personal politics and "statement" can be meaningfully made. "The personal" makes "the political" side of rock n' roll, such as it is, convincing, and Furnaceface don't quite connect because the personal side of things is either left out of these songs or only clumsily presented.

However, this band, who were as convincing a live act as could be found at this summer's Western Canadian Independent Music Festival, should not be missed when in your vicinity, as they soon will be. Hopefully Furnaceface will continue to develop and on their next release go some way toward making the lyrics as energetic and muscular as the music.

Furnaceface plays the Double Deuce on Thursday and Friday night.

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