

# FURNACEFACE to the East

BY MATT BURNS

Furnaceface, a band from Ottawa, is on the east coast leg of their current Canadian tour. Things have changed somewhat as Furnaceface is again performing as a trio. Marty Jones, the keyboardist, has since left the band to pursue other projects. However, Jones is still present in the production of the new album as an engineer. The band says that their live act is just as good as it ever was. Tom Stewart, the band's bassist, and I had a chance to discuss the group last Saturday.

**Gaz** - When was the new record released?

**Tom** - The record came out on Tuesday and we played at the Horseshoe in T.O. We drove insanely to get here to reach the ferry to Newfoundland. We were in Newfoundland last night.

**Gaz** - Was the crowd in Newfoundland pretty receptive?

**Tom** - Yeah they were really good...same as in February a year and a half ago. It was our triumphant return.

**Gaz** - How long is this tour?

**Tom** - It goes all the way from Newfoundland...to Victoria. The true Canadian tour. It's the first time we've done Canada in one run. We're starting on the east coast so we'll be pretty busy until mid-november.

**Gaz** - How long did the new album take to record?

**Tom** - Well, we actually physically started recording in March. It didn't take us very long to do. It was a pretty quick process. Some people would consider that long but that's pretty quick for a record label.

**Gaz** - Where did you record the album?

**Tom** - At Sand Wad Hand studios in Ottawa where we've done all of our albums. We're a power trio again. Marty Jones, or Smarty Mones as he was affectionately known, left the band about a year ago. However, he engineered this record so he's still working for us.

**Gaz** - What's it like playing as a trio again?

**Tom** - Easier to make decisions, more democratic. It's crazy.

We started out as a trio and we've written songs together for so long. I enjoyed being a four piece which was for about three years. However, we started out as a three piece, wrote songs, and played together so we were pretty established by the time he joined the band. So when he left the band it wasn't as tumultuous because we were used to being a three piece.

**Gaz** - So it didn't take away

from the live act too much?

**Tom** - Well Marty was a great live performer. We had a good live show before Marty was in the band, we just felt it was time to do something different. Each record has been a progression but this is my favourite album to date. As long as it keeps progressing and being interesting then it's fun for us.

**Gaz** - Tell me a bit about Furnace Fest?

**Tom** - It's a festival that is put on every year. It's in its fourth year now. It's really fun, about 12 to 13 bands all day long. It usually goes the whole day alternating between local bands and bands across Canada. We wanted to put it on to showcase the music we actually like. This year we used it as a release party. It was also going to be the kickoff of our tour. Unfortunately the weather was so foul that we had to re-

schedule it for November. So now it's going to be a "welcome home" show instead of a kickoff of the tour.

**Gaz** - Where do the proceeds go?

**Tom** - The proceeds go into our deep pockets my friend. No, actually we have two really good university stations in Ottawa: CKCU Carleton, and CHUO for the University of Ottawa. The proceeds are going to CHUO.

**Gaz** - So you guys are playing the Birdland?

**Tom** - It's one of the nicest clubs in Canada. Outside of the Republic and the Rev in Alberta this is the nicest place to play. It's really nice and well organised. We've known the owners a long time. The people are really dedicated to what we're doing.

**Gaz** - You guys played at the Grawood once didn't you?

**Tom** - We usually avoid university shows. You can make a lot more money that way but we usually find that the real music scene is in the local club and that the students who want to go and see us will go down. Very often you end up playing a well paying gig but to...

**Gaz** - A limited audience?

**Tom** - Or a very full audience that are more interested in things other than the music. It's more important to reach the people. There's nothing worse than playing a fourth year engineering bash or a semi-formal. Universities, of course, have to have events like that. It doesn't matter about how much money you made because no one remembers what they heard the night before. However, you end up playing for people who don't care about the music.

**Gaz** - What do you like to do in Halifax?

**Tom** - We like to go to Peggy's Cove for a big bowl of Clam Chowder. Then we like to go to the Chicken Burger in Bedford which is Anne Murray's favourite restaurant.

Furnaceface will be in Halifax on Friday. They will play an afternoon show at Café Olé on Barrington Street and will be playing at the Birdland Cabaret on Friday Night.

Unsafe@anyspeed  
Furnaceface  
Cargo Records

Ottawa's Furnaceface are back with another album.

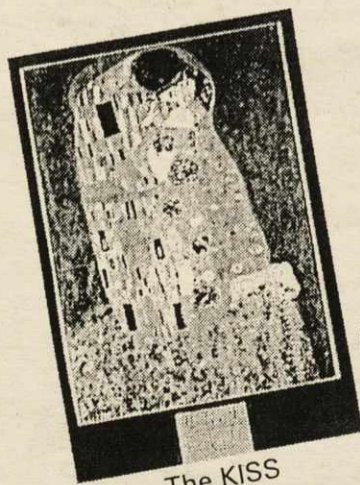
With its thirteen tracks, *Unsafe@anyspeed* moves the band along in the same way as previous releases, but they don't seem to explore any new corridors of creativity. Furnaceface have many rocking songs which go along well at times, but the imagination fails to spark into delight as the album continues. With mostly short songs, it is not the sort of album that grabs your attention immediately. However, after listening to it a few times you begin to find yourself liking it. But isn't that the

case with every single album released these days?

Some of the better songs on the album include "Slip and Stumble", "Trailer Park" and the catchy "Biff Bang Pow". They make their way unfortunately into a few bad punkish-type songs like "Overcome" and the title track. Dressed in suits a la Reservoir Dogs these guys don't seem to have too much imagination, and this carries over to their songs.

This album failed to capture my attention for very long, but there must be a large enough group of fans out there — Furnaceface are playing three shows in three different bars in Halifax over the next few days.

STUART MCMILLAN



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