



Handsome Furs: *Face Control* (Sub Pop)

The second LP from Handsome Furs contains much of the same charm as their debut, with rudimentary keyboards, Casiotone beats, and beautiful guitar work. The second time around however, these elements don't quite carry the same appeal. There simply aren't as many full-bodied, satisfying songs.

Dan Boeckner (also of Wolf Parade) has developed a guitar style all his own, part distortion, part clean and shimmery. He's in fine form shredding his way through the slow-burning "Evangeline" and rocking out Chuck Berry-style on "Talking Hotel Arbat Blues." During the former, he also employs a Buddy Holly-esque hiccup, singing, "I don't know but I've been told/every little thing's been bought and sold." Boeckner and wife/bandmate Alexei Perry mix old and new so perfectly, it feels like every decade of rock history is represented in under three minutes.

Other tracks just don't have the same depth. "Officer of Hearts" for example, is built around a decent bassline and a spare keyboard hook, but it never gains much momentum. Part of the problem is the "Oh oh oh officer of hearts" chorus, which doesn't exactly capture the imagination. "Thy Will Be Done" fails to rise above as well, and grows repetitive.

Boeckner's lyrics are on occasion lazy, which is frustrating for the listener because at times he can paint such a clean picture. Compare the outstanding scene setting of "Talking Hotel Arbat Blues," "We were standing in the center of the occupation/ caught between the ground and the grey, grey sky" to *Face Control's* opener, "Legal Tender" and its horrible lines, most notably, "My love is legal tender." Of course one could argue that Boeckner's referential writing on the former is lazy, but he uses borrowed words as a jumping off point and to create an expectation, which he undermines.

Handsome Furs' best songs break out of their mold the longer they go on; they constantly surprise. *Face Control's* biggest surprise is that so much of it feels incomplete. (www.handsomefurs.com)

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