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Spacehog is only hovering with derivative 'Hogyssey'

After their 1996 hit single and 1998 critically acclaimed album, Spacehog's newest venture seems lackluster



Spacehog 'The Hogyssey'

Artemis

★★★★

By Dave Depper
Oregon Daily Emerald

Is the third time a charm for a band of British one-hit wonders?

"The Hogyssey" is the new album by everybody's favorite T-Rex-inspired popsters, Spacehog. You probably remember these guys from their one and only hit, 1996's irresistible "In the Meantime." Melding a huge guitar riff, catchy falsetto vocals and vintage synthesizers, it was a well-deserved success, and their worthwhile debut album "Resident Alien" made a respectable dent in the charts.

Things went somewhat downhill for the 'Hog after that. 1998 saw the release of "The Chinese Album," which was widely acclaimed by critics. It was an adventurous album, sounding very little like "Resident Alien," yet it still embodied the quintessential Spacehog experience. Unfortunately, nothing on "The Chinese Album" remotely approached a hit single, and it sank like a stone.

Since then, Spacehog have primarily been known for their collective love life. Last year lead singer/bassist Royston Langdon married actress Liv Tyler, and Roy's brother Anthony (the guitarist) has been linked with Kate Moss.

With such a checkered past, it's obvious that a great deal of Spacehog's career is resting on this new album. Which leads us to the big question: Will "The Hogyssey" make these guys into a household name?

Not likely. "The Hogyssey" is a



Courtesy photo

competent, and at times very enjoyable album of huge-but-recycled riffs and over-the-top vocals. It has very little in common with "The Chinese Album." In fact, it sounds a lot like Spacehog is trying hard to recreate the success of their debut album.

The only problem with this approach is that because of their last album, we know what Spacehog is capable of, and a bunch of cheesy synthesizers and lyrics about space aren't going to cut it this time.

One particularly irritating trait of this album is that Spacehog's humor, once so effortlessly blended with their songs, seems forced this time around. In the past, Spacehog managed to make songs such as "Mungo City" and "Captain Freeman" funny without being too lowbrow, but "The Hogyssey" seems to be aiming for cheap laughs. "This Is America" contains the groan-inducing line "the Statue of Liberty lost her virginity to me," and how else can you explain a song called "At Least I Got Laid?"

Also, a funky-up cover of

Strauss' "Also Sprach Zarathustra" (better known as the theme song from "2001") sounds tempting, but it ends up being a corny mess.

To Spacehog's credit, though, some parts of "The Hogyssey" actually manage to break new ground for the guys. "A Real Waste of Food" is an intense ballad, complete with a jazzy horn section. "Dancing On My Own" is a Freddie Mercury-inspired faux show-tune that manages to sound so cheesy that you can't help but like it. And leadoff single "I Want To Live" is simply awesome. With its bone-crushing riff and "woowos," it sounds a whole lot like "In the Meantime," but once you get past this fact, it's a terrifically rocking number that embodies the heady hedonism of the entire glam-rock movement.

In the end, "The Hogyssey" is an enjoyable, but decidedly mixed bag. It's frustrating to know that Spacehog are merely treading water here, when they could be pursuing some of the more adventurous things that they've attempted in the past.

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