

Album of the Week: Hop Along - *Bark Your Head Off, Dog*



Bark Your Head Off, Dog by Hop Along

Philadelphia indie rock act Hop Along has creative versatility beyond their contemporaries. The band amplifies the singer-songwriter aesthetic with powerful sounds glistening with genuineness. It's a mix of folk, '90s alternative, punk and power-pop that soothes the senses. Their fourth album *Bark Your Head Off, Dog* came out on Apr 6 via Saddle Creek Records and is a testament to their musical evolution. There's a certain fearlessness in each song.

What makes this album different from Hop Along's previous releases is the involvement of string instruments. The violin throughout the album is a fantastic addition. Frances Quinlan's vocals combine with guest backing vocalist Chrissy Tashjian (from fellow Philly act Thin Lips) for amazing harmonies. Frances' brother Mark is the anchor on drums while Joe Reinhart provides perfect chords on lead guitar. Bass guitarist Tyler Long keeps it all together with solid bass lines backing everything up.

Usually when a band shifts towards acoustic instruments, a drop-off in emphasis is expected. Hop Along maintains their trademark intensity in their new album, proof of how talented they are. There's also a fine balance between the electric guitar riffing and the stripped-down tones. The variety of volumes makes for a captivating listening experience. For further examination, give a gander to my top tracks off of the Album of the Week:

"Prior Things" is a gem that's also a prime example of the string instruments' resonance; the violin gives a dose of artistic beauty while Quinlan's lyrical melodies are stunning. Starting off with a somber vibe, "Not Abel" progresses into a forceful jam due to the chorus employing those harmonies mentioned earlier. Reinhart's techniques in "How Simple" are impeccable: he rips a solo halfway through that's a wonderful addition.

Hop Along will be playing in New England twice with a gig at Gateway City Arts in Holyoke, MA, on

May 2 and another at the Royale in Boston the following night. While you're at the show, grab a copy of the new album. The ears will get the experience of listening to a kickass band that'll make you an instant fan.

Bandcamp: hopalong.bandcamp.com

Facebook: facebook.com/hopalongtheband