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Glasvegas creates unique musical combination

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The latest self-titled album from Scottish rock band Glasvegas is a nice deviation from the typical alternative album.

Released Jan. 6, the sound of the album can best be described as a cross between 1950s malt shop tunes and 1980s rock. This unique sound gives the album an identity of its own as well as assurance that Glasvegas will not be lost in the sea of alternative band hopefuls.

The first track on the album, "Flowers & Football Tops," begins with very quiet noise and then builds into a catchy 50s-inspired song. The 80s then enter the mix, contributing noticeable drum beats as well as lyrics typical to the '80s: "Baby/why you not home yet/baby it's getting late/I wish you would be home by now." The song slows down near the end and finishes with the addition of a slowed down rock and roll version of childhood lullaby "You Are My Sunshine."

In between the first five tracks on the album, there are no pauses between songs. This seamless transition interests and inspires curiosity in the listener. Always wondering when the next song will start and where the last song ended, the listener is ensconced in the unique hybrid sound of Glasvegas.

"Daddy's Gone" is a surprisingly good song on the album. Although its beginning makes the listener a little skeptical, at about the 43 second mark the song turns from seemingly unconnected sound to a catchy rock and roll decade clash. Although the beginning is mostly repetition of the words "daddy's gone," an interlude occurs where harmonized "ooing" can be heard that is reminiscent of '50s pop.

The only problem with the album is the fact that the lyrics of the songs cannot always be understood. However, lead singer James Allan has an obvious brogue that adds to the sound rather than detracts. Also, the songs on the CD are focused more on the general sound rather than the specifics such as lyrics or guitar lines, which seem to be mostly absent. The melodies are more important than the instruments in most of the songs on Glasvegas and are accompaniment more than anything else.

This shift from a world of instrumentals to one of melodies and harmonies provides a much needed change for the listener. The overall sound of Glasvegas is slow, laid-back, and a nice deviation from typical alternative music.

All of the songs on Glasvegas are very good, except for "Stabbed" and "Ice Cream Van." "Stabbed" is a simple combination of piano and Allan speaking rather than singing during the song. This odd, almost unsettling mixture seems rather pointless and thrown together. "Ice Cream Van" seems equally pointless. The entire song consists of random "ooing" and sound produced by a synthesizer.

Despite its few flaws, Glasvegas is a band that is sure to be remembered. The combination of Allan's lyrics, band mate Caroline McKay's drum beats and Rab Allan and Paul Donoghue's guitars is essential to the band's success. They have achieved the perfect balance of rock and pop as well as a unique hybrid of decade-typical sound. This unique quality keeps the listener interested throughout the CD and also gives Glasvegas its own identity. This up-and-coming Scottish band will not fade into the background.