

**Teenage Jesus
and the Jerks**
*Beirut Slump / Shut Up
And Bleed* [CD]
(Atavistic)

This new collection of early (1978-79) work from a young Lydia Lunch and friends is a welcome summation of this post-punk chanteuse's classic (and timeless) no-wave proto-noise rock. Including just about everything from the band's rare 7" singles, 12 inches,

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and compilations, this 29-song compendium also generously provides some unreleased bits from *Beirut Slump* sessions (with vocalist Bobby Berkowitz, who sounded a little bit like Marc Almond if he were really strung out).

Heralding the soon-to-be-vital NYC scene that spawned peers like Sonic Youth and Swans, Teenage Jesus and *Beirut Slump's* live shows were fiery and intense exercises in endurance and exorcism, eviscerating audiences with their shards of broken-glass guitars, rudimentary drums, and Lunch's atonal shrieks and agonized wails. You could probably consider this "punk," in a loose way, but Lunch's marriage of visceral aggression to a looser, more experimental and even almost jazz/improv vibe places them firmly into more avante-garde territory.

Cuts like the feral "Less Of Me" showcase Lunch's spunky back-alley attitude, and the haunting whirlwind of the aptly-titled "Tornado Warnings" show the force that TJ&TJ were capable of.

Lydia has since grown up, and has gone on to refine her primal anger and biting cynicism at our troubled culture through other mediums, but never has her attitude been so brutal and primal. Essential works here.

-Todd Zachritz • Rating: 4