

# JASON BAJADA

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## The Jesus Lizard Club

REVIEWS ▯ MUSIC DVD ▯ OCT 04 2011



By Vish Khanna

Though it's impossible to properly convey just how ferocious a live band the Jesus Lizard are, particularly in smaller confines, *Club* does an admirable job capturing the quartet's first stateside show in more than ten years, in July 2009. "What's the difference between Farrah Fawcett and Michael Jackson," singer David Yow asks those assembled at Exit/In in Nashville, TN. "About five hours." And so the mayhem begins on a bad joke and a frenetic "Puss," with Yow almost instantly lost to the cameras, surfing his way into the abyss of the crowd. Save for anti-climatic final album *Blue*, the band's original line-up (Yow, guitarist Duane Denison, drummer Mac McNeilly and bassist David Wm. Sims) touch upon every full-length and EP they released, demonstrating how strongly their songs, including torching versions of "Killer McHann" and "One Evening," stand up today. There's actually nothing dated or putridly nostalgic about this exercise; the Jesus Lizard are like an ageless, un-caged animal with scores to settle and points to prove, particularly



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since they went out rather unceremoniously in 1999 as a weakened, incomplete unit. Fans adore Yow for his showmanship, but in many ways, McNeilly is the heart and soul of the Jesus Lizard and, when he left in 1996, they were tied to a record contract and forced to continue on with their spirit deeply damaged. It's obvious how Yow, in particular, feeds off of the power emanating from one of the best and mightiest drummers in all of underground rock (see Mac's featured semi-solo at the end of "7 vs. 8"). The interplay here colours the entire set. "Gladiator" has one of the most ripped off, propulsive grooves in all of post-punk, but it's never as gorgeously gnarled out as at the hands of the Jesus Lizard, who stomp through the song with sinister intent. If it's ever seemed like some arcane, aggro ritual before, then David Yow gives body surfing purpose and entertainment value; he's self-effacingly older, sure ("I'd like to sincerely apologize for my belly," he says before "Blockbuster," adding, "but get back to me when you're 48," then proceeds to do sit-ups during an instrumental break), but he's still a menace, half-naked and threatening the audience in the midst of songs like "Mouthbreather," as he rolls over and through them like a possessed man caught in a whirlwind. (Is he really kissing a woman in the audience and fondling her breasts while the band lurch into "Then Comes Dudley"? Because if so, that is bold.) As the film continues, the camera work begins to better mirror the frenetic movements of Yow, zooming in to track him as he gets up-close-and-personal with the teeming Nashville crowd during "Nub." But then inexplicably weird post-production effects and screen filters are sporadically employed, almost playfully, and they're a tad distracting. "Bloody Mary" is an irresistible lure that descends into a horrific nightmare, and Yow spends most of the song uncharacteristically stationary, getting as close as he can to crooning for dramatic effect. Soon after, he extends a middle finger and leaves it up for the entire first verse of show closer "Wheelchair Epidemic." Again, there are few better poster boys for "you had to be there" than the Jesus Lizard, but *Club* reveals much about their reunion tour – most notably that it felt like they'd never stopped playing together in the first place. Plus: Soundtrack album; photos.

(MVD)

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