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DVD Review

A Message Exclusive Look At New Music

review by Joe Milliken, Message A&E

Alternative rock and indie-cult fans alike unite, as MVD Video releases the first Cracker/Camper Van Beethoven (CVB) "Camp Out", filmed live in September 2005 at the Pioneer Town Palace in the Southern California desert, near Joshua Tree Monument.

And for Cracker and CVB fans, this just has to be the ultimate mother lode, bringing together the bands' entire history with footage from Cracker, CVB, (featuring a rare appearance from original drummer Chris Peterson) plus rare performances and visits from various "family members" including the off-shoot Monks of Doom and vintage "Porch Stock" footage, CVB's Victor Krumpenacher, Greg Lisher, and Johnathan Segel, and Crackers' Johnny Hickman.

All of which are conducted by one common thread of course, David Lowery, the singer/song writer/guitarist (co-leader of CVB and Cracker), who is about as low-key a front man as you will ever see.

Although visually flawed by rough editing and camera work, the almost bootleg-quality certainly adds to the over all charm of this unique "camp out" setting.

However despite any visual deficiencies there might be, it is more than made up for with a 5.1 surround sound mix that reveals just how talented these musicians really are.

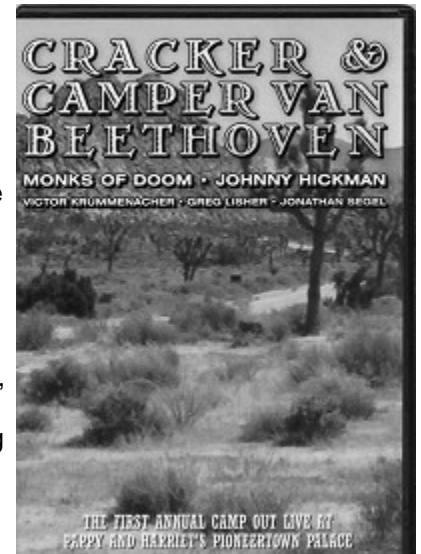
As the various lineups come, go and interchange, the consistent clarity, continuity and tightness of the songs is quite remarkable, considering at one point their might be 10 musicians on stage at once, melding together triple-threat guitars, keyboards, violin, harmonica, a mandolin and pedal steel, and a driving foundation of drums and bass forging along underneath.

The various sets (remarkably) cover the entire careers of all these musicians, including Cracker fan-favorites "Big Dipper", "Movie Star" and "Low", the Camper Van Beethoven classics "Tania", "The Long Plastic Highway" and "Eye Of Fatima", and even "Poison" an "Riverbed" from the almost unknown cult favorite Monks Of Doom.

The solo-acoustic/harmonica performance of Cracker guitarist Johnny Hickman is especially interesting, offering three truly captivating songs, in all their Dylan-esque glory.

There is much more to consider here, but the combinations are too involved to list, but this alternative "camp-out" is sure to please every fan of that CVB/Cracker blues-rock-meets-alt-country groove.

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Cracker/Camper Van Beethoven's "Camp Out Live"

