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Best of Both Worlds

Camping with Cracker

By **Ed Masley**

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David Lowery lost his share of fans when he followed his days at the helm of one of independent rock's most willfully eccentric acts — Camper Van Beethoven — with Cracker, a far more conventional roots-rock band in slacker-rock clothing. Of course, as often happens when your second act is even slightly more conventional, he also gained a lot of fans. The concert film *Cracker & Camper Beethoven: The First Annual Camp Out Live* (Pitch-A-Tent/MVD) is aimed at those open-minded enough to appreciate both sides of the Lowery legacy, as captured live in 2005 at something called Pappy and Harriet's Pioneertown Palace in the California desert. The transition feels as jarring now as it did at the time, when Cracker follows Camper's awe-inspiring set of psychedelic gypsy-punk — and, okay, "Take the Skinheads Bowling" — with its relatively strait-laced brand of rocking (even after solo sets by Johnny Hickman, Victor Krummenacher, Greg Lisher, and Camper side group Monks of Doom). But both acts clearly have their merits, from Hickman's extended guitar jam on the Cracker epic "One Fine Day" to Camper reconnecting with the quirky genius of "Tania" or "Eye of Fatima."

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