

THE JESUS LIZARD

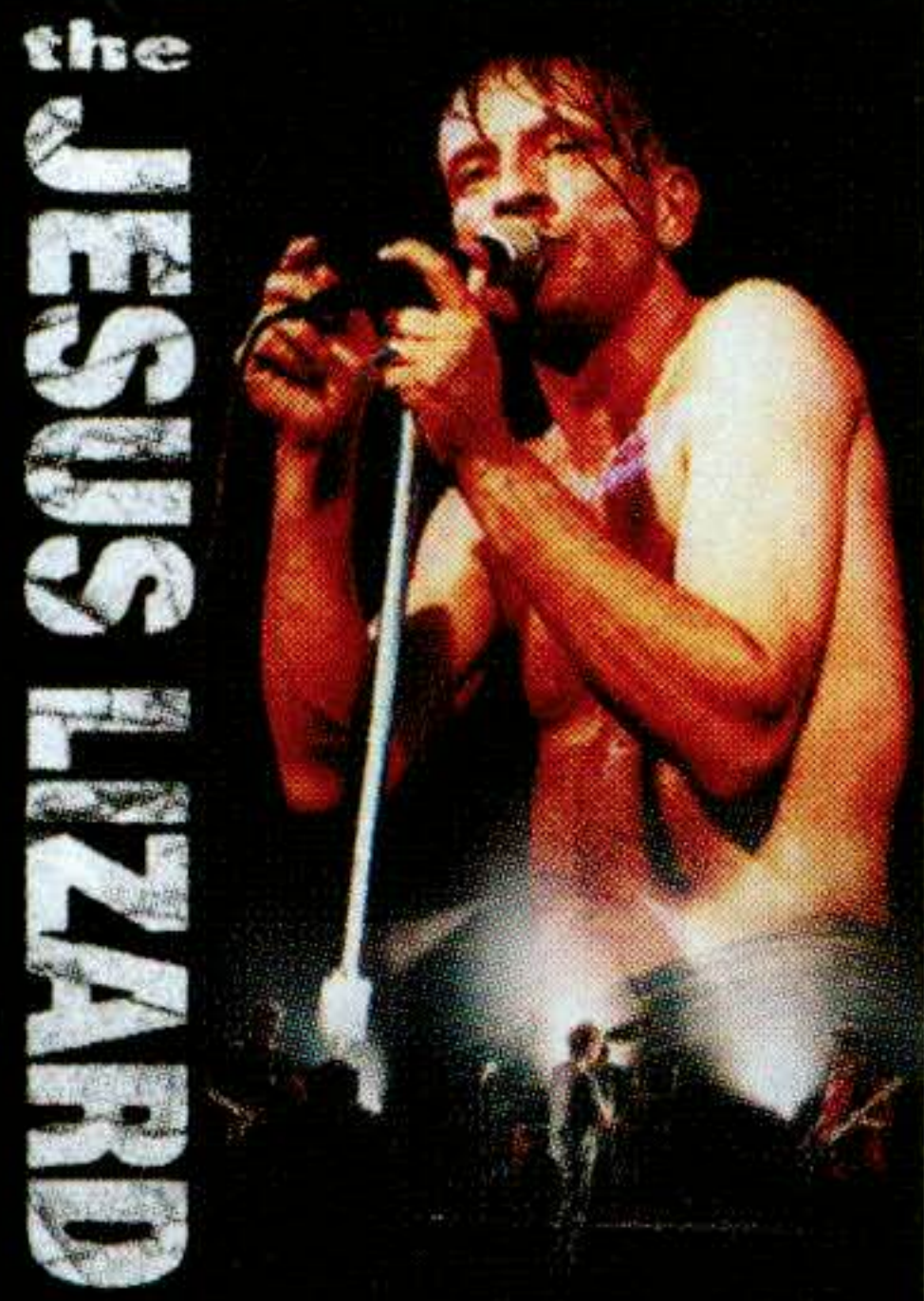
Live DVD

++

MVD

The centerpiece of this recent DVD release is a clear and well-lit two-camera shoot of a '94 Boston gig (shortly before the band sold out). The show seems to have been good enough, but the camerawork is a bit bland and doesn't capture any of the visceral energy we have come to associate with the Jesus Lizard. David Yow was a bit like an American Mark E. Smith, or an Iggy Pop for the nineties, and the band was without question greater than the sum of its equally impressive parts. Steve Albini has often gone on record calling them the best band of their time, with their debut full-length *Goat* being the best album he's worked on.

The real gold here is the bonus features. One is a 15-minute interview with Yow, filmed the same night as the show, with some Boston goofball who for some reason had a local TV show. It's a treat, and illuminating, to see the iconic singer still very much devoted to the band, committed to their independence, and sounding off on all the pressing industry issues facing musicians all those years ago. Also included are five songs from a show at CBGB in August of '92, by far the superior performance and set list. Ideally this DVD would have been a compilation of the best live footage they could find, but I guess we'll take what we can get. **MP**



BOWERBIRDS

Hymns For A Dark Horse

++

Burly Time

The year is 1839. Imagine being trapped on a covered wagon in the middle of the prairie on the Oregon Trail. You've just forded a river, but lost 5 oxen in the process and your little sister has malaria.

Hymns For A Dark Horse is the rickety soundtrack to the rest of the journey. Featuring rustic guitars, looming accordions, and lo-fi textures, what this album lacks in hope it makes up for in its unique and meandering structure of the hymns. **MA**

CAKE

B-sides and Rarities

+

Upbeat Records

Cake's hodgepodge of loose ends amounts to little more than a compilation of unimpressive covers peppered by a couple of recycled originals. Live recordings of two sub-par Cake songs and a remix of the instrumental "Conroy" are the only John McCrea-composed pieces on here. And quirky remakes of Sabbath's "War Pigs" and Barry White's "Never Never Gonna Give You Up" aren't enough to save this effort, which is weak even by Cake's standards. **EF**

CARIBOU

Andorra

++

Merge

Electronic music is often thought of as cold, emotionless, droning or sad. Not so with Caribou's latest release. Its warm tone and nod to the golden age of west coast sixties pop will wash over the listener's ears with wave after wave. In this case, the electronic aspect of the band helps to reinvigorate a sound which, had it been delivered another way, may have rang hollow. **SG**

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Healing the Divide: A Concert for Peace

+

Anti

A live concert featuring Philip Glass and a collab between Tom Waits and the Kronos Quartet? Sweet! Sadly, I should have listened before looking. Followed by a quick lecture from the Dalai Lama and half an album of tantric grunting and chanting, the four Waits songs are barely improved versions of some of his least exciting originals. Glass's contribution, featuring the composer and Gambian musician Foday Musa Suso, is worth checking out—but not for the price of the entire album. **EF**

CROWDED HOUSE

Time on Earth

++

ATO

Every rule has an exception, no? With their latest release *Crowded House* has defied that holiest of rock & roll rules. They've managed to age gracefully and write a relevant record in the process. With *Time on Earth*, the band has transcended their kitsch eighties hit value and wound up a band with an album full of britpop ballads. Don't Dream it's Over! **SG**

DARKEST HOUR

Deliver Us

++

Victory

If *Darkest Hour* hadn't been at it for well over a decade, I'd be much quicker to dismiss this as just another Lamb Of God replica. Truth is, these road dogs have crafted a melodic death metal album that should quench the thirst of the many long hairs they've thrashed in front of, worldwide, over the years. **FC**

DAX RIGGS

We Sing of Only Blood or Love

++

Fat Possum

Borrowing the lyrical croon of Jeff Buckley and the country twang of Ryan Adams, Dax Riggs puts his own shadowy spin on swamp rock. It's a far cry from his days of fronting doom metal outfit Acid Bath, but this first official "solo" effort picks up exactly where his work with Deadboy & the Elephantmen left off. Preexisting fans will approve, and those unfamiliar with the gloomy soul singer will find themselves converting to Daxism upon their first listen. **EF**



JULIETTE & THE LICKS

Four On the Floor

++

The Militia Group

Being as this is Juliette Lewis and her band's second album, the trick isn't so much proving that the actress is a viable (and actually pretty stellar) front woman for a punk-rock group; it's more about determining whether she can turn the raucous energy of one disc into a musical career with the longevity of her acting career. Either that or she figured she had to do something to redeem herself for starring in *Catch & Release*. **EZ**