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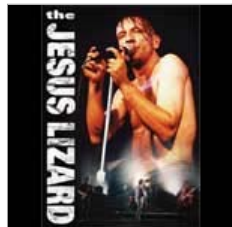
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Jesus Lizard

Live concert footage of Illinois-based noise-rockers flailing with feral fury late in their career



The Jesus Lizard were one of the most uncompromising, original and deliciously wrong groups to surface from the American punk-rock subterranean towards the end of the 20th Century, a messy, sweaty, violent maelstrom of cancerous, corrugated riffage, combusive noise and frontman David Yow's messy, intense stage persona. The group were banned from playing London's The Garage club in the early 90s, after Yow proceeded to kick a ceiling fan to pieces while riding across the heads of his crowd – that's the level of spectacle the group raised their fans to expect. Their music, meanwhile, scraped the murkiest corners of the human soul and served up what it found as entertainment. They were Steve Albini's favourite rock'n'roll group. They even released a split single with Nirvana.

So why doesn't this live DVD quite hit the spot? Filmed in 1997, it captures the group two years into an unlikely contract with the majors, lashing with fury in a small American punk venue, adrift in the post-grunge fallout, telling the crowd their song 'Mailman' is a Soundgarden cover. The band play with barely-controlled fury, Yow dressed in his uniform of faded blue jeans and a swiftly discarded white tee shirt, deflecting smartass heckles from the youthful audience and spending much of the set hurtling and rolling above their heads.

This is how I remember the Jesus Lizard shows of my youth, but the chaos falls a little short of the full-on Lizard experience; the Liar-era material still shines, but there's a sense of exhaustion within the band, a sense of merciless slog that some of their best songs, like 'Slave Ship', elevated to some marvellous enervation, but here is a little disillusioning. That said, five songs from a 1992 set at CBGB more than make up the deficit, capturing the group in more unhinged and destructive mode.

By: Stevie Chick



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