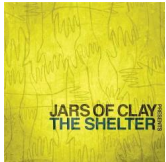


Jars Of Clay - The Shelter (2010)

Written by bluesever

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1 *Small Rebellions* (Feat. Brandon Heath) 2 *Call My Name* (Feat. Audrey Assad, Thad Cockrell) 3 *We Will Follow* (Feat. Gungor) 4 *Eyes Wide Open* (Feat. Burlap To Cashmere, Derek Webb, Mac Powell) 5 *Shelter* (Feat. Brandon Heath) 6 *Out Of My Hands* (Feat. – Mike Donehey) 7 *No Greater Love* 8 *Run In The Night* (Psalm 27) (Feat. – Thad Cockrell) 9 *Lay It Down* (Feat. – David Crowder, Dawn Michelle) 10 *Love Will Find Us* (Feat. Matt Maher, Sara Groves) 11 *Benediction* (Feat. Amy Grant) Dan Haseltine - vocals Stephen Mason - leads guitar Matthew Odmark - guitar Charlie Lowell - keyboards, piano

When a band has been around for over sixteen years, you know they've got to be doing something right. With constant innovation being a crucial factor to stay fresh and interesting in the minds of listeners, Jars of Clay is a very purposeful band; with every new project from the band comes a new direction and approach, keeping the quartet a timeless addition among the industry. 2009's tour de force *The Long Fall Back To Earth* was arguably the band's greatest achievement since their astounding debut, but Jars wastes no time getting back to work with *The Shelter*, a collaboration album of which many praises should be sung.

The Shelter doesn't stray too far from the musical precedent that *The Long Fall...* set, but it's unquestionably a self-contained record. With plenty of experimentation abound, it takes advantage of a great array of approaches while also taking time when it proves most effective. While there aren't many moments that border on frenetic, it maintains a sense of accessibility without feeling watered down, an equilibrium that's tough to master. Most tracks stay within the certain confines, but a couple tracks take very different turns. "No Greater Love" and "Lay It Down" are the most aggressive on the album and probably reflect *The Long Fall...* the most of the record, while "Eyes Wide Open" finds a primarily bluegrass/folk tinge, with clever acoustic strumming and an upbeat handclap section.

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What makes The Shelter most unique, however, is the surfeit of special guest appearances on the project. "No Greater Love" aside, every track features at least one other artist's contribution; Dan Haseltine still leads vocally, but rather than just handing off a verse or two to someone else for every track, the voices are mixed into the composition of the song, sometimes always in unison with Haseltine. One will immediately notice an additional singer on the opener "Small Rebellions," but picking out that it's none other than Brandon Heath isn't entirely obvious. On one hand, it could be argued that such a wide variety and large volume of vocalists on one cohesive project feels a little distracting at times, but repeat listens remedy this factor quite easily.

Not one track really lacks on The Shelter, but a few tracks especially stand out. Thad Cockrell and Audrey Assad complete "Call My Name," a masterful track of chiming keyboards and straight-up worshipful cries, while "Eyes Wide Open" (featuring guests Mac Powell, Derek Webb and Burlap to Cashmere) boasts such lines as "God bruised the heels we dug in the ground that we might move closer to love." Leigh Nash shines with her stunning background work on "Out Of My Hands" as Haseltine and Tenth Avenue North's Mike Donehey remain in awe of Christ's choosing us to be His people ("It's out of my hands, it was from the start/In light of what you've done for me/you lifted my hands, you set me apart"). Every track speaks something new through every listen because of the vast variety found here, leading to an extremely rewarding experience for the listener each and every time.

It seems Jars is back, and they've brought some friends along with them. Never lacking in musical and lyrical brilliance, Jars of Clay pulls off yet another masterpiece right on the heels of another. Without attempting to outdo The Long Fall..., the band takes a completely alternate route for The Shelter; it's remarkably different for the seasoned veterans, and given how long these guys have been around, it's quite demonstrative of how talented this band is (as well as their guests). Using collaboration in its best form no other project this year can boast, The Shelter is a clear standout for 2010 and a worship record no fan should miss. ---Roger Gelwicks, jesusfreakhideout.com

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