

## Jars of Clay

If I Left the Zoo

(EssentialRecords)

If there is one band that can break out of the Christian rock niche into the pop mainstream, it's Jars of Clay.

The Grammy-winning band's third album displays enough musical and lyrical muscle to spell crossover success, particularly the catchy pop nugget "Unforgettable You," which sounds like Matthew Sweet at his best. In most cases, the band's lyrics skillfully walk the tricky line between inspiring the faithful and grabbing the interest of secular listeners.

Jars of Clay does occasionally fall victim to a common trap of Christian rock — adopting a highly derivative sound that courts cliché in its effort to appeal to mainstream listeners steeped in secular rock and pop.

But Jars of Clay has enough native talent to transcend the cliché and make solid pop in its own right. — Sean Scully

"Now Hear This"

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