

Jars Of Clay - Good Monsters (2006)

Written by bluesever

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1. *Work* 3:53 2. *Dead Man (Carry Me)* 3:19 3. *All My Tears* 3:45 4. *Even Angels Cry* 4:21
5. *There Is A River* 3:51 6. *Good Monsters* 4:05 7. *Oh My God* 6:05 8. *Surprise* 3:50 9. *Take Me Higher* 4:40
10. *Mirrors & Smoke* 3:58 11. *Light Gives Heat* 4:41 12. *Water Under The Bridge* 3:57 13. *Work (Acoustic)* African Children's Choir Bass – Aaron Sands Cello – John Catchings Drums – Jeremy Lutito French Horn – Erin Horner, Jennifer Kummer Mastered By – Richard Dodd Mixed By – Vance Powell Mixed By [Assisted By] – Allen Ditto, Nathan Yarborough, Seth Morton, Will James Viola – Kris Wilkinson Violin – Jonathan Beach, Ned Henry Vocals - Dan Haseltine Vocals [Soloist] – Elizabeth Panga Vocals – Ashley Cleveland, Kate York, Kim Fleming, Leigh Nash, Rosemary Butler

Fans accurately predicted a return to a harder-edged rock outing after the band's three previous efforts -- 2003's *Furthermore* and *Who We Are Instead*, as well as 2005's *Redemption Songs* -- leaned primarily toward a stripped-down folk sound. *Monsters* stretches the four-piece band past any set of expectations and results in its boldest effort to date. Known for introspection and openness, their lyrics this time around offer no singular message other than an unapologetic admittance that they don't have all the answers. Songs bounce from haunting to lilting, pensive to provoking, ultimately creating a set list that is cohesive only in its self-examination. Among the many standouts, the jarring opener, "Work," manifests within seconds that acoustic guitars have been set aside in lieu of a more raw, glaring sound. "Dead Man (Carry Me)" gets going with a jangly guitar riff and heavy beats resembling secular contemporaries the Killers. "There Is a River" finds its place among the band's greatest, taking an Americana drive à la Counting Crows' "Mrs. Potter's Lullaby" or Ingram Hill's "The Captain." "Mirrors & Smoke" features a duet between lead vocalist Dan Haseltine and ex-Sixpence None the Richer frontwoman Leigh Nash. The bandmembers continue to bear sonic ode to Toad the Wet Sprocket and U2 on this record, but they draw upon enough of their own trademark sound that only isolated moments would evoke comparisons to the latter's mid-decade classic *How to Dismantle an Atomic Bomb*. *Good Monsters* doesn't aim for arena rock, but it remains well-crafted and vulnerable at the core. Jars of Clay bear the cross of being compared to their self-titled debut with every following record. *Good Monsters* is a departure from that debut, but assuredly a welcome one that yet again demonstrates the band's depth and talent. ---Jared Johnson, AllMusic Review

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