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Death Cab for Cutie: The Open Door EP

By Kristen Johnson

After 12 years of recording and 10 compilation releases, Death Cab for Cutie has proven one thing: their sound is never, ever going to change. Their newly released EP, *The Open Door*, comfortably adds to the family of Benjamin Gibbard creations.



With lyrics of love obsession similar to Joni Mitchell's and a set of vocal chords comparable with Forrest Kline from *Hellogoodbye*, Gibbard and his band have long made an impact on the indie rock scene. DCFC's *The Open Door EP* is a Death Cab staple, proving their steady talent but also emphasizing their comfort with their static sound. Do they fear to waver from their past, or do they just know what works?

This collection includes five tracks, including the demo of "Talking Bird," which first premiered on the May 2008 studio album, *Narrow Stairs*. This newly released version is shockingly light with a ukulele rhythm and a completely acoustic fluidity. Last year's version has a much more processed sound with echoing dark melodies, an impacting contradiction to 2009's track.

The other four tracks on this release do not distance themselves from the DCFC image. Each could be described in terms of past Death Cab songs. For example, the new "I Was Once a Loyal Lover," is a blend of the older "Crooked Teeth," and "This Charming Man," a playful confession of identity matched by fast and simple drum rhythms.

Gibbard's side-project band, the Postal Service, has furthered his impact on the scene with co-indie rock bands like Iron & Wine covering their hits. Their cover of the Postal Service's "Such Great Heights," mesmerized audiences of both the 2005 film *Garden State* and a 2006 M&M's commercial.

Some bands get stuck in ruts and are unable to change their sound from album to album. However, the rut that Death Cab has formed for themselves within the past couple years is so diverse that it continues to work for them, and Gibbard knows what he's doing. For fans of his joggingly smooth voice, *The Open Door* is a great spend. For those who already know they're not a fan of Death Cab's melodiously punchy style, this release will not change your opinion.

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