

REVIEWS

REISSUE

THE POSTAL SERVICE

Give Up: Deluxe 10th Anniversary Edition

[Sub Pop]



The two biggest sellers in Sub Pop's history reveal some of the key differences between the generation that raged along with grunge in the early '90s and the one that took solace in emo in the early '00s. Whereas Nirvana's *Bleach*, which dropped in 1989 but didn't really hit until a few years later, is caustic and vague—notable less for what Kurt Cobain said than for how forcefully he said it—the Postal Service's *Give Up* is clean, clever and emotionally forthright. For young folks reared on the internet, its oversharing set to electro-pop offered relief for the queasiness of reaching adulthood.

Ten years on, *Give Up*—remastered and expanded here onto two discs, complete with remixes, B-sides and two new tunes—doesn't sound dated, but it is a sign of its times. Postal Service takes its name from the snail-mail manner in which Death Cab for Cutie frontman Ben Gibbard and electronic musician Jimmy Tamborello exchanged the snippets of music that became these songs. Nowadays, they'd use email, and the idea of a well-known rocker doing synth-pop wouldn't strike anyone as weird. What remains unusual is the quality of the songs. Playing on the nervous excitement of Tamborello's blips and beats, Gibbard remains hopeful in the face of fading youth, romantic conundrums, political anxieties and, as he sings in one particularly memorable line, the indignities of living in “a gaudy apartment complex.” New songs “Turn Around” and “A Tattered Line of String” continue in the same vein, though the latter's brash beat and frazzled lyrics suggest the young romantics of “Such Great Heights” are slightly older—and no closer to figuring things out. —Kenneth Patridge

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