



Death Cab for Cutie

⚠ This is an old revision of this page, as edited by Taiga Norge (talk | contribs) at 22:14, 10 August 2018 (→ *Departure of Walla and Kintsugi (2013–2016): Ask for pages on Dave/Zac to be created!!*). The present address (URL) is a permanent link to this revision, which may differ significantly from the current revision.

Death Cab for Cutie is an American alternative rock band, formed in Bellingham, Washington in 1997.^[6] The band is composed of Ben Gibbard (vocals, guitar, piano), Nick Harmer (bass), Dave Depper (guitar, keyboards, vocals), Zac Rae (keyboards, guitar), and Jason McGerr (drums).

The band was originally a solo project by Gibbard. Upon getting a record deal^[7], Gibbard expanded the project into a complete band and released a debut album, *Something About Airplanes*, in 1998. The group's fourth album, 2003's *Transatlanticism*, broke into the mainstream both critically and commercially, with songs from the album featured in numerous TV series and films. The band's major-label debut for Atlantic Records, 2005's *Plans*, went platinum. A ninth studio album, *Thank You for Today*, is due in August 2018.

Death Cab for Cutie's music has been labeled as indie rock, indie pop, and alternative rock. It is noted for its use of unconventional instrumentation, as well as Gibbard's distinctive voice and unique lyrical style. Since their formation, the band has released eight full-length studio albums, four EPs, two live EPs, one live album, and one demo album.

The band takes its name from the song "Death Cab for Cutie," written by Neil Innes and Vivian Stanshall, and performed by their group the Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah Band. See *Name section*.

History

Early years (1997–2002)

Death Cab for Cutie



Death Cab for Cutie performing in 2006

Background information

Origin	 Bellingham, Washington, U.S.
Genres	 Alternative rock ^{[1][2]} · indie rock ^{[2][3]} · indie pop ^{[2][4][5]}
Years active	1997–present
Labels	 Warner Music · Atlantic · Barsuk · Fierce Panda · Sub Pop · Grand Hotel van Cleef
Members	<div> <div> Ben Gibbard</div> <div> Nick Harmer</div> <div> Jason McGerr</div> <div> Dave Depper</div> <div> Zac Rae</div> </div>
Past members	<div> <div> Nathan Good</div> <div> Michael Schorr</div> <div> Chris Walla</div> </div>

Death Cab for Cutie began as a solo project of Ben Gibbard in 1997, while he was the guitar player for the band Pinwheel, and was recorded under the name All-Time Quarterback. As Death Cab for Cutie, Gibbard released a cassette titled *You Can Play These Songs with Chords* the same year. The release was surprisingly successful, and Gibbard decided to expand the project into a complete band, recruiting Chris Walla (who had also worked on the cassette) as lead guitarist, Nick Harmer as bass player, and Nathan Good as drummer.^[8] Death Cab for Cutie was officially formed at Western Washington University in Bellingham, Washington, and lyrics from early songs include local references that were important to the band's development.^[9] Many of the early songs were recorded in the basement of an Ellis Street home Gibbard lived in with several roommates in Bellingham.^[10]

Website	deathcabforcutie.com (http://deathcabforcutie.com)
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The four released their debut full-length studio album, *Something About Airplanes*, on August 18, 1998. The album was favorably reviewed in the independent music scene. In 1998 the band also met their long-term manager Jordan Kurland. Kurland had heard good things about them, and after a failed attempt to see them play at South By Southwest finally hooked up with them when touring with his then client, the band Crumb.^[11]

The band released their follow-up second album, *We Have the Facts and We're Voting Yes*, in March 2000. Nathan Good left the band at some point during this album's production, and was briefly replaced by Jayson Tolzdorf-Larson. Gibbard played drums on the majority of the album, with Good's playing on "The Employment Pages" and "Company Calls Epilogue" being kept on the final release.^[8] Although Tolzdorf-Larson did not contribute to the album, he did appear on the song "Spring Break Broke", from the "Death Cab for Fiver" 7-inch record, and also joined the band on two tours, including their first full tour of the United States. Tolzdorf-Larson was later replaced by Michael Schorr, who would first appear on *The Forbidden Love EP*, released on October 24, 2000.

In 2001, Death Cab for Cutie released their third album, *The Photo Album*. Limited editions of this album contained three bonus tracks, which were later released separately as *The Stability EP*.^[12] The album produced the band's first charting single "A Movie Script Ending", which reached number 123 on the UK Singles Chart, and was the first of three songs by the band to be featured on the television show *The O.C.* *The Photo Album*'s two other singles, "I Was a Kaleidoscope" and "We Laugh Indoors", also reached numbers 115 and 122 on the UK Singles Chart, respectively.

***Transatlanticism* (2003)**

In 2003 there was yet another change of drummer with Jason McGerr, who had previously played in the band Eureka Farm with Gibbard and Harmer, joining the band. McGerr's debut came with the band's next release, their fourth album *Transatlanticism*,^[8] which was released in October 2003.^[8] The album received critical acclaim and launched the band into mainstream commercial success, with the two singles "The Sound of Settling" and "Title and Registration", appearing in the soundtracks of the television shows *The O.C.*,^[9] *Six Feet Under*, *CSI: Miami* and *Californication*, and the films *Wedding Crashers*, *Easy A*, and *Mean Creek*. A tenth-anniversary version containing demos and outtakes was released in 2013.^[13]

Signing to Atlantic and *Plans* (2004–2006)

In early 2004 the band recorded a live *EP*, entitled *The John Byrd EP*, named for their sound engineer was released on Barsuk Records in March.^[8]

Death Cab for Cutie had been contacted by major labels on-and-off for several years, but it was only after the proven success of *Transatlanticism* that they decided to start talking to labels about a potential deal. The fact that they had already achieved considerable success allowed the band to negotiate with a lot of creative freedom.^[11] According to their manager Jordan Kurland, the band had spoken to "pretty much all of them", and then decided they were most satisfied with their offer from Atlantic Records.^[11] In November 2004, the band signed a "long-term worldwide deal" with Atlantic, leaving their long-time label Barsuk Records.^[14] Gibbard stated on the band's official website that nothing would change, except that "next to the picture of Barsuk holding a 7", there will be the letter "A" on both the spine and back of our upcoming albums."^[15] After signing to Atlantic, the band was still nervous about corporate economics, and encouraged fans to download its songs from the Internet.^[16]



Ben Gibbard performing at the Street Scene music festival in San Diego.

The band released their fifth studio album and debut major-label release, *Plans*, on August 30, 2005, to critical and commercial success.^{[17][18]} Two singles from the album, "Soul Meets Body" and "Crooked Teeth", reached the top ten of the US *Billboard* Alternative Songs chart, while the single "I Will Follow You into the Dark" became the band's best-selling single to date. Death Cab for Cutie performed "Crooked Teeth" live on *Saturday Night Live* on January 14, 2006.^[19] *Plans* received a nomination for the Grammy Award for Best Alternative Album of 2005, as well as achieving gold certification in 2006 after being featured on the *Billboard* Album chart for 47 consecutive weeks, and later was certified platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America in early May 2008.^[20]

The band released a touring DVD, *Drive Well, Sleep Carefully*, in 2005. Copies of the DVD were given away to promote animal rights, and the band are supporters of the activist group PETA.^[21] In early 2006, the band announced the upcoming release of *Directions: The Plans Video Album*, which features eleven short films inspired by songs from the *Plans* album, each directed by a different person. The videos were posted one at a time at the band's website, and the DVD went on sale April 11, 2006. The iTunes Store began selling the videos (formatted for iPod) early on March 28, 2006. Lance Bangs, P.R. Brown, Ace Norton, Jeffrey Brown, Lightborne, Autumn de Wilde, Rob Schrab, Laurent Briet and Monkmus, as well as Aaron Stewart-Ahn, are among directors that have contributed to the project. An episode of MTV2's Subterranean played these videos for the whole hour, plus discussion with members of the band.^[22] Death Cab for Cutie made their first appearance at Neil Young's annual Bridge School Benefit, and completed their lengthy 2006 tour of the United States on December 10, 2006, finishing with a show at the KeyArena in Seattle, Washington.^[23]

Narrow Stairs and The Open Door EP (2007–2009)

Walla claimed on October 18, 2007, that a new album was "in full swing" and that they had six songs completed.^[24] He went on to call the new music "weird," "spectacular," and "creepy," saying that it contained "lots of blood."^[24] He noted that the album had a "Can jam" that lasted 10 minutes, which Walla said that he would have never imagined doing in 1998.^[24] In a *Billboard* piece in January 2008, the band promised the album to be a "curve ball" and said that although it would have slower songs, there would be some surprises. Walla said, "I'm really excited about it. It's really got some teeth. The landscape of the thing is way, way more

lunar than the urban meadow sort of thing that has been happening for the last couple of records."^[25] Walla added that the album was "louder and more dissonant and ... abrasive." They claimed that they were influenced by "synth-punk band Brainiac."^[25]

Their sixth full-length album, *Narrow Stairs*, was released on May 12, 2008. The first single, "I Will Possess Your Heart", was released on March 18, 2008.^[26] The album version of the song is over eight minutes in length, leading radio and promotional edits to remove the extended intro to shorten the song to four minutes. The second single, "Cath...", was released on July 21, 2008, and the third single "Grapevine Fires", was released on March 3, 2009. The two singles "I Will Possess Your Heart" and "Cath..." both reached the top ten of the Alternative Songs chart, while "Grapevine Fires" reached number 21. In an album review, MTV writer James Montgomery said "Narrow Stairs is a great album, one that could make them very famous, but could very well also kill their careers," and although "Death Cab for Cutie had gone insane," he believed the LP could be "an early contender for the best album of 2008."^[27] Indeed, *Narrow Stairs* was nominated for "Best Alternative Music Album" and "I Will Possess Your Heart" received a nomination for "Best Rock Song" at the 51st Grammy Awards. The band lost in both categories, but prompted debate after appearing at the ceremony sporting blue ribbons to protest against what they view as the excessive use of Auto-Tune in the music industry.^[28] *Narrow Stairs* was their first album to reach No.1 on the Billboard 200 chart on May 31, 2008. Though the album achieved strong success, Gibbard went on to call it the band's most "depressing record".^[29]

On March 31, 2009, the band released *The Open Door EP*, containing tracks left off *Narrow Stairs* as well as a demo for "Talking Bird".^[30] *The Open Door EP* was nominated for Best Alternative Music Album at the 52nd Grammy Awards.^[31] In 2009 the band wrote the song, "Meet Me on the Equinox" for *The Twilight Saga: New Moon* soundtrack. "Meet Me on the Equinox" was not the first song that Death Cab for Cutie contributed to a soundtrack, as they contributed "Soul Meets Body" to the soundtrack for Catch and Release in 2006.^[32]

Codes and Keys (2010–2012)

The band's seventh album, *Codes and Keys*, was released on May 31, 2011.^[33] Ben Gibbard and Nick Harmer have both been quoted as saying that the album was "a much less guitar-centric album than we've ever made before".^[34]

In March 2011, Ben Gibbard performed a new Death Cab for Cutie song at a solo concert in San Francisco, which would later be revealed as the title track from *Codes and Keys*. The track list for the album was released on Death Cab for Cutie's website on March 15, 2011.^[35]

The first single from the album, "You Are a Tourist", was released on March 29, 2011. The song is notable for its music video being first ever live, scripted, one-take music video shoot ever: the group streamed a live performance of the music video as it was being recorded on April 5, 2011. The video was accomplished in a single take, using multiple cameras, and no edits or re-takes. The innovative and artistic production employed dancers, actors, and projected images.^[36] "You Are a Tourist" is also notable as Death Cab for Cutie's first (and to date, only) single to reach number one, topping the *Billboard* US Alternative Songs, US Adult Alternative Songs, and Bubbling Under Hot 100 Singles charts, as well as reaching number three on the US Rock Songs chart. The band released the video for the song "Home is a Fire" on May 9, 2011, featuring street artist Shepard Fairey plastering lyrics from the song around Los Angeles. "Stay Young, Go Dancing" was released as the

second single on September 26, 2011, reaching number 31 on the Alternative Songs chart. "Underneath the Sycamore" was released as the third single on January 10, 2012, but did not chart. *Codes and Keys* was nominated for Best Alternative Music Album at the 54th Grammy Awards in 2012.

The band was due to play at the Ottawa Bluesfest on July 17, 2011, but the outdoor stage collapsed earlier in the evening after sudden severe weather hit the area.^[37] On their website, the band posted: "Our hearts go out to those that were injured and we are so thankful that no one was killed."^[38]

In 2012 the band toured across the globe, starting in Australia, New Zealand, Southeast Asia.^[39] In April and May, the band toured in the United States with members of the Magik*Magik Orchestra, who collaborated on tracks on *Codes and Keys*.^[40] After headlining the inaugural Bunbury Music Festival in Cincinnati, the band played summer festivals in Europe.

Departure of Walla and *Kintsugi* (2013–2016)

On October 11, 2013, the began working on their eighth studio album, produced by Rich Costey.^[41] In an interview with Stereogum, Gibbard said of the new album, "I do think from start to finish it's a much better record than *Codes And Keys*. If that record turned anybody off, I feel pretty strongly that this one could win them back. There are threads in this one that connect back to our earliest stuff that people love."^[42]

As part of the 2014 Record Store Day, the band released its first live album, a vinyl-only double LP recorded during various 2012 tour dates with Magik*Magik Orchestra. Included within the packaging was a code for a digital download of the recording.^[43]

On August 13, 2014, after 17 years as a member of Death Cab for Cutie, guitarist and songwriter Chris Walla decided to part ways with the band, with his last performance occurring on September 13, 2014 at the Rifflandia Music Festival in Victoria, British Columbia.^[44] Walla stated that he plans to "...continue making music, producing records, and erring on the side of benevolence and beauty whenever possible."^[45] When asked in an interview about Walla's involvement in the eighth album, McGerr confirmed that Walla "played on everything and has been involved all the way through, even in the mixing. Even though he's played his last show with us, he's still been involved in everything involving this record."^[42]

On January 12, 2015, the band officially announced the album, titled *Kintsugi*, which was released on March 31, 2015.^[46] *Kintsugi* was nominated for the Grammy Award for Best Rock Album.^[47] The band toured *Kintsugi* across the world through September 2016, with new touring members Dave Depper (guitar/keyboards) and Zac Rae (keyboards/guitar) replacing Walla.

In October 2016, the band announced the release of a new standalone single, entitled "Million Dollar Loan". The song, intended to be a protest song against Republican Party presidential nominee Donald Trump, was released as a part of a campaign entitled 30 Days, 30 Songs (<http://www.30days30songs.com/>), in which a previously unreleased song by a different artist was put out each day. Other artists participating in the project included Aimee Mann, who sang on Gibbard's solo album, as well as My Morning Jacket's Jim James and R.E.M.^[48] In a Facebook post about the song, Gibbard mentioned both Depper and Rae as part of the band and contributors to the writing of the song's arrangement, indicating that the two had joined the band on a full-time basis.^[49]

***Thank You for Today* (2017–present)**

On November 17, 2017, the band announced via Instagram that it had begun work on a new studio album due in 2018.^[50] On May 1, 2018 the band published teaser video indicating an August 2018 release date.^[51] On June 12, 2018, the band announced the title of the new album, *Thank You for Today*, and shared the lead single from the album, "Gold Rush." The album is set for release on August 17.^[52]

Musical style

Death Cab for Cutie's music has been labeled indie rock,^{[2][3][53]} indie pop,^{[2][4][5]} emo,^{[54][55][56][57]} and alternative rock.^{[1][2]} Death Cab for Cutie's early work on *You Can Play These Songs with Chords* was described by *Rolling Stone* as "emotion through its lack of emotion".^[58] Pitchfork also remarked that the work on the cassette was "ultra-lo-fi".^[59] On *Something About Airplanes* the band's style remained similar, with some new instrumental work introduced; "flute, synth, or cello" were noted by Allmusic's Nitsuh Abebe.^[60] On *We Have the Facts and We're Voting Yes* the band again expanded their use of unorthodox instruments, including organ and glockenspiel. Pitchfork called them a "gentle niche" in the current rock climate, compared with bands such as Modest Mouse and Built to Spill.^[61]

Rolling Stone reviewed *Transatlanticism* and commented that it contained "melodic, melancholy songs about feeling both smart and confused, hopelessly romantic but wary of love."^[62] Gibbard's voice was described as "plaintive boy-next-door"^[62] *Entertainment Weekly* commented on the music on *Plans*, saying "The lush arrangements are long on hothouse organs and pianos, but short on the squirmy guitars and squirrely beats that, on Gibbard's best work, offset his sweet voice and borderline-maudlin poetics with a sense of emotional danger."^[18] The band's music on *Plans* was described by the *Dallas Morning News* as "a literate, whispery style, the kind of stuff that normally sounds better in headphones than in large venues".^[63]

In an interview with *Shave Magazine*, Ben Gibbard commented on his song writing saying that he "never sit[s] down to write an album number one. I just kind of sit down and write songs and the theme kind of makes itself apparent. But I would never say I was writing about searching for something as much as just trying to document with every song where I am in that moment when I'm writing that song. If a theme kind of makes itself apparent in a record, it has more to do with the fact that just what's been on my mind recently. So I guess clearly I have been and was and am, but it was never a conscious decision."^[64]

Band name

Gibbard took the band name from the song "Death Cab for Cutie" written by Neil Innes and Vivian Stanshall and performed by their group the Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah Band. The song was performed by the Bonzos in the Beatles film *Magical Mystery Tour*. The song's name was in turn taken from an invented pulp fiction crime magazine, devised by the English academic Richard Hoggart in his 1957 study of working class culture, *The Uses of Literacy*. In a 2011 interview, Gibbard stated, "The name was never supposed to be something that someone was going to reference 15 years on. So yeah, I would absolutely go back and give it a more obvious name."^[65]

Members

Current members

- Benjamin (Ben) Gibbard – lead vocals, guitars, piano (1997–present), drums (1997, 2000), bass

Former members

- Chris Walla – guitars, piano, keyboards,

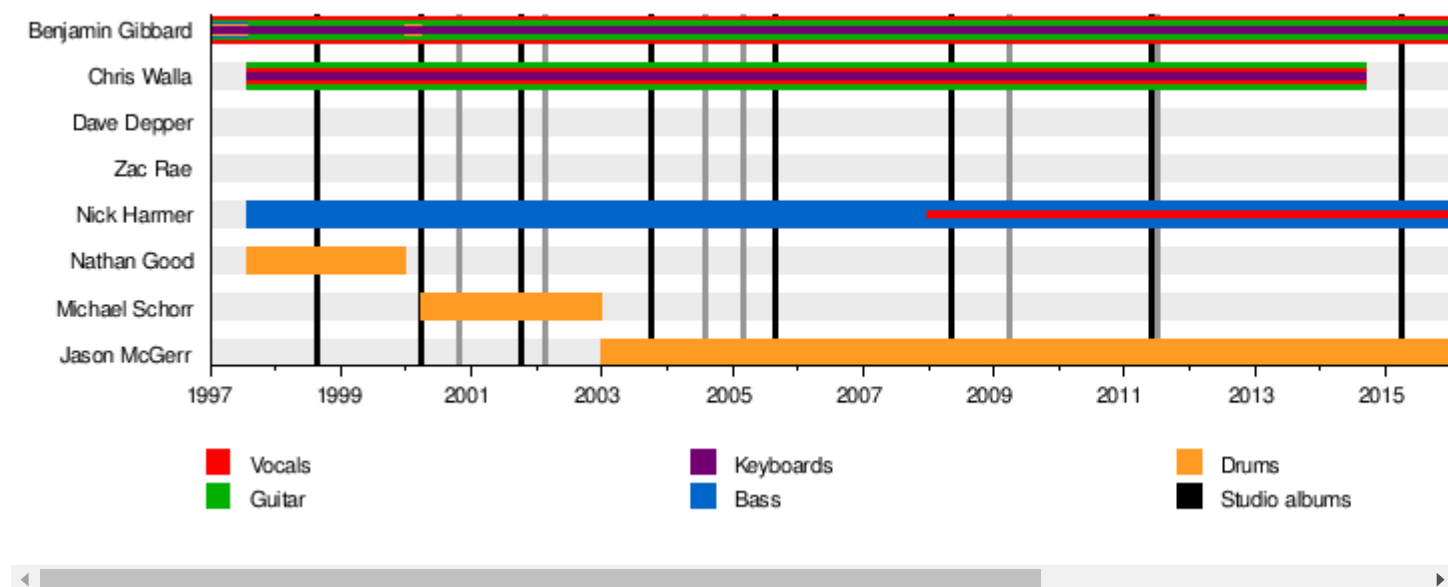
(1997)

- Nick Harmer – bass guitar (1997–present), backing vocals (2008–present)
- Jason McGerr – drums, percussion (2003–present)
- Dave Depper – guitars, keyboards, backing vocals (2016–present; touring member 2015–2016)
- Zac Rae – keyboards, guitar (2016–present; touring member 2015–2016)

backing vocals (1997–2014)

- Nathan Good – drums, percussion (1997–1999)
- Michael Schorr – drums, percussion (2000–2003)

Timeline



Discography

Studio albums

- *Something About Airplanes* (1998)
- *We Have the Facts and We're Voting Yes* (2000)
- *The Photo Album* (2001)
- *Transatlanticism* (2003)
- *Plans* (2005)
- *Narrow Stairs* (2008)
- *Codes and Keys* (2011)
- *Kintsugi* (2015)
- *Thank You for Today* (2018)

Awards and nominations

Grammy Award

Year	Nominee / work	Award	Result
2006	<i>Plans</i>	Best Alternative Music Album	Nominated
2007	<i>Directions</i>	Best Long Form Music Video	Nominated
	"I Will Follow You into the Dark"	Best Pop Performance by a Duo or Group with Vocals	Nominated
2009	"I Will Possess Your Heart"	Best Rock Song	Nominated
	<i>Narrow Stairs</i>	Best Alternative Music Album	Nominated
2010	<i>The Open Door EP</i>		Nominated
2012	<i>Codes and Keys</i>		Nominated
2016	<i>Kintsugi</i>	Best Rock Album	Nominated

MTV Video Music Award

Year	Nominee / work	Award	Result
2008	"I Will Possess Your Heart"	Best Editing (Editor: Aaron Stewart-Ahn and Jeff Buchanan)	Won
		Best Cinematography (Director of Photography: Aaron Stewart-Ahn and Shawn Kim)	Nominated
2009	"Grapevine Fires"	Breakthrough Video	Nominated
2011	"You Are a Tourist"	Best Art Direction (Art Director: Nick Gould, Tim Nackashi and Anthony Maitz)	Nominated

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External links

- [Official website](https://www.deathcabforcutie.com) (<https://www.deathcabforcutie.com>) 
 - [Death Cab for Cutie](https://curlie.org/Arts/Music/Bands_and_Artists/D/Death_Cab_for_Cutie/) (https://curlie.org/Arts/Music/Bands_and_Artists/D/Death_Cab_for_Cutie/) at [Curlie](#)
 - [Death Cab for Cutie](https://archive.org/details/DeathCabforCutie) (<https://archive.org/details/DeathCabforCutie>) at the [Internet Archive's Live Music Archive](#)
 - [Death Cab for Cutie](https://www.allmusic.com/artist/p365455) (<https://www.allmusic.com/artist/p365455>) at [AllMusic](#)
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