

REVIEWS

THE DECEMBERISTS

*Long Live the King*

[Capitol]

Even as they fail to hold together in one piece quite like this year's full-length *The King Is Dead*, most of the songs on this six-track EP strike a fine balance between frontman Colin Meloy's literary depth and some easily accessible tunes. The real keeper here is "Foregone," on which Meloy's love poetry is driven forward by a homey steel-guitar lick. Also on the simpler side are the Prince-ly named folk workout "I4U & U4Me" and the concluding "Sonnet," with horns that threaten to burst into Cole Porter's "Anything Goes." Still, two very different takes on death ensure that the record as a whole can't be categorized as warm and sweet. A cover of the Grateful Dead's "Row Jimmy" is an effective stab at solemn psychedelic rock, while the even creepier "E. Watson" finds Meloy in a familiar position, reciting a richly detailed story with no-frills acoustic accompaniment. —David Styburski

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