



Mission Door
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CD Reviews by Todd Smith

It's incredibly easy to sit here on our critic's throne and lob our opinions down the mountain at artists. Our opinions, for what little they're actually worth, are nearly anonymous. No one harasses a critic while he's writing a column or interrupts his work by talking too loudly. Rarely do critics get criticized. We sit here above reproach offering our views of the world immune from actually living in it.

Of course the dirty little secret is that most critics are musicians in some manner: our sharpened jabs defense mechanisms, our praise wistful hope for our own ambitions. Many of us are short on talent while others short on courage: journalists moonlighting as musicians at local open-mic nights as you can imagine.

Peter Cooper of the Nashville Tennessean has boldly stepped beyond the comfortable confines of writing, teaching and appearing with his ever-so-floppy hair on CMT. Mission Door is Cooper's first full-length effort coming on the heels of the underground release Clown Juice and is an extension of Cooper's everyman writing. Combining the grit of the real world with a healthy respect for the vintage musicians Cooper often covers, the disc offers up a meaty batch of songs that suggest he's a songwriter masquerading as a journalist rather than the other way around.

Joining Cooper are a litany of artists that bring both a convincing sense of Americana authority and a clear desire to help out one of Nashville's most respected denizens. From Nancy Griffith to Todd Snider, Jason Ringenberg to the inimitable Lloyd Green, the records credits read like a who's who of alternative country. And Cooper's no slouch himself: his vocals are unique—neither straining nor forced, lending the perfect amount of laziness to the already laid-back tunes.

Naturally, it is the songwriting that steals the show—a bona fide requirement for making Sharkbitten.com. Peter excels at Hemingway approach—stating the complex idea in simple terms. That's not to say that his songs are without flourish, but rather those flourishes always serve a purpose and never get in the way of the story.

It would be particularly easy for a critic to tear this disc apart if you could only ignore just how good it really is.

Mission Door is available via [Peter's website](#) or that of [Red Beet Records](#).