

# Christmas Albums To Get You In The Spending Spirit

By: Dan Marek

Most Christmas albums are get-rich-quick schemes. Typically, they are unoriginal attempts by musicians to get a cut of the holiday season cash flow spent by millions of parents trying to win their children's hearts over.

Although the custom has spawned classics like Nat King Cole's "Christmas Song," Bing Crosby's "White Christmas" and Burl Ives' "Frosty the Snowman," bands on their way down have recorded Christmas albums to get those last pennies out of their fading fans. Cyndi Lauper's attempt, *Merry Christmas...Have A Nice Life!*, is so far-fetched that it wouldn't be surprising if she used it to get out of her record contract.

More recently, artists have butchered the timeless hits and wrote flavorless tracks like Little Kim's X-rated version of "Santa Baby" from Puff Daddy & The Family's *A Bad Boy Christmas*.

By far the worst at exploiting the holiday season, bubble-gum artists have made the most money by recording the repetitive ten-standards-plus-one-original format. Joining 'NSync, Mariah Carey and Britney Spears, this year Christina Aguilera released *My Kind of Christmas*, her first attempt at a Yuletide album. And then there's Hanson's attempt to pad their college tuition fund before their voices finish changing.

Just to give the bubble-gum pop listeners a run for their money, many respectable pop artists have jumped on the sleigh, with compilations like *Cool Christmas* (featuring The Pretenders, Tom Waits, Tori Amos, and They Might Be Giants) or *The Coolest Christmas*, which includes the timeless shame of David Bowie and Bing Crosby doing "Little Drummer Boy/Peace on Earth."

Years ago, many musicians were obligated to record Christmas albums. Major labels had bands sign a typical five record contract, but insisted that they record a Christmas album within the contract's term (Motown was a firm believer in this). This resulted in Christmas records by far-fetched artists like Smokey Robinson & The Miracles, The Supremes, George Thorogood, Stevie Wonder, and of course James Brown's classic *Funky Christmas*.

But there are many musicians you wouldn't imagine recording a Christmas album that

did so on their own accord. The Beatles released a Christmas album every year beginning in 1963, but these were only available to "official Beatles Fan Club members," and they masked the stylistic and content changes the band went through over the years. Willie Nelson, Liberace, Jewel, Dennis Rodman (whose album *Wild X-mas Party* features Eddie Vedder and Billy Corgan) and Johnny Cash (*Family Christmas*) all took huge profits during the season, but then left drab relics of tasteless overstock in record stores.

Speaking of tasteless, drab material, nothing compares to two of the worst albums ever released to the public—Jingle Cats' *Here Comes Santa Claws* and Jingle Dogs' *Christmas Unleashed*. These two albums have caused more pain and suffering during the holidays than any other album in history. Whoever thought that cats and dogs yelling out Christmas notes constantly for an hour would put us in a warm and loving spirit should burn in hell.

About the only good thing about so many artists recording shameless albums is that everyone can find one to fit their unique Christmas celebrations. For those who look at Christmas as a dreaded time to hang with the boring family, Nick Cave's *A Bastard Is Born This Day* may be the most suitable answer. Cave, who is known for his dreary subject matter and a fascination for biblical themes, goes so far to release "Bethlehem," in which Mary buries Jesus' stillborn twin out back in a shoe box.

Of course, Arizona is not the winter wonderland that so many are used to. *Irie X-mas*, a reggae album featuring Freddie McGregor and Peter Broggs, might be more appropriate than a typical snowy classic. Venus Envy's *I'll Be A Homo For Christmas*, a Gay/Lesbian friendly album with such tunes as "Rhonda The Lesbo Reindeer" adds to the multi-cultural family ideal, and the typical transvestite Christmas would be incomplete without RuPaul's *Ho, Ho, Ho* which features "I Saw Daddy Kissing Santa Claus."

No matter if your tastes range from country hits to transvestite classics, there is a Christmas album for you, and if you haven't found one that fits your taste yet, wait a year—there will be 50 more albums to choose from. **77**

