

# A Family Christmas

(PUT 295 Liner Notes)

Whether you're decorating a tree, making a gingerbread house or wrapping presents, few elements of the Christmas season are more universal and evoke more holiday spirit than music. All of the songs on this collection are festive takes on Christmas classics, most of which have been sung by families for generations. We hope that they light up your holiday celebrations!



## 1. Johnny Bregar Santa Claus Is Coming to Town

Few events are more exciting to children than the arrival of Santa Claus. This song captures that feeling of anticipation! When it debuted on the radio in 1934, "Santa Claus Is Coming to Town" became an instant hit. Now a holiday standard, it tells of Santa's Christmas Eve visit, bringing gifts and joy to children and families around the world. It also reminds children to behave so Santa is sure to bring them presents.

Lots of Christmas spirit is packed into Johnny Bregar's acoustic version of this song, recorded especially for this CD. Johnny played in folk and rock bands for 20 years before becoming a dad and making music for kids and their families.

## 2. Martin Sexton Holly Jolly Christmas

The holiday season is one of the jolliest times of the year and this song captures the essence of that cheerful Christmas spirit. "Holly Jolly Christmas" was written in 1962 by Johnny Marks, who is known for writing several classic Christmas songs, including "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer." It reminds us to spread Christmas joy to our friends and family.

This stripped-down version flawlessly uses festive sleigh bells along with Martin Sexton's soulful crooning and peppy acoustic guitar. Martin is an American singer-songwriter known for his impressive vocal range and for incorporating diverse musical styles, such as soul, country and blues, into his work.

## 3. Big Bad Voodoo Daddy Is Zat You Santa Claus?

First made popular in 1953 by jazz legend Louis Armstrong, "Is Zat You Santa Claus" is a funny jazz tune that puts a different spin on traditional holiday music. This version pays homage to the original, but adds quirky vocals in the style of Bela Lugosi's Count Dracula.

One of the most popular big bands of the 90s swing revival, Big Bad Voodoo Daddy has been serving up danceable, retro-swing music since 1989. They have released nine albums of rockin' big band jams and have recorded lots of music for television and film. They were even featured during the half-time show of the 1999 Super Bowl, the American football championship.

## 4. Leon Redbone Let It Snow

"Let It Snow" is one of the best-known winter songs, but it was actually written in California in July 1945, on one of the hottest days of the year! Even if you don't live in a cold climate, listening to the swinging piano and country-influenced guitar on this song evokes thoughts of snowy days, hot chocolate and spending time with friends and family.

Leon Redbone's version of this beloved melody embodies the warm and comforting feeling of Christmastime. Leon has been performing for more than 30 years and has recorded 11 albums. He is known as much for his signature white hat as he is for his fondness for performing songs of the past. Leon was the voice of an animated Snowman in the 2003 Christmas movie *Elf*.

## 5. Deana Carter Winter Wonderland

"Winter Wonderland" is a holiday favorite that doesn't actually mention Christmas, but names many of the things identified with it, such as sleigh bells, snowmen and toasty fireplaces. Lyricist Richard B. Smith was inspired to write the tune in 1934 after seeing a park in his Pennsylvania hometown covered in snow.

Deana Carter is an American country music artist and the daughter of well-known country singer Fred Carter, Jr. Her first album, released in 1996, sold 5 million copies, and she has been recording and performing country music ever since.

## 6. Sam Bush Sleigh Ride

"Sleigh Ride" is another Christmas song that was written in the heat of summer. Leroy Anderson wrote the song in 1946 on a hot Boston day and it was first recorded in 1949 by the Boston Pops. Though this is an instrumental rendition, its galloping bluegrass swing can help you imagine that you're taking a ride through the snowy countryside in an old-fashioned horse-drawn sleigh.

Sam Bush is an American musician considered to be a bluegrass innovator and creator of a modern style called "new grass." Sam is best-known for his exceptional mandolin playing. He has recorded eight albums and toured extensively.

## 7. Kate Rusby

### **Here We Come A-Wassailing**

Even though Kate Rusby's version of "Here We Come A-Wassailing" sounds fresh and modern, this song is a traditional English melody that is more than one hundred years old. "Wassailing" is an old English word for singing carols door to door. This song is about spreading holiday cheer throughout your neighborhood by wishing your neighbors "Merry Christmas" and good luck in the New Year.

The joyous message of this song is perfectly captured by Kate, who is an English folk singer. She has been fascinated by folk music since she was a child, as her musician parents used to take her to folk festivals all over the country. Kate has released nine albums and is one of the most beloved voices on the English folk scene.

## 8. Brave Combo

### **Jolly Old St. Nick**

Attributed to an anonymous composer in the late 19th century, "Jolly Old St. Nick" is a longtime holiday favorite. This classic carol tells the story of St. Nicholas, an ancient man from a wealthy family who gave all his money to help the needy and sick. Over the centuries, he became the basis of Santa Claus.

Brave Combo has been making music for more than 30 years. Founded in 1979 and based in Denton, Texas, the band is known for an eclectic blend of styles, from rock and orchestral music to Japanese pop and Latin American dance rhythms. The band has won two Grammy awards and has been nominated seven times. They bring on the Christmas spirit with this instrumental rendition, drawing inspiration from European polka and Jamaican ska to deliver a fun, up-tempo holiday song.

## 9. Debbie Davis and Matt Perrine

### **Mele Kalikimaka**

This Christmas song is a festive island greeting from Hawaii. "Mele Kalikimaka" was written in 1949 by Hawaiian musician R. Alex Anderson. Even though you'll probably see more palm trees than Christmas fir trees in the Aloha State, Hawaii is not short on holiday spirit!

Debbie Davis sings and plays the ukulele (a Hawaiian instrument that looks like a tiny guitar) with her vocal trio, the Pfister Sisters. Her husband Matt Perrine plays the bass and sousaphone in many bands, including his own, Sunflower City. Debbie and Matt live in New Orleans with their two sons and their "wonder dog," Bowie.

## 10. The Christmas Jug Band

### featuring **Angela Strehli and Maria Muldaur**

### **Boogie Woogie Santa Claus**

While Christmas songs range from soft ballads to upbeat carols, few are as energetic as this number. "Boogie Woogie Santa Claus" was written by rock and roll songwriter Leon René in the 1940s and is the epitome of Christmas party songs. Featuring vocals by two well-known American singers, Angela Strehli and Maria Muldaur, The Christmas Jug Band's version of this swinging rhythm and blues song will make you want to get up and dance!

The Christmas Jug Band was created in the 1970s in California. It draws from the traditions of Appalachian jug band music, in which household objects are often used as instruments. The group eventually grew into a Christmas band after becoming known for their annual Christmas Eve shows.

## 11. Lars Edegran & His Santa Claus Revelers

### with **Big Al Carson**

### **Frosty the Snowman**

The magical story of Frosty the Snowman has enchanted kids and families since it was first recorded by "The Singing Cowboy," Gene Autry, in 1950. This classic tale of a jolly snowman coming to life to spread joy among children has inspired numerous films, TV specials and countless recordings.

This upbeat rendition is by Swedish-born New Orleans musician Lars Edegran and features accomplished vocalist Big Al Carson. Lars began performing professionally in New Orleans and was a founding member of The New Orleans Ragtime Orchestra in 1967. Big Al, whose real name is Alton J. Carson, is a popular rhythm and blues singer and New Orleans native. Performed in the traditional New Orleans jazz style with blaring horns, this swinging version comes to life like Frosty himself.