

Yuletide's rock 'n' roll best . . .

SONGS from Page 3

"Little Drummer Boy"
Joan Jett and the Blackhearts.
I'm not sure if Jett would have been able to sneak in on the nativity scene with her bubble gum bangs and black eye shadow, even if she said she was one of the exotic Magi, but it's interesting to note that she sings this as if she wanted

to attend. Try getting a life-size promotional cut out of Jett and setting it in with the other figurines on the lawn of the church. See if anybody notices.

"I Saw Jesus in McDonald's at Midnight"
by Mojo Nixon. Whirly headed Mojo and his schizoid washboard player have a religious experience at the local pod-food emporium.

Apparently Mojo caught his Mom in the midst of *flagrant delictii* with Santa and has run off to find the real mening of Christmas. Usual childhood trauma aside, this must have been pretty hard on poor Mojo. This frantic re-working of everything from Jonathan Richman's "Roadrunner" and John Lee Hooker's "Boogie Chillun" to "Sister Ray" by the Velvet Underground, with a dose of the movie, "It's a Wonderful Life" thrown in for good measure, is certainly proof that what happens in the first years of one's life can effect you forever.

"Do They Know it's Christmastime?" by Band Aid. For sheer musical power you can use the Lionel Richie imitation of this as a pizza pan. "We Are the World" is a display of ego and envy. "Do They Know it's Christmastime?" by Saint Bob Geldof and Ultravox's Midge Ure is purely an act of love and caring. The song is moving and ethereal, a little off-kilter at the best of British music is and it certainly has the oddest assortment of coal pipes ever drawn into one studio. Give Geldof the Nobel, the Pulitzer, canonize him, invite him to Christmas dinner, offer to have his children. God bless us everyone.

"Happy Xmas (War is Over)" by John Lennon and The Plastic Ono Band. Speaking of saints, the patron saint of overreaction, John Lennon and chanteuse, Yoko Ono, make a listing, if somewhat generic contribution to the brethernhood that should abound on or around Dec. 25. Yoko of course is squalling in the background, doing what the B-52's vocalists did years later with a sense of humor and to better effect. As far as this new-found belief on the part of rock critics that Yoko can sing, dance, write, play every known instrument and walk on water, I refer you to the

little tale of "The Emperor's New Clothes . . ."

"Christmas is Coming" by The Payolas. From the great undiscovered classic LP "Hammer on a Drum," "Christmas is Coming" is another tale of Christmas loneliness but like all the songs on this album, Paul Hyde sings and writes of transcendence, of working-class phoenix rising above the unemployment lines, the dead-end job and the sense of urban anomie. In this song, Christmas represents the end of a long year without having caved-in to the streets and losing hope. Lovely and sacred as any hymn you might sing by rote, The Payolas remember Christ was born in the humblest of circumstances.

"Merry Christmas, Darling" by Chuck Berry. Berry mellows out to some fine old blues on this one, a dream for nuzzling near a fire on Christmas Eve, about midnight, when not a creature is stirring. Nothing hot and heavy, just a little something to make sure your his-and-hers sweaters like each other.

One has got to love Berry for singing this one like he means it. All he's got to give this woman on Christmas is himself. Don't buy this new, make sure it has some familiar crackles and popping on it. Treat it like an old friend, not like the new "Duran Duran" release. You can hug it, kiss it, leave the sleeve off and nuzzle around it.

"Santa Claus is Coming to Town" by Bruce Springsteen. There's something a little phony about this, but The Boss is having such a good time that I won't bicker. No rock 'n' roll Christmas could really be complete without it. Probably real good for a dance up at the ski lodge. Springsteen is a little omnipresent these days, so you might want to

wait a few Christmases before you try and get into this tune.

"Chipmunk Song" by The Chipmunks. You gotta love Alvin and his little pals — even if they are helium addicts. Some might say this is evidence that Christmas is too commercialized. Well, you can all just take your Anita Bryant Christmas albums and listen to them in a corner somewhere. Alvin wants presents, presents, presents, but don't think he doesn't know the meaning of it all. Even chipmunks have hearts.

"Run, Rudolph, Run" by Dave Edmunds. The weather outside may be frightful, but Edmunds builds a healthy little fire around this Chuck Berry riff. Johnny B. Goode meets all eight shiny bucks and Santa, too. Edmunds isn't omnipresent, so put this one on the tape this year instead of The Boss.

"Jingle Bell Rock" by Wayne Newton. OK, so no one's going to nominate this howler to the rock 'n' roll hall of fame but some spiked egg nog can make it funnier than any inebriated relative in a lampshade. Newton has three or four Christmas stockings stuffed in his cheeks, a suit that looks like the National Christmas Tree and the voice of a choirboy. That Newton would even put the word "rock" in the title is such a screamer you might not even need to play the record.

"White Christmas" by Throbbing Gristle. Throbbing Gristle never recorded "White Christmas" but when my editor said not to put only "weird" music on this list, I asked him what music that wasn't "weird" he wanted to be on the list.

I said, "Oh, yeah, 'White Christmas' by Throbbing Gristle. Great song."

Does anybody out there want to hire an unemployed music critic?



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