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Christmas songs bring out spirit in every Ebenezer's heart, soul

By John Bruce
Arts Director

Last night I was suddenly, and without warning, struck with an uncontrollable urge to spread happiness and joy to my fellow man. Trying to ignore it only made the feeling grow stronger. I was on the verge of a hoedown. Words like "swell" and "shucks" started popping insanely out of my mouth. I panicked and called my friend, Ebenezer (not his real name).

"Hey Ebenezer," I groaned, "You gotta help me! I think I was just struck with Yuletide cheer."

"Calm down," he said. "I can't! It's happening in waves. I can feel the season to be jolly coming on."

"Are you convulsing?"
"No, not yet."
"Fight it!"

"I can't anymore. I think I'll just let it take me. Birds fly south for the winter. I crave egg nog. It happens."

"NO! YOU CAN BEAT THIS THING!"

"If I don't go with my instincts I'll end up like those whales that were trapped in the ice."

"Even for an idiot that's stupid reasoning. If you go with your instincts now, you'll end up getting arrested for impersonating an elf."

"Merry Christmas," I said and he hung up.

The Christmas spirit had me. I put on my Christmas stocking, wrapped blinking lights around my body and dusted off my Christmas albums.

One aspect about these records is that they don't have to be any good aesthetically to soothe anyone into the proper yuletide mood. Marie Osmond's rendition of "Blue Christmas" is quite rancid but I play it every year. And I enjoy it. Sometimes I even weep openly depend-

ing on the potency of the nog. Here are some records that never fail to set my mind in a snowy, Christmas swirl of pine cones, Rudolf the Red Nosed Reindeer pez dispensers and sugar plum fairies doing the Frug.

1. The Chipmunk Song. This is an old favorite for all ages. The Chipmunks harmonies rival even the Bee Gees. I was disappointed, however, when at 8-years old, I played the song at the wrong speed and realized that Alvin et al were just regular guys. And Santa is really David Crosby.

2. Alice's Restaurant. Arlo Guthrie's 18 minute anti-war, anti-littering mock epic is actually a Thanksgiving song but it also works in this season to be jolly. Evidently, Guthrie is planning an updated version of the song for the 80's. Perhaps the song will take on new meaning if its layered in synthesizers.

3. White Christmas. Patty Smith, the punk, poet priestess who trusts her guitar, rasps her way through this Bing Crosby classic without once mentioning anything about the transformation of waste. Lenny Kaye doesn't thrash into feedback, unfortunately and the piece is done traditionally, complete with jingle bells and glad tidings from the Patty Smith Group.

4. Little Drummer Boy. Joan Jett and The Blackhearts recreate this religious ditty for the Leather and Chain crowd. This one should be played early Christmas on morning. Play it loud. Wake up the neighbors.

"I'm Joan. It's Christmas! I wanna open my presents NOW!" Ba rump a bum bum.

5. Deck The Halls. This standard is from the Mannheim Steamroller Christmas album and just might be the worst recording ever made. It gets played at my house every Christmas. It's the Evening News theme. It's Star Wars. It's Jack Frost going for your jugular. It's Christmas for computer viruses and a must for anyone who lives for Emerson, Lake and Pompous.

6. The Beatle's Christmas Album. This is a compilation of Christmas records the Fab Four sent out to Fan club members. It opens in December 1963, with the loveable mop-tops merrily goofing around in the studio singing Christmas tunes about Betty Grable and thanking their fans for being so gear.

By the time the 1967 edition was released, the group had become weird. Using Sgt. Pepper studio techniques, the recordings became more conceptual and it was evident that someone had put hash in the cranberries.

The final entry, from 1969, sounds like a remake of Revolution #9. The Beatles were splitting up, Yoko screams, and George plays sitar.



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