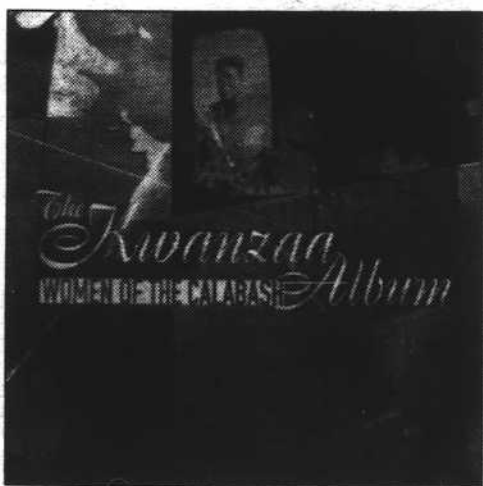


Holidays of Harmony

Holiday music tuned to specific styles available to suit shoppers

By SARAH BAKER
Senior staff writer

Although the days of believing in Santa are probably over for most of us, and we can't remember why we ever wanted to get up at 4 a.m., we're never too old to enjoy some good holiday music.



iday music.

And if it's Christmas music – or Kwanzaa music for that matter – you're after, there are virtually hundreds of albums to choose from.

Holiday tunes, whether they have a country twang, a swingin' beat, a bluesy twist or a traditional harmony, always seem to bring a festive warmth into the season no matter what the holiday celebration.

Most albums feature conventional Christmas

songs, but the wide range of artists who perform them are sure to suit almost any tastes.

Compilation holiday albums are a popular choice and are available in almost any genre.

"Star of Wonder, a country Christmas collection" (Arista, 1996) features 12 traditional songs performed by the likes of classic country group BR5-49 ("It Came Upon a Midnight Clear,"), Brooks and Dunn ("Cabin in the Valley") and Alan Jackson ("Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer").

"The Alligator Records Christmas Collection" (Alligator Records, 1992) brings home the holiday blues with songs such as "Santa Claus Wants Some Lovin'" performed by Tinsley Ellis and "I'm Your Santa" by Lil' Ed and the Blues Imperials.

"Christmas Stocking Stuffers" (Columbia, 1998) mixes the old with the new and gives the gifts of Mariah Carey singing "O Holy Night," Harry Connick Jr. performing "Sleigh Ride" and Johnny Mathis moaning "I'll Be Home for Christmas."

But if it's the true classics you're after, check out "Croon and Swoon" (Relativity Records, 1998). The album features 18 classic Christmas tunes performed by the masters of holiday melody making: Tony Bennett, Andy Williams and Judy Garland, just to name a few.

Although the majority of albums focus on Christmas, there are still quite a few records out

there for those who don't observe the holiday.

"The Kwanzaa Album: Women of the Calabash" (Bermuda Reefs Records, 1998) features a trio of female artists who sing traditional music dedicated entirely to the celebration of Kwanzaa. The album presents the traditional songs with a unique mix of vocals in harmony with a variety of percussion instruments.

"Festival of Light" (Island, 1996) celebrates the eight days of Hanukkah with a mix of both traditional and original music.

The album carries both instrumental and vocal tracks, including "Rock of Ages – Ma'oz Tzur" performed by Mark Cohn and an instrumental version of "Bikkurim" plucked on violins and the like by the Masada String Trio.

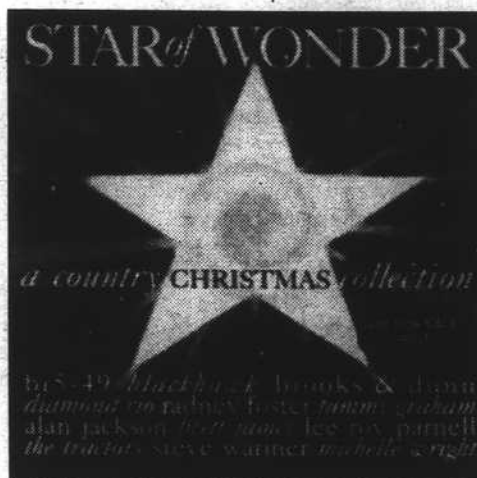


Although the songs tend to be more traditional, "A Brazilian Christmas" (Astor Place Recordings, 1996) spices them up with a South American twist.

"The Christmas Song" is performed by Dori Caymmi the way you would expect to hear it on an exotic island, complete with

bongo-like drumming and happy flutes.

For those who don't dig tradition but still dig Christmas, alternatives are out there ready for the taking.



An odd mix of alterna-Christmas is available on "O Come all Ye Faithful: Rock for Choice" (Columbia, 1996).

Unlikely pick Henry Rollins chants "'Twas the Night Before Christmas" in a very anti-spiritual growl, while Bush re-defines a classic in "Good King Somethingorother."

"Christmas With the Vandals, Oi to the World!" (Kung Fu Records, 1996) is the obvious punk choice, with the band rocking out to tunes such as "Oi to the World" and "Dance of the Sugarplum Fairies."

Squirrel Nut Zippers' "Christmas Caravan" has to be one of the best Christmas albums out there, with offerings of both traditional ("Sleigh Ride") and original, often funny tunes such as "Indian Giver."

So, whether you're looking for something new or wanting to stick to tradition, it's definitely going to be a happy holiday season whatever your listening pleasure.

'Psycho' remake falls short of classic

By JASON HARDY
Senior staff writer

Movie Review

Imagine taking a two-hour elevator ride where you are continually bombarded with annoying "Muzak" versions of classic songs by Elvis, Chuck Berry, James Brown or Buddy Holly.

Or think of two hours of solitary confinement with only a handful of Puff Daddy recordings.

Each scenario is equally painful and distasteful, but put them together, and you have the collective experience of watching director Gus Van Sant's new version of "Psycho."

As Universal Pictures' latest blunder, "Psycho" fails miserably to recapture the macabre and sensual style of Alfred Hitchcock's 1960 original masterpiece of suspense and horror.

Van Sant's version falls way short by changing what never should have been changed and by poorly imitating the elements that make Hitchcock's version so timeless. Despite being remade shot for shot, Van Sant still took some liberties with certain characters and scenes – none of which really work.

The most obvious difference between the two "Psychos" is the color. Hitchcock chose to shoot the original in black and white to emphasize shadows and enhance the suspense. Van Sant's color representation proves Hitchcock's brilliance by being

much less dramatic and intense.

However, the mere presence of color isn't the film's major flaw. It's Van Sant's use of color that makes it so diluted. The odd outfits and strangely lit sets make the new "Psycho" look like a cross between "Dick Tracy" and "Silk Stalkings." The back office of the Bates Motel, originally eerie with the outstretched shadows of stuffed owls and hawks, now seems, well, cozy.

Also hindering Van Sant's "Psycho" is his cast, the worst being Vince Vaughn's depiction of the notorious Norman Bates. While Bates' original incarnation, played by the late Anthony Perkins, seemed calm and largely genuine, Vaughn seems like a psycho from beginning to end. His goofy laugh and tense facial expressions are sadistic and maniacal from the get-go and destroy any notions of his character's initial innocence.

Though Anne Heche's portrayal of Marion Crane isn't as blatantly wrong as Vaughn's acting, it still doesn't exactly work. While Vaughn made Bates too neurotic, Heche made Crane too calm and collected, which makes for some problems with the delivery of certain nervous lines.

Rounding out this rag-tag group is Viggo Mortensen who plays Sam



ANNE HECHÉ stars as victim Marion Crane in Gus Van Sant's remake of the Hitchcock classic "Psycho." The film has garnered mostly negative critical reviews and failed to knock "A Bug's Life" out of the box-office top spot.

Loomis, Crane's semi-secret boyfriend. For some reason, Van Sant made the originally smart and straight-laced Sam Loomis into a cowboy doofus, and unfortunately, Mortensen is pretty good at being a doofus.

Aside from the characters and color, Van Sant also added a few things – the first being a lovely masturbation scene. Though it doesn't show Vaughn actually strokin' it, the damage is done as it makes Bates look like little more than a 10-year-old perv. Also added were a few Oliver Stone-esque images of stormy clouds and estranged cows during the two stabbing scenes. None of these images would have been needed had Van Sant accurately recreated Hitchcock's initial tension.

Basically, the only good things about Van Sant's "Psycho" are good simply because he did them the same way Hitchcock did them. The up-close facial shots on the cop and private investigator Arbogast (William H. Macy) still work, as does the shower scene, which is virtually untouched, aside from a bit more blood and a clearer view of Heche's buttocks. Also unchanged is the music which, luckily, isn't swing or techno.

While Hitchcock's "Psycho" ends with a sharp, stabbing, staccato climax, Van Sant's is drawn out, dull and cheesy. An appropriate ending for an inappropriate endeavor.

Ultimately the new "Psycho" is a sad step in the wrong direction for

The Facts

Title: "Psycho"
Stars: Vince Vaughn, Anne Heche and Julianne Moore
Rating: R (Violence/nudity)
Grade: D+
Five Words: stale, diluted version of classic

both the director and actors who participated in it. The sad thing is that, like Puff Daddy, the kids surrounding me in the theater seemed to love it.

Of course their end reaction was that "Vince Vaughn is such a hottie."