

MUSIC MATTERS

■ Different genres of holiday music are popular with all ages.

BY LINDSAY HENSHILWOOD
Staff writer

Whether it's Mannheim Steamroller, the Backstreet Boys or compilation albums, holiday music is a gift and a tradition that crosses all age barriers, music store employees and customers said.

Every year, a new type of music becomes popular around the holidays, and music stores and music departments have grown accustomed to seeing a huge increase in sales of music over the holidays, said Eric Ziegler, manager of Homer's, 1339 O St.

"Compilation albums tend to be one of the most popular selling albums at Christmas," Ziegler said. "Also popular are contemporary artists such as Celine Dion and more wacky artists like Bob Rivers."

"There is one album in particular that comes out every year, which donates proceeds to AIDS research. Each year there are different artists performing on it, like Bon Jovi and Shania Twain."

Retailers at stores such as Wal-Mart and Target said they see a lot of people around the holidays buy "Christmas Angels" by Mannheim Steamroller.

"The Mannheim Steamroller (albums) are usually the biggest Christmas seller," said Jeremy Bealer, assistant manager in the music department at Target, 5330 S. 56th St.

"Although this is entirely instrumental with no vocals at all, it still seems to be pretty big. Also big are the boy bands like Backstreet Boys and

980, as well as the older music like Elvis and Barbara Streisand."

Music store employees said the main customers of holiday music are between the ages of 30 and 55.

Some University of Nebraska-Lincoln students seemed to have different tastes in Christmas music.

"I like compilations of different types of music and usually buy a Christmas album every other year," said Paul Nielsen, a UNL senior art major. "My favorite Christmas song is Enya's Gaelic version of 'Silent Night.'"

Music also seemed to be a popular

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holiday gift idea among college students because compact discs and tapes are relatively cheap and always appreciated.

"One of my favorite Christmas albums is by the Mannheim Steamroller," said B.J. Mazurek, a UNL junior civil engineering major.

"I don't usually buy that much music for myself at Christmas, but it is one of the main gifts I give."

Ziegler said for whatever reason people buy holiday music, it has become an important part of the holidays.

"Whether the music is bought for the customer or as a gift, a big part of Christmas is the songs and the music," Ziegler said.

ALBUM PUTS A SPIN ON HOLIDAYS

Various Artists
"Just Can't Get Enough: New Wave Xmas"
Rhino Records
Grade: B+

For years, humanity has pondered a burning holiday question: How can the power of 1980s new wave - with its skinny ties, weird haircuts and power-pop hooks - be cross-pollinated with the festive atmosphere and Yuletide fun of the traditional Christmas song?

Some said this explosive combination would be too powerful for many ears to handle, but others said the combo would work as well together as chocolate and peanut butter.

A few years ago, Rhino Records finally answered this question with a special Christmas edition of its "Just Can't Get Enough: New Wave Hits of the '80s" series, called "New Wave Xmas."

The compact disc is a nice mix of traditional and original Christmas songs, all performed by '80s favorites, with a couple of '90s songs thrown in. With only a few weak songs, it's the perfect Christmas album for new wave lovers.

Where else can you find atheists XTC - sarcastically mocking a holiday they don't believe in on "Thanks for Christmas" - sharing album space with Miracle Legion's faithful (in more ways than one) cover of "Little Drummer Boy"?

How about David Bowie and Bing Crosby smoothly sharing vocals on a medley of "Peace on Earth" and "Little Drummer Boy?" It would seem an awkward pairing teaming Crosby, an icon of 1950s Caucasian morality who drank hard and beat his kids (and who can really sing); with Bowie, a bisexual, ex-cocaine addict who has dabbled in glam, punk, soul and Mick Jagger's pants (who can't really sing). But the duo's sweetly faithful rendition of the two Christmas carols could bring a tear to Satan's eye.

The album is worth the price alone for another duet, "Fairytale of New York," by the Pogues and Kirsty MacColl. This is a perfect Christmas song for the Irish drunkard in us all, when Pogues vocalist Shane MacGowan sings mournfully, "It was Christmas Eve, babe, in the drunk tank/An old man said to me, 'Won't see another one.'"

Another good pairing is Los Lobos' "Rudolph the Manic Reindeer," a rocking medley of "Rudolph the Red-



"'New Wave Xmas' really covers the gamut of the Christmas experience"

Nosed Reindeer" and Jimi Hendrix's "Manic Depression."

"New Wave Xmas" really covers the gamut of the Christmas experience. There's the aforementioned atheists in XTC, traditional Christian holiday songs and the increasing commercialization of the holiday,

which Root Boy Slim & The Sex Change Band sings about on "Xmas at K-Mart."

And, of course, there's Santa. Lots and lots of Santa. Throwing Muses sing "Santa Claus," They Might Be Giants come to grips with Santa stealing their girlfriends on "Santa's Beard," and They Might Be Giants side project Mono Puff tells the story of a kleptomaniac St. Nick on "Careless Santa."

The album also features holiday rock from Squeeze, the Pretenders, Timbuk 3 and Wall of Voodoo, as well as The Buzz of Delight, a band featuring Lincoln native Matthew Sweet.

While this album isn't for fans of undistilled, traditional Christmas music, anyone wanting something Christmasy, but with a twist, should enjoy "New Wave Xmas."

-Josh Krauter

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