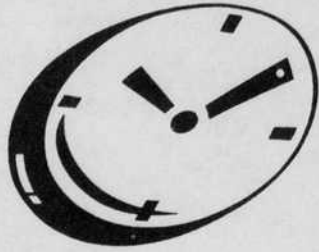


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a Season of tradition

Mason Williams makes instrumental holiday magic

By Jesse Stephenson
Entertainment Reporter

The sounds of Christmas are sometimes drowned out by the lyrics of holiday carols. While this is not always the case, classical composer Mason Williams has taken the safe road by releasing an instrumental Christmas album, *A Gift of Song*.



CD REVIEW

A Gift of Song

Mason Williams
★★★★
(instrumental)

With a pleasant blend of traditional songs and modern creations, *A Gift of Song* is enough to put at ease anyone who wishes to relax during the holiday season.

A Gift of Song captures the mood of the season with quiet songs that are peaceful enough to listen to while taking a nap yet at the same time are powerful enough to cause everyone in the

room to take notice.

Three of the songs on *A Gift of Song* were composed by Williams, and two of these are among the best on the album. "Guitar Carol" perfectly blends flute and horns with guitar to make listeners feel as though they are sitting in front of a fire as snow falls outside.

The second original composition by Williams, "Mistletoe Mustache," has the sound of a ballroom dance with a country twist added by a Jew harp and violin. The ringing of bells gives "Mistletoe Mustache" a Christmasy feel.

Near the end of *A Gift of Song* is the title track, written by Patricia Ingalls. This song has a beautiful sound, with Williams on guitar and an orchestra in the background. It could be even better if the lyrics were sung, but Williams' has shown on the rest of the album that words aren't necessary.

Perhaps the most unique song on *A Gift of Song* is "Hawaiian Sleigh Ride," written by Rick Cunha. While it doesn't have the quiet, traditional feel of Christmas, it works.

A Gift of Song is quite possibly the perfect Christmas album, and if it isn't, it is very



COURTESY PHOTO

Mason Williams is an award-winning composer and performer of folk and classical music.

close. Anyone interested in adding to their holiday music collection needs to begin with this album, as the sounds of the holiday come through it loud and clear.

Mariah Carey Christmas release old but not out of date

By Jesse Stephenson
Entertainment Reporter

With four original songs, six traditional songs and a choir in the background, Mariah Carey delivers holiday cheer in her 1994 album *Merry Christmas*.

Carey uses her unique vocal talents to create a sound sure to be noticed by any listener in the room, and the sound that is heard is appealing.

Carey's versions of the classics, such as "Silent Night" and "O Holy Night", retain the songs' traditional sound, and for the most part Carey refrains from raising her voice to high octaves — a practice that has made her famous.

As this is the third year *Merry Christmas* has been available on



COURTESY PHOTO

Mariah Carey's album 'Merry Christmas' was released in 1994.

the market, many people are already aware of one of Carey's original songs on the album: "All I Want For Christmas is You." Unfortunately, this song is not Carey's best work; it does a great job of entering your head and staying there, but that's all.

Another original, "Miss You

Most (At Christmas Time)," is a Carey-molded ballad of the type that is common on each of her albums. This song is bothersome and is not worth listening to.

The other two originals, "Jesus Born On This Day" and "Jesus Oh What a Wonderful Child," have the sound of some traditional church hymns.

Carey changed the holiday classic "Joy to the World" by giving it a more danceable beat that is almost enjoyable — until the classic melds with the 1970s song of the same name. These two songs should not have been brought together; the two



CD REVIEW

Merry Christmas

Mariah Carey
★★★
(soft classics)

sounds do not combine well at all.

The last traditional song the album includes is "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing." Carey sings it perfectly — at least in comparison with versions that have been performed in the past. It is easily the best song on this album.

Mariah Carey fans should run out and buy *Merry Christmas* if they haven't done so already. For holiday

music fans, this is definitely an album to consider; however, those who are looking for original music to satisfy their holiday craving should probably keep looking elsewhere.

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