

boxing for the holidays

BUY THE BOX, AND YOU'RE SET By Chuck Adams

Why oh why do we love us our box sets? Perhaps because they are big gifts in small packages? For this, we must duly give thanks to the techno-wizards behind data compression and CD/DVD technology. Sure, their products are easily rendered skip-prone if not kept in an airless environment, but they have taken the once cumbersome burden of tapes, VHS and vinyl box sets (typically weighing in at over a gazillion pounds) and condensed them into paper thin volumes. Good or bad, this has just spurred the box setters to cram as much into one "set" as possible (e.g. Janus' *Essential Art House Films*, a stack of 50 films for a little over \$750).

Also, giving a box set says a lot about the giver. While not technically a "box set," The Smashing Pumpkins' *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness* double album was one of the most memorable gifts I received from a sibling back in 1995. After cracking open the jewel case, I remember thinking two

things: "My brother cares about my musical taste" and then, upon seeing the two discs inside, "My brother isn't a cheapskate." Twelve years on, here is a roundup of the season's highly anticipated releases.

The Brit Box: UK Indie, Shoegaze, and Brit-Pop Gems of the Last Millennium (Rhino, \$64.98)

It's fitting that the four-disc time capsule *Brit Box* kicks off with The Smiths' "How Soon Is Now?" Because obviously such speculation as to "time" and "millennium" and "now" are beside the point when collecting some of the more definitive songs recorded by Brits between 1985 and 2000. No, this is not the collection in which to find The Beatles mixing blood with the Rolling Stones and the Psychedelic Furs. This is the anthology to give to anyone who came of age (musically) in the Thatcher-Major-Blair Dynasty. With tracks from criminally neglected Inspiral Carpets, Ned's Atomic Dustbin and Kula Shaker to more mainstream cuts from The Cure, New Order, Oasis and Cornershop, *The Brit Box* packs



in enough candy and curios to satisfy just about any Gen X music aficionado with a lick of nostalgia in his or her heart. **EXTRAS:** Packaging is designed like a "traditional English phone booth illuminated with a battery-powered flickering light bulb." **TARGET MARKET:** Gen Xers; fans of music history; people who wear pea coats.

Radiohead, *In Rainbows* discbox, includes two CDs, two vinyl records, digital photographs and artwork (www.inrainbows.com, approx. \$82)

Half the reason I bought Radiohead albums was the lovely packaging and artwork by Stanley

Donwood and Thom Yorke. Now I'm sitting here listening to a legally purchased burned copy of their latest, *In Rainbows*, and I've got nothing to look at. Half the joy is gone. But I salivate at the thought of this discbox, primarily because it comes in a vinyl edition. (Sure, \$82 is big bucks to spend, but try finding Radiohead's past albums on vinyl for less than \$40, and those are *used*.) **EXTRAS:** Eight songs not on the digital download. That's practically a new LP! **TARGET MARKET:** Vinyl-edition collectors; people who bought the iPhone as soon as it was released; college students; financial analysts; wolves in sheep's clothing.





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