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A Grab Bag of Four New Bluesy Christmas Stocking Stuffers

By Robert Putignano



Sandy Atkinson

Christmas Songs, Tales and Fables

www.SandyAtkinson.net

BluesWax Rating: 6

CHRISTMAS

SONGS, TALES AND FABLES



SANDY ATKINSON

Sandy Atkinson's vocals takes a bit getting used to; that being said she's has assembled a varied and somewhat entertaining collection of Christmas tunes. Sandy wrote and/or co-authored eight of the ten tunes here. She also covers "Blue Christmas" and adds her own words to the music of "Silent Night" on "A Soldier's Daughter Never Cries," which is incredibly moving and predictably sad. Of note, **Bob Margolin** makes a singular appearance on "Baby, Come Home For Christmas." My favorites are the hip "Christmas In My Building" which vamps and raps like an early **Tom Waits** tune (think "Emotional Weather Report" from Waits' very fine *Nighthawks at the Diner*, but without the raspy vocal) and Atkinson's "New Santa Claus," a jazzy and happy track that also adds trombone and sax.

Gary U.S. Bonds

Christmas is On!

G.L.A. Records

BluesWax Rating: 7



Veteran **Gary U.S. Bonds** rocks mightily starting with his guitarist **Paul Zunno**'s title track, and a nicely rearranged "Santa Claus is Coming to Town." The second line kicks on Zunno's "Christmas in Nu Awlins" and it works pretty well with a gospel vibe, too. There's more Crescent City bounce on "Christmas Is a Phone Call Away" which adds a **Boots Randolph** Yakety-like sax from an uncredited saxophonist. "White Christmas" is oddly rearranged with a doo-wop style that didn't work for me. From doo-wop they take on reggae on "Santa Bring My Bay Home to Me." It's not memorable. Bonds' guitarist **Mark Leimbach** authored the high-speed rocking "Why Don't You Spend Christmas With Me," where Leimbach tears it up as does the band. The final two tunes are also written by Zunno, "Tis the Season to be Lovin' You" has a bluesy vamp that also works well for Bonds' vocals and that uncredited sax player and the ballad "Baby, Baby It's Christmas," which ends this collection on a gentle and heartfelt note.

David Gogo

Christmas With the Blues

Cordova Bay

BluesWax Rating: 9



David Gogo looks so cozy on the front cover in front of his wood-burning stove having a cocktail with his guitar by his side, but the cover is (happily) deceptive as Gogo delivers the Blues cheer, as the glee starts smarty covering **Canned Heat**'s "Christmas Blues" that slides down the chimney with his strong vocals and biting guitar. Gogo's own "Christmas On the Bayou" is hauntingly swampy in a **Creedence Clearwater Revival** way and is pretty humorous, too. And, oh yes, Gogo dredges up **Freddy King**'s lost classic "Christmas Tears," giving it the first-class and appropriate blues treatment, adding horn ornaments for good measure too. Lets rev up with Gogo's "Let's Get a Real Tree," Gogo must be a fun guy adding lyrics like "Don't Be a Hippie, Let's Get a Real Tree." This baby rocks hard throughout with sparkling guitar notes from Gogo's axe. Things simmer down on **Charles Brown**'s "Please Come Home for Christmas" where Gogo nails the vocal and adds tasty guitar work. And I also enjoyed **Phil Dwyer**'s sax work trading off of Gogo; very sweet and authentic here, Charles Brown would have certainly given this one his approval.

I'm not sure whether **Leiber and Stoller** thought "Santa Claus Is Back In Town" would have been roughed up like this and given the blues brash Gogo exudes here, but I did, and I liked it! "Merry Christmas Baby" is not very nice and definitely naughty, buy, hey this is a blues Christmas record. The horns return, Gogo's vocals are dead-on, his guitar sails, those horn ornaments return, and this is yet another dynamite ho-ho-ho inclusion. "Merry Christmas Baby" indeed! I was curious to see how Gogo would handle "Little Drummer Boy" and he serves it up instrumentally, not raucous, and it's reverent too, with some nice harp fills from **Shawn Hall**. Let's get funky with **Sir Mack Rice**'s classic "Santa Claus Wants Some Lovin'" adds background vocalists **Tina Jones** and **Camille Miller**, and the horns are back. Gogo's vocals are obviously convincing about his physical needs and, once again, he rips it up with his nasty-nasty guitar solos.

Note: This recording is easily the best blues Christmas album of the year and one of the best Christmas blues albums by a

solo artist in many years.

Various Artists

Santa's Got Mogo 2: An Electro-Fi Christmas Blues Celebration

Electro-Fi Records

BluesWax Rating: 8



Electro-Fi Records follows up with a second edition of *Santa's Got Mogo* and, like its predecessor, it's another welcomed Yuletide present. Highlights include a very bawdy **Shakura S'Aida** performing her own "Be My Santa Claus," which hints of **Jeannie and Jimmy Cheatham's** "Meet me with Your Red Drawers On," except Shakura wants Santa to leave his drawers on when he does the deed. Shakura also asks Santa to slide down her chimney and wants him to do it right, she also wants to ride in his sleigh, telling Santa that he'll be screaming "Ho ho ho" and to please not forget his big, old bag of toys. It's all very *risqué* and hilarious as a new Christmas classic is born!

Other standouts include two from **Fathead**; "Let's Have a Christmas Party" is soulful, but their "Santa's Drunk" is a funky hoot, reminiscent of something **James Brown** would have done for Christmas, telling us it's tough times as Mrs. Claus is