

So This Is Christmas.....

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by Andy Von
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VPME CHRISTMAS EDITION 2007

Without further ado lets kick off with one of the best Xmas songs to be released, it's by an old friend of mine.....yes all the way from the Wirral, it's Halfman Half Biscuit

"It's Clichéd To Be Cynical At Christmas" By Halfman Half Biscuit

Well, the baubles have been vigorously polished, the tree has been erected, the turkeys been roundly stuffed, and we await Santa's heaving, bulging sack with bated breath. But meanwhile, away from the buxom snowcapped, twin peaked mountains of the magical "Land Of Double Entendre" and back in the real world, parents are preparing for their annual blitzkrieg in "Toys-R-Us" over this seasons "must have toy/gadget." This is of course due to the fact that if little Johnny doesn't get exactly what little Johnny has *demande*d, then the child who has yet to be acquainted with the word "no" or even the concept of compromise may well grow up to be psychologically damaged. (or worse, a solicitor) It is against such a background that the corporate giants expertly manufacture this kind of hysteria. Huge advertising campaigns, involving the sort hyperbole Alistair Campbell could only dream of, are launched, which cleverly exploit parental guilt, the basic message being, if little Johnny doesn't get this product you are a CRAP parent, a loathsome individual and you deserve to live a life of friendless, unremitting misery, forever haunted by your shameful neglect. With this in place they then deliberately undersource retail outlets of said product in the run up to Xmas, thus creating the kind of Seasonal pandemonium, that sees quite reasonable, educated people fighting over Nintendo Wii's in order to assuage their guilt. Meanwhile others are cramming their shopping trolleys to bursting point with ludicrous amounts of food that they quite frankly, could never eat, even if the entire population of Birmingham had been invited for Christmas dinner! But hey-ho, if nuclear war ever breaks out, let's pray it's over the Christmas period , as we, as a nation, will be well stocked ! It most certainly is "*The Most Wonderful Time Of The Year*" the season of goodwill and indeed the season to be jolly! So bollocks to all that negative humbug ! We love Christmas, and as the song says "*It's Clichéd To Be Cynical At Christmas*" so let's be thankful for all the positives, as we reflect on the year, and what Christmas means to us. It is also a chance to thank all the readers, musicians and contributors who have joined in and to wish everybody a **very** Happy Christmas.

As a seasonal treat we thought it would be fun to quiz some of our favourite artists and special friends, enabling them to share their thoughts on the festive season, how do they spend Christmas?... what do they love about it (or not) ?? and/or , what are their most cherished Christmas songs that warm the cockles of their hearts and induce a fierce and compelling desire to roast their chestnuts on an open fire.

Well, Christmas certainly has arrived early for Mr VP as one of his all time heroes ex- **Lush** legend **Miki Berenyi** agreed to share her favourite Christmas songs with us:-

MIKI : "Frosty the Snowman" featuring Angela McCluskey

from "The Rumor Mill's Christmas On Clinton St." charity album. Heard this very recently and knew nothing whatsoever about Angela McCluskey (that's how out of touch I am). What a lovely voice! Also an excellent cause (<http://www.savefrosty.org>) and a lovely video on YouTube (below)

"Sleigh Ride" by The Ronettes

"Santa Claus is Coming to Town" by The Crystals

"Both from the Phil Spector Christmas album – I'd pick every track but these 2 are my favourites. Genuinely the most HAPPY renditions of any Christmas songs EVER, this is a staple of our family Christmas and will induce dancing, singing and general whoops of delight from me, Moose and the kids."

The Pogues featuring Kirsty MacColl “Fairytale of New York”

“You’re a bum, You’re a punk, You’re an old slut on junk, lying there almost dead on a drip in that bed You scumbag, you maggot, You cheap lousy faggot, Happy Christmas your arse, I pray God its our last !” “Lyrics that just beg to be yelled out as you stagger home from the Christmas booze-up”

“Christmas Wrapping” by The Waitresses

“Reminds me of being a teenager – I think I was about 15 when it was out! I remember seeing the Waitresses on some music programme miming or whatever. I thought Patty Donahue looked so amazing – this giant leggy geeky thing in a mini skirt. Brilliant! Love the sweet love-story soap-opera story line, too.”

“Frosty The Snowman” Angela McClusky

“Fairytale Of New York” The Pogues And Kirsty McColl

James from [The Hussy’s](#) Top Xmas themed Songs are

- 1/ Come on Let’s Boogie to the Elf Dance- Sufjan Stevens
- 2/ Snow plus Xmas- Pearlfishers
- 3/Santa Claus is Coming to Town- The Crystals
- 4/ I Was Born on Xmas Day- St Etienne
- 5/ The Wizzard One

“Come on Let’s Boogie To The Elf Dance”- Sufjan Stevens

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For Yuki from [Asobi Seksu](#) it sounds like Christmas is a chance to rest

“I’m looking forward to wearing sweat pants and eating lots of food that is “bad” for you. Mostly this holiday, I’m looking forward to being in one place for an extended period of time. And in 2008- can’t wait to make a new album!”

Asobi Seksu have just released a fabulous reverb soaked festive cover of The Ramones “Merry Christmas (I Don’t Want To Fight Tonight)”backed by the fantastic “New Year” get it [here from One Little Indian Records](#)

Rowena from [Santa Dog](#) describes her perfect Xmas thus ;

“It’s all about the food! Full on turkey, all the trimmings, flaming pudding, too much booze and sharing with those you love (aaahhh). Every other year we’re in Aberdeen and then it often snows – perfect. 2008 plans? To keep having fun and to get to Japan!”

And if you’ve ever wondered what [Charlotte Hatherley](#) gets up to at Christmas....apart from causing a near nationwide stampede at job centres in the rush to fill out those Santa Claus job application forms.....

Charlotte :” Every year I try to go to Sydney for Xmas where most of my family live (lucky bastards). I have Xmas on the beach drinking beer in the sweltering heat thinking how great it is to get out of London.”

Toby from [The Duke Spirit](#) will be full of Xmas Spirit and indeed possibly spirits !

“My parents live on the Isle Of Wight, so I like going to visit them for Xmas day. It feels like a cool adventure getting

the train and boat down there. I'm a big Xmas fan. I love the excuse to cook huge meals, more food than you can eat, and drink for 3 days without feeling like an alcoholic. I like the suppressed childish excitement you can see in peoples eyes too. It's a good time of year. 2008 The Duke Spirit start spreading their wings once again.–My hope for 2008 ?- to reap the rewards of 2007. It's been a hard year but things can only get better.”

“Just Like Christmas” By Low

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For **Screaming Ballerina's** vocalist **Laura Trouble** its all about animal welfare, champagne and big eared farm boys !

“What I like about Xmas is lots of presents please. Christmas is good because i get to go home and see my beloved dogs (April and Ulie) (RIP Rosie and Scampy and Sooty) and cats (George and Oscar)and its the only time of year where my lunatic family get to be all together in a big ball off tinsel and fuzz and love. Watching Dad's Army (“*WHAT IS YOUR NAME , BOY?'Dont tell him Pike! ’’....)*) and Black Adder (“*YOU SHOT MY SPECKLED JIM!*”) is good . Throwing wrapping paper at the TV while my gran sleeps through the queens speech is bad. Going to the farm near my dads house to drink with all the inbred big eared locals and having to leave when some member of my family insults someone unintentionally- is bad but hilarious so its good. Getting over excited at 9 am and drinking so much champagne that i peak to soon and need a cat nap at 1pm – is bad. Eating a bloody nice xmas dinner – is good. Eating too much bloody nice xmas dinner – is bad and extremely uncomfortable. Listening to lots of music and wearing your slippers all day – is very good indeed. Fairy lights are the best invention in the world, so thats good, because they are EVERYWHERE . The apocalyptic blood bath that is 10 million turkeys getting slaughtered in the most in-humane way possible in an extremely short space of time – is very very bad.And makes me sad inside. But over all I do love Christmas, its a time for loving and giving and skipping and swaying and glowing and eating and shitting and singing and that my friends is a good thing.”

My fave xmas songs are

1. Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas – Sinatra
2. Merry Christmas Everybody – Slade
- 3 . “I Hope You All Die You Blood Hungry Carnivorous Christian Bastards”
– Laura Trouble (that's a joke)

Merry Christmas Everybody -By Slade

And **Beth Gibson from The Hot Puppies** tells us about her stockings!

“What do I like best about Christmas?. Going home to my Mum and Dad's and spending time with family and friends mainly. That's the big bit! Then, singing Christmas carols, Christmas stockings full of bits you'll find throughout the year that take you right back to Christmas, Christmas morning with “The Philadelphia Story” and Christmas evening eating too much chocolate! and the songs;

“Fairy Tale Of New York” The Pogues

“Oh Holy Night ”

And anything christmassy by Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin!”

Christopher Seink Of Seinking Ships

“What Christmas means to me....

- 24 hour marathons of “A Christmas Story”
- Avoiding the malls at all cost (shopping online)
- Spending time with loved ones
- Mastering the art of regifting”

Favorite Christmas tunes....

- Skating (A Charlie Brown Christmas)
- Let It Snow
- Feliz Navidad
- Nutcracker- Op. 71: No. 2 March

“The Christmas Song” By The Raveonettes

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Mr Von Pip, who having a birthday on Xmas Eve is rather fond of the festive season...” There are toooooo many great Xmas songs to mention , but here’s my top 10

1. Fairytale Of New York- the Pogues and Kirsty McColl
2. Merry Xmas From The Family – Jill Souble
3. It’s Cliched To Be Cynical At Christmas – Halfman Half Biscuit
4. Just Like Xmas – Low
5. Christmas Lullaby -Shane Mac Gowan
6. The Christmas Song – The Raveonettes
7. Donner And Blitzen – Badly Drawn Boy
8. Frosty The Snowman -The Cocteau Twins
9. All Alone On Christmas-Darlene Love
10. Same Old Christmas-Hilary Duff (!!)

And then theres the carols “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” “Silent Night” “O Little Town Of Bethlehem.”

And to this years festive releases:- as well as The Rumour Mills Christmas Charity Album mentioned by Miki which you can get [HERE on I-tunes](#) and Asobi Seksu’s single, there’s also [Lucky Souls](#) “Lips Are Unhappy” backed by an exclusive festive cover of “Lonely This Christmas” (all profits go to the War Child charity). Buy it [here its only £0.40p !](#)”

For films,well Christmas Eve wouldn’t be Christmas Eve without **“It’s A Wonderful Life”** it is possibly my favourite film ever. Not only is it thoughtful, emotive, magical and Christmassy...it’s possibly the most subversive film ever made. George Bailey is on the brink of suicide on Christmas Eve, and gets a chance to see what the world would be like if he’d never been born.”*Strange, isn’t it? Each man’s life touches so many other lives. When he isn’t around he leaves an awful hole, doesn’t he?” – “You’ve been given a great gift, George: A chance to see what the world would be like without you.”* It appeals to me on every level, its humanity , its politics, it’s message, it really is so uplifting, people *can* make a difference, the little guy *does* matter! The good will out! The performance of Jimmy Stewart is incredible and it makes me cry-*everytime!* A perfect film! (sniffle)

“All Alone On Christmas” By Darlene Love

“Merry Christmas From The Family” By Jill Souble

Dogwood , who surely will one day be delivering the Christmas message to the nation, has this to say about the festive season :

“Hello Dogwood here, Settle down....

I don't think Christmas has been Christmas since Andy Williams was forcibly removed from the schedules by the likes of Grade the Younger. Thank you Michael Grade, for reducing Christmas Day to an unceasing conveyor belt of Eastender 'your gonna get yours' storylines featuring nervous breakdowns, petty revenge, petty larceny, grand larceny, gay vengeance, straight vengeance, children coming out of the woodwork to unwitting parents, parents coming out of the closet to unwitting children – processed misery for the masses. Orwell would be proud. I'd like to sit down with my snowball and unshelled nuts and watch the afore-mentioned Williams or Como gad about in a sleigh against a filmed background of Aspen or some such place with a load of dolly birds in scanty Santa suits and white teeth. I can't do that now because some idiot down at health and safety has decided that unshelled Brazil nuts represent too much of a litigation risk with the flying shell shrapnel that occurs when one applies their nutcracker. Back in Preston when I was a lad, Christmas would begin when Ma Dogwood would skin the tripe and allow us to mix the rendering pot whilst singing Industrial Revolution carols. My Dad, fresh from his Chartist meeting, would mix up a gin punch and serve them in a custard jug as we didn't have any glassware. I would swig mine from a jam jar. Santa Claus would bring a variety of treats including a Satsuma, a root vegetable, a tin of pilchards, half a pound of cough candies, a box of matches and some woodbines. One year I got a scale size Anthony Eden whittled from driftwood. I still have him and he sits on top of my 4' tinsel tree that I've had since 1968. Ipodman? I wouldn't have known where to start lad.

As for my favourite Christmas songs, well:

Perry Como and Angie Dickinson – The twelve foods of Christmas. It starts off with 'On the first day of Christmas, my true love gave to me a de-licious chocolate éclair and climaxes with '12 Artic rolls, 11 Jaffa Cakes, 10 Swiss Rolls, 9 Wagon Wheels, 8 Mince Pies, 7 Iceland Bannofee Kebabs, 6 Lidl Lincoln biccies, 5 Crepe Suzettes, 4 Crunchie Bars, 3 Selection Boxes, 2 Tins of Roses and a de-licious chocolate éclair'

The Little Boy That Santa Claus Forget – Vera Lynn. This always reduces me to tears as I WAS that boy in 1952.

Perry Como – 'A Christmas Dream' from The Odessa File. I admire Jon Voight immensely.

Have a seasonal fest.”

“A Christmas Dream” By Perry Como

Monster Bobby's Xmas Faves

- 1 “Poetry For The Winter” By [Komon \(free download here\)](#)
- 2 As Above
- 3 As Above
4. Little Saint Nick By The Beach Boys (*or is it Hanson?*)
- 5 Mary's Boy Child (?) Boney M

BOBBY: ” I think my two favourite artists at the moment are Boney M and Komon (god knows what that says about the direction for the next Pips album..!) ” (*Pipettes in Boney M- direction shocker!!!? 3 female singers and a dude called Bobby ???!!!;-VP*)

“Mary's Boy Child” By Boney M

For **Marcella Puppini** its “*all-a about-a da family, capiche?*”

For me, Christmas is all about going back to Italy and spending time with my extended family. We are really lucky as

we all get on really well, and even my parents, who've been divorced for 20 years, get together during the holidays for family dinners. Our Christmas lunch is an absurdly lavish affair: the silver cutlery and embroidered table cloth come out, and we have about 6 or 7 courses, of which the main one is a whole roasted leg of pork. Every year we hope for snow, but these days it doesn't snow until the new year. When I was a kid we sometimes would get snowed in for a couple of days and read by the fireplace. I loved that. The Christmas song that we listen to every year is an Italian one called "Un Natale da buttare via" – a Christmas to forget. It's a really tragic song about being dumped on Christmas day and it has always appealed to my melodramatic side. And there's another song that my father requests every year, which me and my sister have been singing since we were about 7. It's another Italian one, and my dad makes us sing it from the garden as it's about the baby Jesus being cold on Christmas day. Us Italians do love a bit of drama!!! That one always makes us giggle. It's a wonderful life is also a staple, which we usually watch on Boxing day.

Nick Levine From [Tack! Tack!Tack!](#) tells us what he'll be up to:-

"This Christmas I'll be listening to the soundtrack of The Ghosts Of Oxford Street. I've had a cassette copy for years and finally managed to track down a CD of it earlier in the year. The Ghosts Of Oxford Street was a made for TV film/musical presented and written by Malcolm McLaren about the history of Oxford Street. It features music by a whole array of peeps like Tom Jones, Kirsty MacColl, and true to form a pretty bad stab at a Stock, Aitken and Waterman techno style track by McLaren himself. To my knowledge it only aired once, in 1991. And its a great shame that it isn't shown each and every Xmas as it would make a pleasant change from The Snowman.

The Ghosts Of Oxford Street (Sinead O Connor-Silent Night)

The final word however, with regard to the meaning of Christmas, I'll leave to [Eric Matthews](#) who has been producing astonishing and innovative music for many years on the Sub Pop label and has worked with Tahiti 80, The Dandy Warhols, Ivy, Man of the Year, Elliott Smith, Paula Kelley, Pugwash, Volovan, and Bug 2000. 2007 has seen Eric as industrious as ever, which included working with Miki Berenyi and Christopher Sienk on the Seinking Ships album, due for release next year .

"To me Christmas is a two fold thing. It is both a bizarre time where we I get all jazzed about spending stupid money on those closest to me and getting cool presents. But it is also an intensification of the general message of my religion. I think of Christ 300 days a year anyway but in this time it becomes more intense somehow. I surround myself in His glory and it really helps get me through.

3 songs: Christmastime Is Here, Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas, and (from the hymnal) It Came Upon A Midnight Clear.

Movies: A Charlie Brown Christmas, Ben Hur, Groundhog's Day, and Jesus Of Nazareth."

Quote Of The Year

Monster Bobby after a recent Pipettes gig in NYC discussing Mr Von Pips dancing!

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(Courtesy Of Dave Cromwell)

"Christmas Lullabye" By Shane MacGowan

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Happy Xmas , we'll leave you with a special Christmas verse, from [Neal Zetter](#)

“When The Music Ran Out”

I had a horrid nightmare about
On Christmas eve the music ran out
The radio had no sound
There was silence all around
The magic that made the melody
Was just a distant memory
A buried treasure underground
Lost and never to be found
When the music ran out

iPods were idle
CDs ceased – all blank
The notes were all stolen
From the musical bank
Concert halls stood empty
Discos deserted and dead
No more songs left to write
Or to stick in people's heads
So they read
Books instead
When the music ran out

A, B, C, D, E, F, G
Were consigned to history
F-sharp, A-minor, B-flat too
All unemployed with nothing to do
Standing in a long dole queue
On that day
When there were no tunes left to play
They packed the instruments away
Coloured rainbows turned to grey
Rappers were wrecked
DJs in disarray
Buskers broken in dismay
Andy Von Pip said “I'm anything but ok”
When the music ran out

Whistlers couldn't whistle
Dancers couldn't dance
Hummingbirds that tried to hum
Didn't have a chance...
But on Christmas morning I woke up from my dream

I could feel my heart beat
I began to tap my feet
I switched on my MP3
The best possible presents were waiting there for me
My ears enthralled in ecstasy
Screaming Ballerinas, Wedding Present, Clash and the Pipettes
Hot Puppies, Operator Please, Pulp, the Raveonettes
Long Blondes, Sex Pistols, Ramones, Charlotte Hatherley
Ladytron, Duke Spirit, Smiths and Morrissey,
Left me without a doubt
That there will NEVER be a day
(I'm soooooo relieved to say)
When the music runs out

HAPPY CHRISTMAS-"It's A Wonderful Life"

Festive Greetings !

"Everthing's Gonna Be Cool This Christmas" By Eels

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