

Dave Koz - A Smooth Jazz Christmas (2001)

Written by bluesever

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1. Smooth Jazz Christmas Overture 2. The Christmas Song 3. O Tannenbaum/Sleigh Ride Medley 4. Silent Night 5. Beneath The Moonlit Sky 6. Little Drummer Boy 7. Hark! The Herald Angels Sing 8. December Makes Me Feel This Way 9. Boogie Woogie Santa Claus 10. Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas 11. White Christmas 12. Eight Candles (A Song For Hanukkah) 13. Get Here (For The Holidays) 14. 'Twas The Night Before Christmas
Musicians: Dave Koz – saxophones (alto, soprano, tenor) David Benoit – piano Rick Braun – flugelhorn, trumpet Nick Lane - trombone Bill Sharpe – bass Peter White – accordion, guitar Stephen Theard – drums Bridgette Bryant, Nick Lane, Esterlee Nicholson, Brenda Russell, Sandy Simmons – vocals

Since 1997, the Dave Koz & Friends Christmas Tour has evolved from a handful of concerts by the beloved saxman and pianist David Benoit to a 30-plus-city national phenomenon also featuring fellow genre all-stars Peter White and Rick Braun and singer Brenda Russell. The original tour came in support of his popular 1997 seasonal offering *December Makes Me Feel This Way*, but the show has taken on an incredibly joyful creative life of its own, prompting Koz and his cohorts to create an exciting studio recording which captures the powerful emotion, warmth, and special familial spirit of these shows. Featuring unique ensemble arrangements of timeless classics, a handful of several Koz originals (including the brand new Koz/Benoit collaboration "Beneath the Moonlit Sky"), and musical surprises by the sleigh-load, *A Smooth Jazz Christmas By Dave Koz & Friends* is contemporary music's premier event for Christmas 2001. The experience begins the same way as the live performance, with a lengthy medley ("The Overture") introducing each artist one by one; in a complete blend of styles, the songs include "Let It Snow," "Winter Wonderland," "What Child Is This?," "Angels We Have Heard on High," "Jingle Bells," and "Santa Claus Is Coming to Town," the latter segment featuring Brenda Russell. Russell also adds her lush vocal presence to "The Christmas Song," while the medley of "O Tannenbaum/Sleigh Ride" moves from a playful Vince Guaraldi-like groove to a feisty Latin explosion. The gang creates a gentle, moody atmosphere for "Silent Night," while "Beneath the Moonlit Sky" features a wild moodswing from smoky soprano sax/piano duet to guitar, trumpet, and sax jam. "The Little Drummer Boy" is an exciting showcase for Braun's trumpet over a marching drum beat, while "Hark the Herald Angels Sing" features a bluesy solo

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improvisation by Benoit. Koz sang on the original recording of the title track to December Makes Me Feel This Way, and gives the reins here to the incomparable voice of pop superstar Kenny Loggins. Russell found the intensely energetic '40s big-band gem "Boogie Woogie Santa Claus," and it's since become a showstopper live; Koz and Braun create a potent horn section here as well. Cozy readings of "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" and "White Christmas" are followed by a festive and folksy Koz original for Hanukah, "Eight Candles" (featuring Peter White on accordion), and a passionate new recording of Russell's classic "Get Here." Here as in the show, the encore/grand finale is "It Was the Night Before Christmas," featuring each member of the band reciting a verse of the famous poem over a bouncy, finger-snap-driven groove. One of the most diverse and original smooth jazz Christmas CDs ever. --- Jonathan Widran, Rovi

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