

Ella Wishes You a Swinging Christmas (2002)

Written by bluesever

Friday, 11 December 2009 20:51 - Last Updated Sunday, 12 October 2014 09:26

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1 Jingle Bells 2:22 2 Santa Claus Is Coming To Town 2:18 3 Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas 2:55 4 What Are You Doing New Year's Eve? 3:32 5 Sleigh Ride 2:56 6 The Christmas Song 3:00 7 Good Morning Blues 3:15 8 Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow! 2:42 9 Winter Wonderland 2:15 10 Rudolph, The Red-Nosed Reindeer 2:51 11 Frosty, The Snowman 2:11 12 White Christmas 3:01 13 The Secret Of Christmas 2:45 14 We Three Kings Of Orient Are/O Little Town Of Bethlehem 3:35 15 Christmas Island 2:18 16 The Christmas Song (Alternative Take) 3:41 17 White Christmas (Alternative Take) 3:44 18 Frosty, The Snowman (Alternative Take) 2:11 Ella Fitzgerald – vocals Frank DeVol's Orchestra (1 to 12, 14 to 18) Frank De Vol - conductor Russ Garcia's Orchestra (13) Russel Garcia – conductor

Listening to scores of vocal jazz records, all contemporary, it is easy to lose the trees for the forest, particularly the redwoods. Ella Fitzgerald was one of those rarified talents one took for granted, as she was so damn good that her talent became transparent. Rated with Sarah Vaughan and Billie Holiday as one of the most important female jazz vocalists, Fitzgerald can reasonably be deemed the most important because of her flawless execution and elocution. Every word she sings can be understood and her scatting ability has no equal. In many ways, Ella Fitzgerald is the antithesis of Billie Holiday, who was a uniquely enigmatic talent. She is

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more like Vaughan, though that comparison is akin to noting that tomatoes and oranges are similar because they are both fruits. Ella Fitzgerald might be considered as the gold standard of jazz singing. She was (and is) in a class all her own.

Holiday recordings are released by the bushel basketful every year, and this year is no exception. The same two dozen songs, secular and religious, joyous and somber, are created and recreated in the spirit of jazz, some good and some better. Many perfectly fine recordings have been prepared for this season and may be researched at All About Jazz. They all serve a purpose and appeal to different subsets of listeners. In an art form as far flung as jazz, it is hard to find holiday recordings that will appeal to all. Part of what is necessary is a conservative approach to this music's presentation. For this season, it is a 40-something year-old recording that takes the prize as most accessible.

This 2002 reissue of Ella Fitzgerald's Ella Wishes You A Swinging Christmas mates the LP release with six additional songs, three of which were previously unissued (alternative takes of "The Christmas Song," "White Christmas," and "Frosty The Snowman"). All save one of the cuts were recorded with the Frank De Vol Orchestra in July and August 1960. "The Secret of Christmas" was recorded a year earlier with the Russ Garcia Orchestra. Enough of the historical stuff, this is one smart Christmas recording. It swings hard and is perfectly digestible by anyone. The listener can sing along with Ella should they want to and almost sound as hip as she does. The Divine Ms. Ella turns "Jingle Bells" and "Rudolph" into Christmas Swingtime, while turning in definitive (yes, I said definitive) "A Christmas Song" and "White Christmas". Why anyone would purchase another Kenny G holiday recording is beyond me. ---C. Michael Bailey, allabout.jazz

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