



❄️ ❄️ **CHRISTMAS WITH THE**
FIRST LADY OF JAZZ ❄️ ❄️

Ella Wishes You *a Swinging Christmas*



Verve Records / Universal Music
Red Vinyl LP 00602458310641
VÖ: 27.10.2023

Den Albumklassiker von 1960, den das Rolling-Stone-Magazin auf Platz 10 seiner „25 Greatest Christmas Albums of All Time“-Liste platziert, gibt es jetzt in der schönsten LP-Ausgabe aller Zeiten: als feierlich rote, remasterte Schallplatte mit neuem Coverdesign.

Zu einem gelungenen Weihnachtsfest gehört neben Baum und Keksen auch die passende Musik! Wenn man nur ein Weihnachtsalbum im Haus hat, sollte es auf jeden Fall „Ella Wishes You A Swinging Christmas“ sein. Die legendäre *Ella Fitzgerald* singt wie ein Engel und swingt so heiß, dass es zum Fest gerade noch erlaubt ist. Die schenkt man seinen Liebsten - oder sich selbst.

Seite A

1. Jingle Bells
2. Santa Claus Is Coming To Town
3. Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas
4. What Are You Doing New Year's Eve?
5. Sleigh Ride
6. The Christmas Song

Seite B

1. Good Morning Blues
2. Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow!
3. Winter Wonderland
4. Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer
5. Frosty The Snowman
6. White Christmas



Videoclip "Santa Claus Is Coming To Town" [hier](#) anschauen

ÜBER ELLA FITZGERALD

Ella Fitzgerald (1917-1996), auch „First Lady of Song“ genannt, war mehr als ein halbes Jahrhundert lang die weltweit beliebteste Jazzsängerin. Im Laufe ihres Lebens verkaufte sie mehr als 40 Millionen Alben und erhielt fast alle Auszeichnungen, von denen ein Künstler nur träumen kann, darunter die *Ehrung des Kennedy Center* (1979), die amerikanische *Medal of Arts* (1987), den französischen *Commander of Arts and Letters* (1990), die *Presidential Medal of Freedom* (1992) sowie dreizehn Grammy Awards. Im Jahr 2007 ehrte der United States Postal Service Fitzgerald mit einer Briefmarke.

In ihrer sechs Jahrzehnte dauernden Karriere nahm **Ella Fitzgerald** mehr als 200 Alben und rund 2.000 Songs auf und ist damit die am häufigsten aufgenommene weibliche Künstlerin der Geschichte. Fitzgeralds unverwechselbarer Stil hat mehrere Generationen von Sängern und Sängerinnen beeinflusst, ihr Werk überschreitet Generationen und Musikgenres.

LEGENDARY MUSIC JOURNALIST WILL FRIEDWALD ABOUT THE ALBUM

Ella Fitzgerald loved children. She raised one child, her adopted son, Ray Brown, Jr, and everything that we know about her indicates that she would have liked to have had a whole houseful of them.

Phoebe Jacobs, a friend from Fitzgerald's Decca days on, has talked about visiting the vocalist in the final months before her death in June 1996. She has described how Fitzgerald sang for the infants of friends and relatives; how she would coddle them and sing lullabies such as George Gershwin's "Summertime." According to Jacobs, those were the most moving performances that Fitzgerald ever gave.

The book of First Corinthians (13:11) tells us, “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.” Not to contradict St. Paul, but in Fitzgerald's case, it would have been a mistake to put away childish things too quickly. One of her most remarkable assets was a child-like sense of wonder, as many of her colleagues had observed. When I called Frank Sinatra's office that June, the Chairman's official statement to the press was, “Ella was a sweet, shy girl when we first met, and she never lost her innocence.” Mel Tormé, who was himself silenced by a stroke only two months later, told me the same thing. “One of the things that we all loved about Ella was that she had a little-girl quality when she sang, When she did “A-Tisket, A-Tasket,” she sounded like a fourteen-year-old girl — even when she was fifty! Then she'd turn around and sing the Gershwin ballads, and Rodgers and Hart, with great maturity.” Rosemary Clooney elaborated, “There was an amazing freshness in her singing each time. I don't know how you get that. If you were watching her sing, even if she wasn't smiling, it still sounded like she was.”

It's obvious that Ella Fitzgerald made this album with children in mind. Some of these songs are distinctly adult, written with adult sensibilities: “White Christmas” is sung from the perspective of a grownup who is reflecting nostalgically on the holidays of his childhood, and “Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas” is a mature ode, which shows how the spirit of Christmas can help us to get through tough times. (The songwriters were really talking about World War II.) But the majority of Christmas songs describe the holiday season as it's seen through the eyes of a child, with frequent references to Santa Claus and other Christmas characters who have become part of the collective consciousness — some that were, in fact, created in song, such as “Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer” and “Frosty, the Snowman.”

Thus, Fitzgerald was the perfect artist to record a Christmas album.

In 1950, Fitzgerald had recorded the novelty song “Santa Claus Got Stuck in My Chimney” for Decca, and then, in 1959, she had done another Christmas single, pairing Tormé's then-classic “The Christmas Song” with a new movie tune, “The Secret of Christmas.” But *Ella Wishes You a Swinging Christmas*, which came the next year, was the only album-length secular Christmas project that she ever did.

Fitzgerald's music director on this project was Frank DeVol (1911-99), who had long worked as an arranger and bandleader on radio, and who had made his reputation with his arrangement of Nat “King” Cole's “Nature Boy.” Since that 1948 hit, DeVol had worked with many pop vocal stars, doing memorable albums with Doris Day (one of her very best, *Hooray for Hollywood*), Rosemary Clooney, and Vic Damone, and making a series of records on which he backed Tony Bennett with strings and choir (*Alone Together*, *Long Ago and Far Away*, and *To My Wonderful One*). Long after he had worked with Fitzgerald, DeVol achieved the kind of recognition that few if any of his fellow arranger-conductors did, when he portrayed the stonefaced leader of the band Happy Kyne and His Mirth Makers, on the syndicated TV satire *Fernwood 2-Night*. Along the way he also composed the scores of more than fifty motion pictures.

In 1957 DeVol began collaborating with Fitzgerald on a lovely cycle of albums. These records achieved less recognition than did her celebrated songbook series or her best-selling live sets, but they include some of her best singing, particularly on ballads. The Fitzgerald-DeVol partnership produced *Like Someone in Love*; *Hello, Love*; *Get Happy*; *Ella Sings Sweet Songs*

for Swingers, and Hello, Dolly!, yet one wishes that DeVol had been given the chance to work with Fitzgerald on one of the songbooks (in particular, the Cole Porter or the Rodgers and Hart).

Even though *Ella Wishes You a Swinging Christmas* emerged in a period when every new Ella Fitzgerald record seemed to become an instant classic, it is one of her greatest. For one thing, it's a jazz album through and through: On even comparatively slower tracks, there's a distinct jazz feeling; besides Fitzgerald's instrument itself, there are big band-style voicings and horn solos on virtually every song. Even the mixed choir, which is heard on several of the cuts, is a jazzy one in the manner of the Swingle Singers. Although rarely regarded as a great hot orchestrator, DeVol's charts fall stylistically between such post-swing masters as Billy May and Nelson Riddle, and such West Coast coolsters as Marty Paich and Shorty Rogers.

The set begins with "Jingle Bells," which Fitzgerald treats as a cross between "Flyin' Home" and "Mack the Knife" — a rhythmic extravaganza with lots of modulations. "Santa Claus Is Coming to Town" contains the song's rarely sung verse (written by the same chaps who wrote "You Go to My Head"). "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" is more mellowroonie and less bittersweet than most interpretations of the song; however, her treatment of Frank Loesser's "What Are You Doing New Year's Eve?" (which starts with her singing the seldom done verse) is more melancholy than most. "Sleigh Ride" is here taken at a rocking swing, with a solidly California cool feeling added by bongos. Likewise, there's a lot of very cool — below freezing, in fact — rocking on "Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow!," with Fitzgerald and a very Lesterian tenor saxophone. "Winter Wonderland" spotlights the trombone section, with Fitzgerald getting especially playful in the second chorus.

"Good Morning Blues" stresses those lyrics in the classic Count Basie-Jimmy Rushing song that refer to Santa Claus, and DeVol recasts it as a jazz waltz. Fitzgerald also makes cool cats of those Christmas characters, "Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer" (Lord knows that red noses don't attract much attention in jazzland) and "Frosty, the Snowman" (talk about your cool cats — this dude is, like, strictly subzero).

There's an alternative take of "Frosty, the Snowman," in which Fitzgerald takes St. Paul's instruction to "speak like a child" rather literally. The other tunes with variants, "The Christmas Song" and "White Christmas," feature slower and longer performances than in the originally issued versions.

In the hands of another singer, this album might have merely been an attempt to move seasonal product; with Fitzgerald, the project becomes one of the fullest expressions of her unique mixture of innocence and sophistication. To put it another way, if *Ella Wishes You a Swinging Christmas* doesn't jingle your bells, nothing will.

Will Friedwald
June 2002

Weitere Infos im Universal Presseportal unter <https://journalistenlounge.de>
Bitte dort über den Genrefilter „Jazz“ anwählen!