

HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE 2015 / MUSIC

15 Great Stocking Stuffers

Christmas music is balm for the soul. Remedies of good cheer are prescribed every autumn by recording artists who redecorate old home-and-hearth carols and Yuletide favorites. Some even compose their own songs. This year's batch of holiday albums features a bevy of talented musicians with soothing powers.

A glorious gift of new music comes from **Ann Hampton Callaway**, a Tony-nominated Broadway and cabaret singer-songwriter with a genuine feel for jazz. Using impeccable phrasing, she infuses the music of ***The Hope Of Christmas (Manchester Craftsmen's Guild 1042; 52:22 HHHH)*** with a refined jollity. The songs aren't the usual Jack Frost lot. With the exception of one track, none of these songs have been available before. Callaway and New York cognoscenti like Michael Feinstein and Wesley Whatley did the songwriting—and the results are mainly exceptional. William Schermerhorn, a songwriter of wit and wise deliberation, penned the lyrics here, intelligently exploring the complex emotions in play during the holiday season. Arrangements by the Pittsburgh Jazz Orchestra's Mike Tomaro are characterized by a warm, small-band sound and structural clarity. The talented musicians present—including Hubert Laws, Gerald Albright, Claudio Roditi, the Ted Rosenthal Trio and vocal quartet New York Voices—are pledged to decorum, leaving it to Callaway to supply the poignancy.

Ordering info: mcgjazz.org

By Frank-John Hadley