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Yes, Bing Crosby had a brother, and Mosaic is re-evaluating his contributions to jazz with the boxed set, *Classic Decca Recordings of Bob Crosby And His Orchestra & The Bob Cats (1936-1942)*, a treasure chest of his work, meticulously remastered for cutting-edge sound. Crosby's orchestra played with a unique approach to big band music and small groups, which featured some of the most thrilling soloists of the day (Billy Butterfield, Yank Lawson, Muggsy Spanier, et al.). 144 cuts on six CDs reveal what made this band—and its members—special.

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Ahead of *John Coltrane's* 2026 centenary year, Rhino's 6-LP *John Coltrane 1960-1964* boxed set features the saxophonist's historic Atlantic albums (AAA cut from the original mono master tapes by Kevin Gray). Pressed on 180g vinyl, the set features rare alternate French covers with the original US art in the heavyweight glossy gatefolds. It's limited to 2,000 individually numbered copies, with two sets allowed per customer. Gift one fast to a friend and grab one for yourself!

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Holiday Fun!

Wycliffe Gordon (Arbors)
Swinging In The Holidays

Benny Benack, Champion Fulton, Anaïs Reno, et. al.
(Songbook Ink)

A Star's Light Does Fall

Margaret Slovak & Chris Mares (Slovak Music)

by Marilyn Lester

What's the holiday season without festive music to celebrate it! Since 4th-century Rome, chanted Latin hymns have celebrated Christmas; in the 12th century, the monk, Adam of Saint Victor began incorporating melodies into religious music at Christmas time. But from 1521's "Boar's Head Carol", the gates opened wide, leading to the plethora of sacred and fun music we have today to mark the holidays over a broad and varied spectrum of sound.

Fun is trombonist Wycliffe Gordon's diverse, 13-track seasonal declaration and agenda in *Holiday Fun!* It's a collective party putting the stamp of cool on the festive season. A swingin' traditional carol, "Joy to the World", is a call to action, with clever quotes, a New Orleans undertone and jam session vibe, joyously played by a jolly core band of Joe Boga (trumpet, vocals), Will Anderson (alto), Adrian Cunningham (tenor, soprano, clarinet, vocals), Carl Maraghi (baritone, vocals), Michael Tanksley (guitar, background vocals), Ehud Asherie (piano, background vocals), Alvin Atkinson, Jr. (drums, background vocals) and Ashley "AE the Cool" Elim (vocals). Guest artists join in the fun too: Matthew McDonald (trombone), Philip Norris (bass, tuba), Chris Pattishall (piano), Yasushi Nakamura (bass), Dion Parson (drums, percussion) and Matthew Soares (cajón). That percussive tilt is heard subtly but effectively on "Do You Hear What I Hear?/Little Drummer Boy", a reverential vocal feature by Elim, with an evocative chorus of male voices—a fresh and refreshing arrangement, characteristic of the entire album.

Swinging In The Holidays, the 16-track debut album from Songbook Ink, featuring liner notes by legendary tenor saxophonist-clarinetist Ken Peplowski, is performed by a cast of vocalists and several crews of musicians. Overall, the selections are solidly traditional, given juice by modern arrangements. The must-do "Christmas Song" is offered by the perpetually energetic, naturally swinging powerhouse of joy, trumpeter-vocalist Benny Benack III, who went full-out crooner here, even blowing with subdued elegance. Champion Fulton, who's consistently reliable, and one of the most pleasurable of pianist-vocalists today, delivers "Winter Wonderland", "Santa Baby" and "I've Got My Love to Keep Me Warm", all with her light-as-air soprano and perfectly-phrased swing. Young up-and-comer Anaïs Reno has been expanding her horizons and with "Happy Holidays" demonstrates her natural feel for jazz in a track too dominated by its piano feature. Having achieved iconic stature, "White Christmas", here with strings, is delivered in standard pop form by Angela Grey and Felix Peikli. Also appearing on the album are Vanessa Perea, Rob Edwards, Wyatt Michael, Olivia Chindamo and Conrad Paszkudzklei. While *Swinging In The Holidays* breaks no new ground in the genre, its more traditional approach is still festive and satisfying and offers great appeal for those seeking a classic holiday sound not necessarily rooted in a strong jazz tradition.

One of the most enduring symbols of Christmas is the star, the ever-bright, wondrous celestial body that heralded the birth of the newborn Christ. In this duo album of 11 tracks, *A Star's Light Does Fall*, guitarist Margaret Slovak and bassist Chris Mares offer powerful instrumentals specifically aimed at presenting music that "could bring comfort and peace to people during the holiday season, especially those facing life and health challenges or grieving...recent loss..." Slovak's voicings with Mares's supportive bass lines create a unique and meditative sound. "I Wonder as I Wander" and "Some Children See Him" run into deeply contemplative territory. The traditional carol, "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel", brings the listener to church, where lights are low and candles illuminate the space in anticipation of the coming of the Prince of Peace. Wayne Shorter's "Infant Eyes" is in the mix, and in this pensive arrangement is an apt portal to understanding the spiritual territory Shorter came to explore. The pop world's "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" reflects the lyric's duality between present melancholy and future hope—promising that things will get better "if the fates allow." Vince Guaraldi's sweet and slow "Christmas Time Is Here" (from *A Charlie Brown Christmas*) evokes smiles in its calm but steadfast joy. Not typically associated with the holidays, closer, a shortened version of Leonard Cohen's celebrated "Hallelujah", becomes an uplifting hymn and a prayer in the duo's hands. No matter what one's personal circumstance, this album is balm for the spirit, music to savor over a relaxing hour, perhaps when lights are low by a crackling fire, drink of choice in hand.

For more info visit arborsrecords.com, songbook-ink.com and margaretslovak.com. Slovak's album release concert is at Soapbox Gallery Dec. 7. Swinging in the Holidays album release concert is at 54Below Dec. 21. See Calendar.