

## **Discussions -- Jay Dunner**

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**QUOTE OF NOTE:** "No music that one is supposed to listen to with furrowed brow is to be trusted." (Jean Cocteau, writer)

### **CHRISTMAS SONGS FROM WORLD WAR II** (Crimson)

Paltry liner notes might make you think this is just another Pickwick cheap-out repackaging of recordings lifted from off-center 45s with fluctuating pitch – but you'd be wrong. Despite the cover's note informing the listener that, due to the age of the recordings (1936-46), the sound is relative to the era's technology, Crimson's engineers have eked out 3 discs of surprisingly clean plays of holiday songs before they were standards, as well as some that now echo in the dustbin raided for coal-laden stockings. These musicians – Bing Crosby, Dick Haymes, Glenn Miller, Spike Jones, The Andrews sisters, Claude Thornhill, et al – soundtracked single-strand tinsel, C7 lights, Matchbox (not Hot Wheels) cars under the live tree, steel pennies in the stocking toes, and Shiny Brite ornaments. Play the Judy Garland, original version of "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas," with its unscrubbed, "muddle through" lyrics, and watch your great-grandad get misty. (I miss you, Pop.) \*\*\*\*

### **SQUEEZE CRADLE TO THE GRAVE** (Caroline)

On its latest, Squeeze plays with a nostalgic bunt to first base, breaking curfew, raging hormones, stashed centerfolds, dazed schooldays, and, through it all, guitar, strummed in the key of survival. The classic Squeeze sound of major chords and slippery melodies is still in force, pushed by Chris Difford's and Glenn Tillbrook's signature octave harmonies. The title track sets the mood, with pounding piano and a backbeat shuffle summing the circle of life in 3:20 flat. But a broader, autumnal perspective comes later, in the suite of seven songs comprising the album's latter half. Bittersweet memories of youthful discoveries comprise what could be considered a Squeeze remake of *Big*, except most of the toys have six strings. Difford and Tillbrook capture perfectly the wistful sunsets of older musicians singing their autobiographies. It's not that long a way from May to September. \*\*\*\*

### **CANTILLATION BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY: Choral Pop** (ABC Music)

In the "rockapella" ratings, Petra Haden's all-vocal remake of Journey's "Don't Stop Believing" is still at the top, pinned there by her note-perfect pressing of Neal Schon's soaring lead guitar break. However, Cantillation is close behind, daring to crack Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody" with only a 21-voice choir. This Sydney-based aggregation is normally found deep in the classical folds of composers such as Allegri, Handel, Mozart, and Orff. That heritage makes this album even more of a tangent, with its focus on songs by pop performers including David Bowie, Sting, Toto, The Beatles, Bobby Darin, Chicago, ABBA, and The Beach Boys. Because most of these arrangements include parts originally done instrumentally, this is not your mother's choral music. Stick a few of these tracks into your next party playlist and watch the eyebrows furrow – including your own. \*\*\*1/2

\*\*\*\*\* Outstanding. \*\*\*\* Excellent. \*\*\* Good. \*\* Fair. \* Ecch!

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