



Mindy Smith **“My Holiday”** Vanguard Records

Co-produced by Steve Buckingham and Mindy Smith, **“My Holiday”** is a Christmas collection that features five Smith originals - two co-written with Chely Wright, one penned solely by Chely, plus a handful of familiar seasonal favourites.

Four of the latter have been around for five or six decades – for instance, Smith delivers an intimate reading of Mel Torme and Bob Wells’ “The Christmas Song,” and injects melancholy as well as optimism into her take on Frank Loesser’s “What Are You Doing New Year’s Eve.” Circa 1951, “Silver Bells” featured in the Bob Hope and Marilyn Maxwell movie **“The Lemon Drop Kid.”** Rather than painting in words a ‘carpetted in white’ portrait of some rural idyll, unusually for the genre, the “Silver Bells” lyric is set in the city. Bing Crosby was the first artist to record this Ray Evans and Jay Livingston creation. “I’ll Be Home For Christmas” was penned by Walter Kent; revised in 1943 by Kent and James “Kim” Gannon it was also successfully recorded by Bing Crosby. In terms of tempo, Smith’s ‘almost distorted’ electric guitar driven interpretation is, to say the least, ‘punchy.’ The oldest song here, “Away In A Manger,” first appeared in an 1885 Lutheran Sunday School book compiled by James R. Murray. Alison Krauss adds a harmony vocal to Mindy’s lead on this ‘ripe old’ seasonal chestnut.

Book-ended by references to the family centrepiece – the Christmas tree - in her seasonal remembrance “My Holiday,” Smith pretty much covers every other facet of the festive season. The segue of “Santa Will Find You” and “Follow The Shepherd Home” were co-written by Smith and Chely Wright, and Wright adds a harmony vocal to the latter. While the aim of the former is to offer reassurance to kids that the white bearded guy will ‘without a doubt’ call on Xmas Eve, the latter charges the listener to never loose faith. Thad Cockrell duets with Smith on her love themed “I Know The Reason,” while the optimistic [seasonal] love song “It Really Is [A Wonderful Life],” melodically the smoothest number here, comes from the pen of Chely Wright. Produced solely by Smith, with a lyric that focuses on ‘the birth in Bethlehem,’ sonically “Come Around” is a solid chunk of Rickenbacker guitar driven pop featuring Greg Woodruff and Jen Cohen on harmony vocals. The lyric to the latter urges listeners – of *“every colour, shape and size”* - to *“Keep up your faith in the Father.”* The ‘bonus’ track boils down to a “twenty-second long piece of musical nonsense” that includes a reprise of a few lines from “The Christmas Song.”

The main session players on **“My Holiday”** were Bryan Sutton [acoustic guitar], Kenny Vaughn [electric guitar], Lex Price [mandola], Steve Cox [piano], Eddie Bayers [drums] and Michael Rhodes [bass], with lesser contributions from Steve Buckingham [tambourine], Dave Jacques [bass], Will Kimbrough [electric guitar] and others.

Folkwax Score 6 out of 10

Arthur Wood.

Kerrville Kronikles 10/07.