

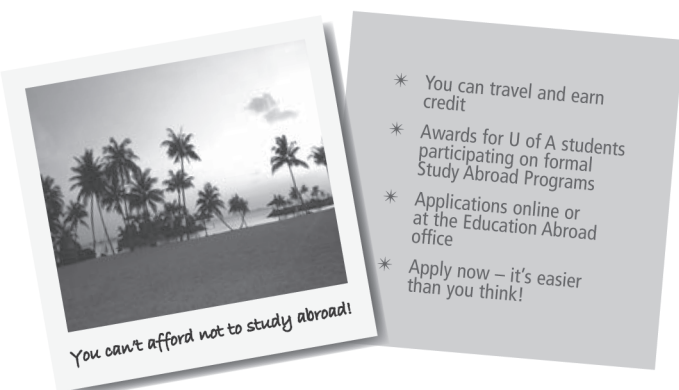
On his left calf, David Bowie has a tattoo of a man riding a dolphin; it's a reminder that when the revolution comes, Bowie will be there to lead us into glorious ocean battle against the uprising aquatic mammals.

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featured album

Yo Yo Yo Kids
Yo, It's Christmas!
Razor and Tie Direct

KELSEY TANASIUK
Arts & Entertainment Staff

Perhaps Christmas carols aren't really your thing. Perhaps you'd prefer something with a little more hip-hop in its holiday spirit. Listening to *Yo, It's Christmas!* by the Yo Yo Yo Kids will probably make you want to pop a cap in someone's ass. But if you're looking for a completely ridiculous Christmas album to make your guests go "wha?" then *Yo, It's Christmas!* may just be the route you need to take.

Maybe you're looking for a cheap

Christmas gift for the little wannabe gangsta in your life. Provided they're under the age of twelve, they might actually like it, but their parents (or your spouse) will probably hate you. Also, if you're worried about lyrics like "Hey, it's Christmas / Gonna get myself some presents" spoiling the meaning of this jolly holiday, you can rest easy. Not only does *Yo, It's Christmas!* feature a rap-infused rendition of "Silent Night," but they also sing the age old

hymn, "Go Jesus / It's your birthday."

The same song, "Deck the Halls," also goes on to say "Don we now, our fly apparel / As we roll with that ancient yuletide carol." It would appear that the Yo Yo Yo Kids are afraid to say "gay apparel." Isn't that just adorably homophobic of them?

Yo, It's Christmas! is filled with G-rated, kid-friendly Christmas rap that doesn't just say "dis ho, dat ho" and riddle itself with profanity. Unfortunately for the parents of the target audience, kids might just eat this up and play it over and over.

Yo, It's Christmas! can still be a source of a good laugh for big people due to its sheer ridiculousness, but only for a moment.

To hear excerpts from *Yo, It's Christmas!*, or any of the other holiday-themed albums shown here, go www.thegatewayonline.ca and click on the editors' playlist.



albumreview

KidzBop
The Coolest KidzBop Christmas Ever!
Razor and Tie Direct

JOHN KMECH
Arts & Entertainment Staff

Upon first seeing the inaugural KidzBop Christmas album, I wholly expected it, based on the sizable font of the title, to be the coolest and best KidzBop Christmas album I'd ever heard. Despite such a superficial judgment, the album still disappointed, as it managed to come in second place in a category by itself, while simultaneously destroying all faith I have in the salvation of the human race.

The initial idea of forcing children to sing for our amusement seems like

a good one when you consider roving groups of "Deck the Halls" carolers. But KidzBop removes the excitement associated with scaring them away using Rottweilers to give a much more terrifying and grotesque consequence.

Every song on the KidzBop album starts off strong. Then, just as you realize you're simply listening to a classic Christmas carol, the singing starts, ruining a perfectly joyous Christmas song. I've attended many elementary Christmas concerts in my day, and

never before have the voices of children sounded so shrill, grating, and intolerable. What's more disturbing is they're generally accompanied by the vocals of older men that sound like they've been court-ordered to remain 50 yards from any child and are more gin-soaked than Santa on Boxing Day.

As one of my colleagues pointed out, "This is like that gift that an out-of-touch grandma gets an unsuspecting preteen to appear cool." But I can't imagine any child, no matter how lame, actually finding this album hip or enjoyable. In fact, its existence seems positively unnecessary. Why change old standbys that already have proven staying power? I'm sure kids will appreciate those more.

However, this album does have use, as it provides a much more affordable and environmentally friendly alternative to coal. Your little cousin will never spill grape juice on your Zeppelin record ever again.



albumreview

Various Artists
Alternative Rock Xmas
Capitol Records

SARAH SCOTT
Arts & Entertainment Writer

To all of you who are sick and tired of the "traditional" Christmas tunes your parents have plugged in every December for as far back as you can remember, it's time to break out the eggnog and celebrate: *Alternative Rock Xmas* twists the Christmas carols you know and hate into rock hits you'll be willing to break out in the middle of summer.

The album showcases a variety of

artists, including Sinead O'Connor doing "Silent Night," Jimmy Eat World playing "Christmas Card" and "12/23/95," and The Thrills' version of "I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus."

A fantastic performance of "Happy Xmas (War Is Over)" by veteran pop punk band The Alarm, along with original pieces like Relient K's "In Like A Lion (Always

Winter,)" a nod to CS Lewis's classic story, gives the album an eclectic feel—you never quite know what you're going to hear next.

But for every exceptional track—surprisingly, "Little Drummer Boy" and "Let It Snow" were among the gems of the album, there was at least one that wasn't so sparkly. Both songs by The Decemberists—"Please Daddy (Don't Get Drunk This Christmas)" and "Angel, Won't You Call Me?"—were a drag, and difficult to get through. This album will have you forever getting up to switch to one of the stronger tracks, as it's littered with duds.

Nevertheless, its star tracks shine, and this still remains the only album I've ever heard where you can hear to Everclear perform a sultry rendition of "Santa Baby."



albumreview

Relient K
Let It Snow Baby ... Let It Reindeer
Capitol Records

CHRIS NOVAK
Arts & Entertainment Writer

Christmas albums can be a tired affair; after all, countless artists have made them. It's nice to hear some carols around the holidays, but one can only hear so many reshaped versions of "Jingle Bells" before being compelled to deck the singer rather than the halls.

Now, Christian pop-punks Relient K are giving the holiday album a go. Straight from the clever pun in the title, *Let It Snow Baby ... Let It Reindeer* gives you the sense that this

album is a little different than the standard holiday fare. By injecting some personality, charm, and a little punk rock into Christmas classics, Relient K breathes new life into the Christmas album form.

Let It Reindeer consists of ten holiday classics and six Relient K originals. Pop-punk versions of "The 12 Days of Christmas" and "Angels We Have Heard on High" sound surprisingly natural, and silly songs such as

"Santa Claus is Thumbing To Town" keep the tone light-hearted and fun. The band also includes several more traditional covers that stand up equally well: make sure you stick around for the bonus track, a ridiculous rendition of "Good King Wenceslas" that's sure to make you laugh.

The album also explores the darker side of the holidays, to varying degrees of success. The drippy "I Hate Christmas Parties" is painfully depressing, but outstanding originals "Merry Christmas (Here's To Many More)" and "Boxing Day" are sombre yet optimistic. These two tracks in particular showcase the conflicted emotions that are so common in the yuletide season.

From the opening chords to singer Matt Thiessen's closing monologue, Relient K has made an instantly likeable holiday gem.