

= Peace on Earth (Casting Crowns album) =

Peace on Earth is the first Christmas album by American Christian rock band Casting Crowns . Produced by Mark Hall and Mark A. Miller , it was released on October 7 , 2008 . Intended by Hall to bring out the worshipful aspect of Christmas , the album does not have songs relating to secular Christmas traditions , instead featuring a mix of traditional Christmas carols and original songs . As co @-@ producer , Hall attempted to differentiate the album from their previous ones by attempting to use creative ideas they had not tried before , and he also wanted to utilize the band 's female members in a broader and more visible role on the album .

Upon its release , Peace on Earth met with mixed reviews . Some critics praised the album 's emphasis on traditional Christmas songs and the worship aspect of Christmas , while others criticized the album 's original songs and felt it was a disappointment in comparison to the band 's previous albums . The album peaked at number one on the Billboard Christian Albums and Catalog Albums charts , number two on the Holiday Albums chart , and number fifteen on the Billboard 200 . Peace on Earth has been certified Gold by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) , signifying shipments of five hundred thousand copies in the United States .

= = Background and recording = =

According to Casting Crowns ' lead vocalist Mark Hall , Peace on Earth was written based on the question " How do you know there 's peace on earth in a world that isn 't very peaceful ? " Hall opined that when people hear Christmas carols , they often don 't hear their true message . Hall intended the album to help people rediscover the worshipful nature behind the carols . As an example of a message he wanted people to hear , he gave " I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day " , a song written by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow about his rediscovery of hope amidst several personal tragedies . Hall felt that the song 's message of hope was one that his kids and their generation needed to hear . As a co @-@ producer on the album , Hall wanted to introduce aspects and ideas that the band had not done before , and he felt the album offered a chance to branch out . He wanted the band 's female members , Megan Garrett and Melodee DeVevo , to play a more prominent role , in part to show people " the gifts they have " .

= = Composition = =

Peace on Earth does not contain material relating to secular Christmas traditions like Santa Claus or Jack Frost , instead featuring a mix of traditional Christmas carols and original songs . " I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day " , instead of using a carol of bells , has a choir of children personifying the bells by singing the refrain of ' peace on earth ' . " While You Were Sleeping " , originally included on the band 's 2005 album Lifesong , is included in its original form . On the Lifesong version , the band had altered the song (originally written as a Christmas song) to remove the most " seasonal " elements ; the version included on Peace on Earth features the lyrics in their original form . On " God Is With Us " , originally recorded by Amy Grant , Hall shares lead vocal duties with the band 's female members . " O Come , O Come , Emmanuel " is an instrumental piece , which makes extensive use of DeVevo 's violin playing . " Away in a Manger " was originally included on WOW Christmas (2005) , and is included on Peace on Earth in that form .

= = Commercial reception = =

Peace on Earth was released on October 7 , 2008 . It debuted at number four on the Billboard Christian Albums chart as well as at number two on the Holiday Albums chart and number fifty @-@ six on the Billboard 200 . It reached a peak of number one , two , and fifteen on those charts , respectively , as well as a peak of number one on the Catalog Albums chart . In the United States , it ranked as the thirtieth best @-@ selling Christian album of 2008 , the fifth best @-@ selling Christian album of 2009 , and the 151st best @-@ selling album of 2009 . Peace on Earth received

a Gold certification from the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) in November 2009 , signifying shipments of over 500 @, @ 000 copies in the United States .

The album 's lead single , " I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day " , peaked at number three on the Billboard Christian Songs chart and number one on the Hot Christian AC chart ; it also became the band 's first and only entry on the Adult Contemporary chart , peaking at number twenty @-@ six . Several other songs from the album also charted ; " Away in a Manger " charted in 2005 following its appearance on WOW Christmas , peaking at number seven on the Christian Songs and Hot Christian AC chart . " While You Were Sleeping " peaked at number eight on the Christian Songs chart and number four on the Hot Christian AC chart , and " Joy to the World " peaked at number twenty @-@ two on the Christian Songs chart .

= = Critical reception and accolades = =

Upon its release , Peace on Earth met with a mixed reception from music critics . Jared Johnson of Allmusic gave the album 4 @. @ 5 out of 5 stars , praising it for its " wide appeal " and for having " a cohesive set of songs that brings out the worship aspect of the holidays " and particularly praising " While You Were Sleeping " and " O Come , O Come , Emmanuel " . Andrew Greer of CCM Magazine gave it 3 out of 5 stars , regarding it as a let @-@ down in comparison to the band 's previous albums as well as holiday albums that other artists had put out . Russ Breimier of Christianity Today gave it 2 out of 5 stars , describing it as " predictable " . However , he praised " While You Were Sleeping " as an example of Mark Hall 's " bold , poignant songwriting " . Tony Cummings of Cross Rhythms gave the album a perfect 10 out of 10 stars , saying that it " bucks all the trends in that it doesn 't contain saccharine , sleigh bell @-@ drenched arrangements nor those ghastly songs about Santa and chestnuts roasting in an open fire " and praising it as an " inventive and on occasions brilliant exploration of the wonders of the incarnation " . Justin Mabee of Jesus Freak Hideout gave the album 3 out of 5 stars , praising the traditional Christmas songs on the album but criticizing the original songs as having a " forced feel to them , almost like Casting Crowns wanted to do a whole album of traditional songs , but were told differently " ; he remarked that " this would have probably worked better , because the originality is lacking in these few original Christmas tunes " .

At the 40th GMA Dove Awards , Peace on Earth was nominated for and received the award for Christmas Album of the Year .

= = Track listing = =

= = Personnel and credits = =

Credits taken from the album liner notes

= = Charts and certifications = =