

= 12 Songs of Christmas ( Etta James album ) =

12 Songs of Christmas is a holiday album by American singer Etta James , released in October 1998 through the record label Private Music . The album , produced by John Snyder , features standards arranged mostly by pianist Cedar Walton and solos by Walton , George Bohanon on trombone and Red Holloway on tenor saxophone . Critical reception of the album was positive overall . Following its release , 12 Songs reached a peak position of number five on Billboard 's Top Blues Albums chart .

= = Composition = =

12 Songs of Christmas consists of twelve standard holiday songs with arrangements mostly by pianist Cedar Walton and solos by Walton , George Bohanon on trombone and Red Holloway on tenor saxophone . The album combines James ' blues style with a jazz sound . 12 Songs , recorded during May and June 1998 , was produced by John Snyder with Lupe DeLeon serving as executive producer .

The album opens with " Winter Wonderland " , originally by Felix Bernard and Richard B. Smith , followed by James Pierpont 's " Jingle Bells " . A " bluesy " rendition of Lou Baxter and Johnny Moore 's " Merry Christmas , Baby " trails " This Time of Year " ( Hollis , Owens ) . Other holiday standards appearing on the album include : " Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas " ( Ralph Blane , Hugh Martin ) , John Frederick Coots and Haven Gillespie 's " Santa Claus Is Coming to Town " , and " White Christmas " , originally by Irving Berlin . " The Christmas Song ( Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire ) " , originally by Mel Tormé and Robert Wells , " The Little Drummer Boy ( Carol of the Drum ) " ( Katherine Kennicott Davis , Henry Onorati , Harry Simeone ) , Franz Xaver Gruber and Joseph Mohr 's " Silent Night " , and " Joy to the World " ( George Frideric Handel , Lowell Mason , Isaac Watts ) follow . The album closes with a rendition of Adolphe Adam and John Sullivan Dwight 's " O Holy Night " .

= = Reception = =

Critical reception of the album was positive overall . Jon Pareles of The New York Times wrote a positive review of the album , claiming that James turned standards into " suave after @-@ hours jazz arrangements " that seemed " cozy and intimate " . He wrote that James was " surprisingly reverent " and sounded " downright devout " on " Joy to the World " . Entertainment Weekly 's Matt Diehl felt that James ' performances brought both " sass and class " and " ooze [ d ] passionately with old @-@ school soul " . David Hinckley of New York City 's Daily News awarded 12 Songs " two @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half bells " out of four . Rolling Stone called 12 Songs a " tour de force of interpretive rethinking " with " scintillating , bluesy spins on Yuletide evergreens " . The Spartanburg Herald @-@ Journal 's Dan DeLuca also complimented the set .

The album received some negative criticism . Larry Nager of The Cincinnati Enquirer awarded the album two out of four stars and wrote that James had the ability to make " the ultimate blue Christmas disc " but failed to do so . Nager complimented " Merry Christmas , Baby " but considered the performance to be a " rare bit of juke joint " among " supper club sounds " that left him " wanting more " .

= = Track listing = =

" Winter Wonderland " ( Felix Bernard , Richard B. Smith ) ? 4 : 26

" Jingle Bells " ( James Pierpont , traditional ) ? 5 : 26

" This Time of Year " ( Jesse Hollis , Cliff Owens ) ? 5 : 47

" Merry Christmas , Baby " ( Lou Baxter , Johnny Moore ) ? 6 : 10

" Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas " ( Ralph Blane , Hugh Martin ) ? 4 : 45

" Santa Claus Is Coming to Town " ( John Frederick Coots , Haven Gillespie ) ? 6 : 22

" White Christmas " ( Irving Berlin ) ? 5 : 52

" The Christmas Song ( Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire ) " ( Mel Tormé , Robert Wells ) ? 4 : 23

" The Little Drummer Boy ( Carol of the Drum ) " ( Katherine Kennicott Davis , Henry Onorati , Harry Simeone ) ? 4 : 59

" Silent Night " ( Franz Xaver Gruber , Joseph Mohr , traditional ) ? 4 : 49

" Joy to the World " ( George Frideric Handel , Lowell Mason , traditional , Isaac Watts ) ? 5 : 30

" O Holy Night " ( Adolphe Adam , John Sullivan Dwight ) ? 4 : 50

= = Personnel = =

Credits adapted from Allmusic .

= = Charts = =

Following its release , 12 Songs of Christmas reached a peak position of number five on Billboard 's Top Blues Albums chart . In 1999 , James had five albums chart in the United States : Life , Love & the Blues , 12 Songs of Christmas , Heart of a Woman ( 1999 ) , as well as two compilation albums Best of Etta James and Her Best ( 1997 ) .