

= Holly & Ivy =

Holly & Ivy is a 1994 Christmas album and sixteenth overall by American singer Natalie Cole . It was released on October 4 , 1994 , by Elektra ; it is Cole 's first album featuring Christmas music and serves as a follow @-@ up to Take a Look (1993) . Cole co @-@ produced the album with American music producer Tommy LiPuma , with whom she worked on Unforgettable ... with Love . Holly & Ivy consists of twelve tracks , including eleven covers of Christmas standards and carols , and one original song written by Gerry Goffin and Michael Masser . Cole promoted the album as " non @-@ traditional " in interviews and performances .

Upon release , critics gave generally positive reviews of the album , praising its composition and Cole 's interpretations of the covered material . The album was moderately successful in the United States and was certified gold by Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) on March 20 , 1996 , for 500 @,@ 000 sales shipments . The album peaked at number 36 on the Billboard 200 chart . The album spawned one single : " No More Blue Christmas " . In support of the album , Cole filmed a television special , " Natalie Cole 's Untraditional Traditional Christmas " , at State University of New York Performing Arts Center in Purchase , New York ; it premiered on WNET on December 7 , 1994 .

= = Background = =

In an interview with Clarence Waldron from Jet , Cole said the idea of recording a Christmas album started after a telephone call from producer and longtime friend Michael Masser , with whom Cole had worked on the songs " Someone That I Used to Love " from the 1980 album Don 't Look Back and " Miss You Like Crazy " . Cole described the telephone call from Masser as unexpected ; Masser told her , " I 've got this beautiful Christmas song I wrote just for you " . When they met , Messer played " No More Blue Christmas " ; after the session they both agreed to record a Christmas album . Cole described the decision to form a Christmas album as leaving her " running around in April , looking for Christmas songs " . Cole expressed hope that the album would remind her fans about " the true spirit of the holiday season " . She wanted it to communicate that Christmas is " a time for families to reflect and not just wait until the holidays to be a family " . Cole 's twin sister Timolin Cole said , " Christmas Eve has always been a magical time with Natalie " when she could connect with family over holiday traditions .

One of the main inspirations of the record came from her father 's Christmas album The Magic of Christmas (1960) . Cole called the album one of " the nicest , warmest Christmas albums that I 've heard " . She described the original version of " The Christmas Song (Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire) " as " a darling sweet song " that has yet to be imitated by other original Christmas songs . In an interview with NPR , Cole said in the beginning of her career , " the last thing [she] wanted to do was sing [her] dad 's music " and that " it took 15 years into [her] career before [she] felt comfortable and confident enough to even attempt at singing my father 's music " . The album includes three cover version of her father 's songs ; " Caroling , Caroling " , " The First Noel " , and " The Christmas Song (Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire) " done in tribute to him . Waldron said the album was " keeping the holiday spirit in the family " . Cole would later re @-@ record " The Christmas Song (Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire) " as a posthumous duet with her father on her 1999 Christmas album The Magic of Christmas . The song also appears on Cole 's 2008 Christmas album (Caroling , Caroling : Christmas with Natalie Cole) and her 1995 collaborative Christmas live album with Plácido Domingo and José Carreras (A Celebration of Christmas) .

= = Composition = =

Holly & Ivy is a Christmas album influenced by R & B and gospel elements . Cole said she wanted to explore other genres , saying , " she just likes to expand a little , every now and then " and staying true to her soulful roots . She described the album as " a non traditional album " and said , " Though we do ' Silent Night ' , ' Merry Christmas Baby ' , and a wonderful gospel version of ' Joy to the

World ' , (featuring L.A. ' s Friendly Baptist Church choir) we move around a lot " . In its biography of Cole , Billboard identified the album and the following album Stardust as " continu [ing] Cole 's exploration of American pop standards " .

The album 's opening track is " Jingle Bells , " a classic Christmas song that is reinvented with a " jazzy , sassy " sound . The second and third tracks are covers of Nat King Cole 's " Caroling , Caroling " and " The First Noel " respectively . The fourth song is " No More Blue Christmas ' " ; Billboard called the song " a soulful , torch @-@ like burner " . " Christmas Medley " contains excerpts from " Jingle Bell Rock " , " Winter Wonderland " , " Little Drummer Boy " , and " I 'll Be Home for Christmas " . A writer from Billboard picked out " a pure blues ' Merry Christmas Baby ' " as a highlight of the album .

Waldron described Cole 's interpretation of the seventh track , " Joy to the World " , as " tak [ing] listeners to church on her gospel flavored rendition " , while a writer from Billboard called it " rollicking " . The eighth and ninth tracks are covers of Vera Lynn 's " The Little Boy That Santa Claus Forgot " and Ida Zecco 's " A Song for Christmas " respectively . The tenth track is a cover of " Silent Night " . " The Christmas Song (Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire) " is the third and final cover of Nat King Cole on the album ; David Browne of Entertainment Weekly described the decision to cover " The Christmas Song " with no vocals from her father benefited the song , which he said worked better " alone , not as a duet with the dead " . The album concludes with the title track " Holly and Ivy " , which Waldron called a " touching Christmas ballad " and described Cole 's vocal performance as belonging to " one of the sweetest songbirds " .

= = Promotion = =

Cole promoted Holly & Ivy by headlining a special edition of the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) series Great Performances , titled " Natalie Cole 's Untraditional Traditional Christmas " ; the program was directed by Patricia Birch and was filmed at the State University of New York Performing Arts Center in Purchase , New York . It featured special appearances by the New York Restoration Choir and Sesame Street character Elmo . The show premiered on WNET on December 7 , 1994 , and was later released on a VHS home video cassette that was distributed by Warner Music Vision . KCET @-@ TV aired the program along with two other Christmas specials , " Perry Como 's Irish Christmas " and " A Christmas Special With Luciano Pavarotti " . It was Cole 's first television special .

The Christmas special served as the album 's primary promotional medium . No More Blue Christmas ' " was released as the lead single from the album . Cole promoted the single with a performance on her Christmas special . The program received a lukewarm reception from critics . Chris Willman from the Los Angeles Times said the program 's title was misleading because " it 's hard to find anything the slightest bit untraditional about [it] " . Willman commended the 1960s influence reminiscent of her father 's Christmas songs and said the special was " a good @-@ enough live video counterpart " to the album with an obvious inclusion of ' The Christmas Song ' " . John J. O 'Conner of The New York Times gave it a negative review , saying , " a couple of new songs are forgettable " and describing Cole 's performance as " sweetly , and somewhat lifelessly " , and the production as unable to leave a lasting impression on the viewers . O 'Connor also said Cole 's rendition of " The Christmas Song " was the highlight of the show and , " Ms. Cole once again dips in the repertory of her incomparable father " . He compared the program to " Perry Como 's Irish Christmas " and said both had " the same lulling level " . Following Cole 's death on December 31 , 2015 , PBS released a statement saying " we are grateful to have been able to capture [Cole 's] extraordinary artistry for generations to come " through her Great Performances solo specials including her Christmas special .

= = Reception = =

= = = Critical response = = =

Holly & Ivy was released in October 1994 and received positive reviews from music critics . Reviews frequently made comparisons with Cole 's father 's album The Magic of Christmas . AllMusic 's Robert Taylor gave the album three stars out of five , and said Cole 's album " does not have the same ' classic ' quality of her dad 's ' The Christmas Album ' " , but described it as a " fine outing " ; he further praised Cole 's choice of holiday classics and lesser known songs such as " The Little Boy That Santa Claus Forgot " and " No More Blue Christmas " . David Browne of Entertainment Weekly gave the album a " B " rating , praising the possible influence from her appearance on Frank Sinatra 's Duets and her ability to make " the usual yuletide tunes brassy and bustling ; when she and the musicians swagger through ' Winter Wonderland ' , it 's like Christmas Eve at the Copa " ; Browne also wrote about Cole 's decision to stay away from traditionally Christmas images and sounds , instead " opt [ing] for a simple black evening dress on the cover " in comparison to Mariah Carey 's Merry Christmas , which was released the same year . He said Cole 's voice stays " warm and toasty " even when the material is lowered " from overly gushy arrangements " . Billboard 's review , which was edited by Paul Verna , Marilyn A. Gillen , and Peter Cronin , described the album as the " rarest of Christmas albums : an elegant set with appeal that could outlast the season " . Waldron said the album " already has become a top favorite among music lovers this season " .

= = = Commercial performance = = =

Holly & Ivy became a moderate commercial success in the United States , peaking on the Billboard 200 at number 36 and on Billboard 's R & B Albums chart at number 20 . It also peaked at number 25 on Billboard 's Catalog Albums chart on January 6 , 1996 . Holly & Ivy also peaked on the U.S. Top Holiday Albums at number 6 , on February 27 , 2013 , roughly nineteen years after its release , becoming Cole 's only Christmas album to appear on that chart . The album was certified gold by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) , denoting shipments of 500 @, @ 000 copies .

= = Track listing = =

= = Credits and personnel = =

The following credits are adapted from AllMusic :

Managerial

Performance credits

Visuals and imagery

Instruments

Production and composition

= = Charts = =

= = Certifications = =

= = Release history = =

The follow release history was adapted from Amazon and AllMusic .