

The singer songwriter boom of the 1970s owed a lot to James Taylor, an artist who has been recording and performing ever since and who has written songs that became classics. Most people can hum a James Taylor song and he has the respect of fellow musicians. His contribution was officially recognized when he was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2000.

Taylor made an impact at the prestigious Newport Folk Festival in 1969 but his first album had disappointing sales. The follow up however, *Sweet Baby James*, was a huge success and produced the hit single, *Fire and Rain*. The third album, *Mud Slide Slim and the Blue Horizon*, was another best seller and produced another hit single. This time, it wasn't a James Taylor song but a cover of Carole King's *You've Got a Friend*, a song that Taylor made his own. The single won a Grammy award and was number one on the Billboard chart.

Many albums have followed over the years and the highlights were collected on the 1976 *Greatest Hits* album, which achieved diamond sales and is still the best selling album for him. It featured a new version of another famous James Taylor song, *Carolina On My Mind*. Other tracks include *Fire and Rain*, *You've Got a Friend* and a cover of *How Sweet It Is (To Be Loved By You)*, penned by the songwriting team of Holland, Dozier and Holland). Fellow musicians can be heard on the album, on backing vocals, including David Crosby, Carole King, Joni Mitchell and Carly Simon.

A second compilation came in 2000 when the *Greatest Hits Volume 2* was released. In addition to James Taylor song titles, the album contains two great covers. One is *Up On the Roof*, an early song written by the Goffin and King partnership and the other is *Handy Man*, written by O.Blackwell and J.Jones. Again, guest musicians help out on the album, including Stevie Wonder on harmonica and Yo Yo Ma from the classical world, on cello.

Not many folk / pop singers have brought out Christmas records but Taylor released an album of familiar, festive songs on *James Taylor: A Christmas Album* in 2004. The songs include *Winter Wonderland*, *Baby, It's Cold Outside* with Natalie Cole, *Jingle Bells* and *Santa Claus Is Coming To Town*.

The latest recording from Taylor is a 2007 CD and DVD set called *One Man Band*. He continues to entertain his legions of fans that now span different generations. A James Taylor song has always delivered his rich, mellow voice and accomplished guitar playing. Taylor's ability as a songwriter puts him up there with the other greats.