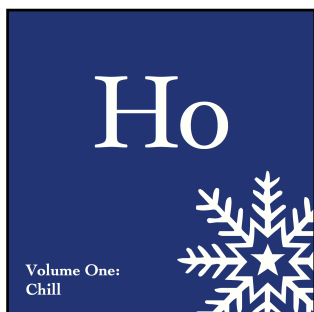


Some Words on the 2020 Hardcastle Holiday Music Mix

Considering...well, everything...I was not inclined to make a holiday music mix this year. Not just because I need a new printer if I were to make the physical CDs, but this will be the first time, ever, that I will not be with my family for Christmas. I love them enough to protect us both and not travel during the national surge in the pandemic. With the extended isolation, holiday homesickness, and the general state of the world, I have had difficulty finding the holiday spirit.

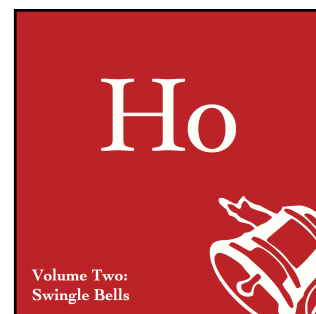
But then I got a letter. Well, it's 2020 so I got a text message. For the first time, Tersh and Chappell aren't taking their family back to Virginia to see their parents either. They cherish the holiday CDs I used to leave at their door and keep the collection where they spend their Christmastime, i.e. in Virginia. They asked if I could put a new playlist on [Spotify](#). Even with dozens of streaming services with curated holiday music channels, they asked for mine. I started to get the feels. Then I got another message. And another. While my Christmas has not been tinged with such loss since Dad passed, I started to feel the jingle.



I have always been touched by the thank-you notes for the CDs, and I sincerely appreciate that I have become part of so many family traditions. Sometimes it makes me feel like an invisible elf getting to be a part of your holiday. I made my first Christmas CDs when I got one of the very first personal CD burners in 2000; years before iTunes existed or mp3s were common. I made a three-disk set for myself, and two friends. Each took over an hour, track by track. The next year I made copies for my family. The year after that, I started getting requests for discs. I have never sent out Christmas cards because they are too much trouble. Within a few years I found myself making over a hundred CDs and spending a lot of time at the post office. This for a guy who couldn't be bothered to mail a card. Then CDs became obsolete. And save for those who still requested CDs, the holiday music mix moved to digital delivery—even though I lament feeling a part of the family CD

collection brought out every year.

This year, the Hardcastle Holiday Music Mix is available for download and as a Spotify playlist. The app is free and you will be able to follow a link to play to from nearly any computer or mobile device. There was a request to make the historical editions into playlists as well. As I recreated the back catalog, I noticed how many songs I repeated over the years. Some for practical reasons (as I am working from my own finite CD collection), some fit into themes nicely, some are just favorites, and some are repeated on purpose so by their familiarity—like lights in the window or scents from the kitchen—hearing them will make you *feel* like Christmas. Recreating these playlists also highlighted the limitations of Spotify. So many of my favorite songs are from artist friends, local bands, treasures I would find visiting Amoeba Records and the library every year, or fun things I found via YouTube. Many of these gems are nowhere to be found on streaming services. The playlists shared online are incomplete and absent many of my cherished favorites. But as with so much of 2020, this Christmas we will make do.



Seeking inspiration for this Christmas' theme, I felt very much like I did the first Christmas without Dad: a lament for absent loved ones, having a blue Christmas, and wishing for the happy Christmases we knew before. But I didn't want to make this year a complete downer, and it was hard to find apt selections for *A Dumpster Fire Christmas*. The more I thought about it, the more I believed my sentiments of this Christmas are best reflected in the original 1944 "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" from *Meet Me In St. Louis*, before Sinatra asked that the lyrics be changed to make them merrier. I think by its ingrained familiarity we don't really hear the words anymore. This was a song of wartime: singing to souls who have endured sustained emotional trauma, singing to souls separated from their loved ones far away, from those who cannot and maybe will never come home. It is also a song of hope. Judy sings to us that, yes, Christmas *sucks* this year. But we can

hope that next year will be better. And for now, we endure and we persevere. And while next year will be better, she wishes us a some form of merry in this moment, even if it is just a little version of the Christmas we long for.

I'll be home for Christmas, if only in my dreams.

Next year all our troubles will be far away.

The British might have sung “Keep calm and carol on.”

Listen again:

- *Let your heart be light. **Next year** all our troubles will be out of sight.*
- *Have yourself a merry little Christmas, make the yuletide gay (ahem). **Next year all our troubles will be miles away.***
- *[Next year] faithful friends who are dear to us will be near to us once more.*
- *Someday soon we all will be together, if the fates allow. Until then, **we'll have to muddle through—** somehow.*
- *So have yourself a merry **little** Christmas **now.***

This, to me, sounds very much like a quarantine Christmas. And my gift for you this little Christmas is the 2020 Hardcastle Holiday Music Mix: **Merry Maskmus**.

You may have noticed, each year I try to tell a story and the tracks are laid out in a specific order. This year starts with the thesis statement “Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas,” and acknowledges in several tracks that “It Won’t be Christmas Without You.” (I could not bring myself to include “I’ll Be Home for Christmas” because I won’t, and listening to it still chokes me up.) I wish that all of us “Keep Warm and Safe This Winter.” And if we are going to make for ourselves a merry little Christmas now, we are going to have to “Accentuate the Positive”—which I never thought of as a Christmas song but it was on Aretha’s Christmas album and if *Die Hard* can be a Christmas movie then this song can be a carol.

Even though many of us will be spending the holiday alone, still “It Must Be Christmas,” with “Christmas Lights,” “Christmas on My Radio,” and “Christmas Wrapping.” Then I’m going to jingle all the goddamn way, then finally “Count My Blessings,” “Light a Candle,” and appreciate “Christmas as I Knew It.” Which is much better than so many families have ever had, or will have this year.



You can download the mix CD [here](#) ([insert](#) and [artwork](#)), and [click here for the Spotify playlist](#).

I went through the trouble of rebuilding the holiday mixes (as available) from 2003-2019. Included too from 2004, when I started sharing discs to more than just my family, is a disc I made for my non-Christmas friends who celebrate other things around the winter solstice. The *Frosted Flakes* collection features non-Christmas winter holiday songs. The list of Hardcastle Holiday Music Mixes from years past and links to the Spotify playlists are presented on the next page.

Until next year—when our troubles will be miles away and those who are dear to us will be near to us once more—I wish for you a merry, if little, Christmas. Now.

Merrily,

Wilson

Subordinate Claus

We stay home this year so when we come together next Christmas, no one is missing.

Hardcastle Holiday Music Mixes



2003
Baby It's Cold Outside
[Tracks](#) • [Artwork](#) • [Playlist](#)



2004
A Country Christmas
[Tracks](#) • [Artwork](#) • [Playlist](#)



2004
Frosted Flakes
[Tracks](#) • [Artwork](#) • [Playlist](#)



2005
Mary Christmas
[Tracks](#) • [Artwork](#) • [Playlist](#)



2006
Carol of the Belles
[Tracks](#) • [Artwork](#) • [Playlist](#)



2007
Merry Mixmas
[Tracks](#) • [Artwork](#) • [Playlist](#)



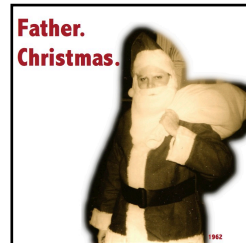
2008
Mistletoe
[Tracks](#) • [Artwork](#) • [Playlist](#)



2009
Christmas Cheers!
[Tracks](#) • [Artwork](#) • [Playlist](#)



2010
Merry Gentlemen
[Tracks](#) • [Artwork](#) • [Playlist](#)



2011
Father. Christmas.
[Tracks](#) • [Artwork](#) • [Playlist](#)



2012
Christmas Cocktails
[Tracks](#) • [Artwork](#) • [Playlist](#)



2013
Jolly!
[Tracks](#) • [Artwork](#) • [Playlist](#)



2014
Christmas by the Fire
[Tracks](#) • [Artwork](#) • [Playlist](#)



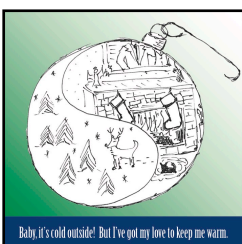
2015
Swingle Bells
[Tracks](#) • [Artwork](#) • [Playlist](#)



2016
A What the Hell Noel
[Tracks](#) • [Artwork](#) • [Playlist](#)



2017
The Spirit of Christmas Present
[Tracks](#) • [Artwork](#) • [Playlist](#)



2018
Cold & Cozy
[Tracks](#) • [Artwork](#) • [Playlist](#)



2019
Christmas with the Crooners
[Tracks](#) • [Artwork](#) • [Playlist](#)



2020
Merry Maskmus
[Tracks](#) • [Artwork](#) • [Playlist](#)

Batman smells and Robin laid an egg.