

# Mp3 The James Bazen Big Band - Merry Christmas Take One



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From the happy go lucky "Sleigh Ride" to the intensely emotional "Jesus Loves Me" and the thought provoking "The 'Spirit' of Christmas Present", this recording captures the sometimes conflicting emotions associated with this special time of year. 13 MP3 Songs JAZZ: Big Band, JAZZ: Jazz Vocals Details: AMG REVIEW: With its service bands, the Washington, D.C., area offers a ready roster of highly skilled musicians to fill chairs of many big bands. Maryland-based multi-reed man James Bazen has put together one such aggregation and, for his second album, pays tribute to the holiday season. Many jazz artists sometime during their careers manage to issue a Christmas album. This album is not only a paean to that festive time of the year, but is an excellent session of big band music, ranging from sizzling, swinging renditions of such tunes as "Sleigh Ride" to a unique rendition of "Silent Night." The arrangement for the latter starts with appropriate piety as befitting the granddaddy of all Christmas hymns, before leaping into a swinging, funky performance. Strangely enough, the latter treatment doesn't seem out of place at all. And that's what strikes one immediately about this album, the fresh, joyous arrangements all brought to life by outstanding section work and superb solos. Jeff Gray's tenor and Leonard Stevens' guitar ride high on such tunes as "Silent Night." Vocalist Christina Crerar is on five cuts, with an especially nice offering of "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas," backed by Bazen's clarinet. The bari sax of Don Lerman works with Robert Wagner's bass and Larry Brown's piano on one of the most adventurous orchestrations of the traditional "O Christmas Tree" one will ever hear. The play list is not limited entirely to well-known holiday offerings. There is Vince Guaraldi's "Christmas Time Is Here" and a ten-minute exploration of a quasi-symphonic "The 'Spirit' of Christmas Present" showcasing the trumpet of Mike Davis, among others. Whether it's a big band that tickles your fancy, or the music of the holidays, this album will satisfy

completely satisfy both needs. - Dave Nathan

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