

MATT WERTZ SNOW GLOBE

Song by Song

“Walking in a Winter Wonderland” – The lyrics to this song quickly bring images of an idyllic Christmas to mind—sleigh bells, snow. It’s just a great place to start, with one of those classics that played over and over at my house growing up. I approached it with reverence.

“Snow Globe” – I was writing another holiday song with Chad Cates (Mandisa, Casting Crowns) when he shared the idea for “Snow Globe” with me. I just loved the whimsy of it and was like, ‘Let me in on this!’ He and the other writer, Tony Wood (Michael W. Smith), welcomed me into the process. It has one of my favorite lines I’ve ever written: ‘It’s a glitter blizzard wonderland.’ It’s a mouthful, but it’s fun to say!

“White Christmas” – We modeled this after The Drifters’ version in *Home Alone*, my favorite Christmas movie. Of course we didn’t just copy that, but wanted to maintain its doo-wop bounce. I love the musical nuances producer Ben Shive brought to the bridge of the song—subtle background vocals that sound like the wind, giving it an authentic 1940s/50s feel.

“Tennessee Christmas” – I grew up listening to Amy Grant’s Christmas albums with my family and knew from the beginning that I wanted to record this song. I haven’t heard an updated version that I felt was true to the original, so that’s what we set out to do here. Brown Bannister, who first produced that song, also produced the vocals on *Snow Globe*, so he called Amy and asked if she would sing with me. That’s like the cherry on top; it’s a huge honor for me.

“Christmas Just Ain’t Christmas” – I wrote this with my buddy Jonathan Singleton who has written hits for country artists like Josh Turner and Billy Currington. All along, I’ve heard this as something to be played over a visual scene of shoppers on 5th Avenue, showing all the hustle and bustle, the Salvation Army bell ringers, and so on. It’s just a fun, get-home-for-Christmas tune, and as a production reference, Ben was inspired by Tom Petty’s “Christmas All Over Again.”

“Christmas Time Is Here” – Although this is just a minute-long instrumental interlude, I had to give a nod to *A Charlie Brown Christmas* which is just so quintessential to the season and one of the greatest things ever. I also wanted each selection to flow nicely into the next one, and this feels like a moment that holds everything together nicely. Arranging the songs for this project, we thought in terms of a vinyl album; in that context, this would be the last song on side A.

“Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas” – I picked all the songs for this record, and this is a good example of me just wanting to sing a great melody. Among the Christmas classics, some have the greatest melodies of all time. You don’t find that a lot in popular music now; you have to go back to something like “Edelweiss” from *The Sound of Music* for a melody like this.

“O Holy Night” – I knew I wanted to have children singing on this album; that’s just another one of those crucial elements of the Christmas experience—going to a kids Christmas program. The Nashville Children’s Choir sounds like angels here, and it was Ben’s idea to have me come in later with the band playing in a style that feels like “Can’t Help Falling in Love” by Elvis. When both parts meld together through the rest of the song, I love it.

“Sleigh Ride” – This is the Amy Grant influence again; she sang a great rendition on one of her Christmas albums. I wanted to do an instrumental take here, so we bought sheet music for the original version by Leroy Anderson and basically just redid it. But the cool thing is that we bring up the volume on parts that tend to get buried in other recordings—the woodwinds, for example. And we put some drums in there as well as some banjo. What can I say? I live in Nashville.

“Christmas in the City” – The only time I have been to New York around the holidays was with my friend and fellow musician Brandon Heath. There was nothing at all romantic about that, but I still wanted to write a guy/girl thing about going to New York during the Christmas season. It’s such a romantic place in general, but Christmas really puts that city over the top.

“Wake Up, Wake Up” – This is my attempt at capturing the spirit of a 5-year-old on Christmas morning, the excitement that is only found in a child. When I was that age, I woke up early once, snuck down to the tree, opened one of my presents, and then rewrapped it before anyone else got up.

“Christmas Just Does This to Me” – The first Christmas song I wrote is the last song on *Snow Globe* and the most autobiographical. The line about falling asleep on the couch by the tree and drifting off to the sound of the dishwasher humming in the kitchen is my personal experience. I also love the mention of *It’s a Wonderful Life* and its double meaning in the context of the song as well as the parts about Mary and Joseph on the lawn and Jesus being born—just the weight of what’s happening. Christmas music can really paint a picture and take people somewhere special.

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