

RITA COOLIDGE



A RITA COOLIDGE CHRISTMAS

In many spiritual and emotional ways that reflect the deep and ever-present importance of family, **A Rita Coolidge Christmas**—the two time Grammy Award winning singer’s highly anticipated debut on Savoy/429 Records—is a musical holiday celebration she’s been working on all her life.

Coolidge loves to remember the sweet holiday story she was frequently told about her early childhood in rural Tennessee. As the singer’s mother frequently recalled, “White Christmas” played throughout their household, and, even before she could walk, they’d put young Rita in a rocking chair and she would hum Irving Berlin’s timeless melody—making that the first song the celebrated vocalist ever sang. Over the past ten years, Coolidge has come full circle with the timeless sounds of the season, performing her favorite holiday classics on a popular Christmas tour which plays annually in different regions across the U.S. throughout December.

The singer—working with her longtime band of John McDuffie (guitar), John Thomas (keyboards), Lynn Coulter (drums) and Randy Landas (bass)—captures the magic of those shows in the studio for the first time with a 12 track set of standards and several originals that paint a joyful mosaic of all the styles that have inspired and defined Coolidge’s solo career since the early 70s: country, pop, jazz (from swing to stompin’ New Orleans), gospel and the Native American music of her Cherokee heritage.

“It’s wonderful to be at a point in my life where there’s no pressure to make an album each year and I can record when I feel I have a great idea and songs I want to share,” says Coolidge, whose most beloved pop hits “We’re All Alone,” “The Way You Do The Things You Do,” “Your Love Has Lifted Me) Higher and Higher” and the James Bond Octopussy theme “All Time High” have been staples of Adult Contemporary Radio for over three decades.

Because the love of family has always been a foundational part of her life and extended family gatherings are among her most precious Christmas memories, the timing of recording **A Rita Coolidge Christmas** is especially serendipitous and poignant. Her father the Baptist minister who read Bible verses and funny Cajun holiday stories on Christmas Eve, passed away in February. Since he died, her mother has had numerous health issues and lives with Coolidge, who tends to her daily needs. Finding blessing amidst the hardship was a challenge, but the singer is happy to have finished

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the recording by her father's last Christmas and was able to play it in its entirety for her father and mother.

As they listen, perhaps Coolidge's fans from multiple generations can imagine her father lighting up at the memories sparked by his daughter's beautiful and creative versions of these timeless classics, including "Rockin' Around The Christmas Tree," "Let It Snow," "Winter Wonderland," "Baby, it's Cold Outside" (a duet with raspy voiced drummer Lynn Coulter), "Santa Claus Is Coming To Town," "Little Drummer Boy" and "Jingle Bell Rock."

Coolidge enters the deeper spiritual portion of the album with the richly inspirational, powerful gospel ballad (complete with choir) "Circle of Light"—a tune Coolidge penned with her sister Priscilla and originally released by Walela, the trio exploring Native American music that the Coolidge sisters formed with Priscilla's daughter Laura Satterfield in the late 90s. Coolidge then pays homage to her rich Cherokee roots by singing several verses of "Amazing Grace" in the tribe's native language before closing with a familiar English verse. Highlighted by a haunting bagpipe solo, it contemplates and celebrates the grace of God in the same way the Cherokee did when they sang it on the Trail of Tears in the 1830s.

An artist with Coolidge's storied legacy doesn't need a special time of year to celebrate, but there is so much musical joy for her fans of multiple generations to look back on and be thankful for as they listen to ***A Rita Coolidge Christmas***. In recent years, she has been honored with a "Lifetime of Musical Achievement" award at the 2002 First Americans in the Arts Awards, as well as being the recipient of a "Native American Music Award for Lifetime Achievement." It's the music, the stories and the dynamic collaborations that will be remembered most. In the late 60s, Coolidge was on big-time pop music's leading edge, and her reputation as an A-list backup singer spread quickly. Joe Cocker enlisted her in that role and as a featured soloist on his *Mad Dogs and Englishmen* tour. Work with other rock royalty followed, including tours and recordings with Eric Clapton, Jimi Hendrix, Bob Dylan, Leon Russell and Stephen Stills.

In a time when an album per year was the norm, Coolidge released more than a dozen solo albums in the years to follow, including 1978's multi-platinum *Anytime... Anywhere*. In addition to her catalog of hit singles and soundtrack songs (including "Love Came For Me" from *Splash* and "Heart Don't Fail

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Me Now” with Lee Greenwood, which was used as a recurring theme for the CBS daytime drama *As The World Turns*), Coolidge has performed with high-profile pals like George Harrison, Roger Waters, Robbie Robertson and Jimmy Buffett. In 1973, Coolidge married singer, songwriter and actor Kris Kristofferson. During their eight-year union, the pair teamed up for a number of hits and the classic albums *Full Moon* and *Breakaway* and was twice named Country Duo of the Year. When the cable music channel VH1 debuted, she was also one of its original “veejays.”

Truly in line with the spirit of ***A Rita Coolidge Christmas***, the singer gives thanks for the divine gift of a voice which has allowed her to make a living doing what she is most passionate about. “My voice is so much richer now than when I was younger, and it is an instrument I have learned so much about over the years,” she says. “I’m happiest when I’m making and playing music, and it’s always been the thing that gives me strength and helps me endure the hardest times. My father was buried on a Sunday, and I got on a plane home Monday morning before getting on a flight to Florida to perform 12 shows earlier this year. Some may have found it impossible to sing under such circumstances, but doing those shows saved me from falling apart. That’s the power of music that I’m so excited to celebrate on the new album.”