

## Five Creepy and/or Sexist Christmas Songs

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It's that time of year again when regardless of whether you celebrate, enjoy, participate or even care about Christmas you're constantly inundated with painfully cheery, sappy and repetitive Holiday music, everything from the Bing Crosby classics to the latest pop star's rendition of jingle bells. Every store you go into, every mall you enter, and all over our television screens and radios these songs are stuck on repeat for a solid month, if not more! Those of us who happen to live in the West, probably know all the words by heart and find ourselves unintentionally singing along. But have you ever really paid attention to what's going on in these lyrics? Some of the messages are just down right creepy and they're passed off as holiday cheer with hardly a comment year after year.

Here is my list of the top 5 creepiest and sexist Holiday songs. At number 5: **All I Want for Christmas Is You**. While it might sound like an old time classic, it's actually a contemporary Holiday song, produced for Mariah Carey in the 1990's. On the surface it may seem cute and romantic but there's a nasty little message embedded in the lyrics. It's the tired old, all women need is a man myth. We see this disturbing message embedded in Hollywood movies, especially in romantic comedies where it essentially serves as the backbone of the entire genre. In these stories we're taught that women's primary goal in life is to find Mr. Right and without him, apparently our lives are all unfulfilled, boring and meaningless. With lyrics like: "I just want you for my very own, more than you could ever know. Make my wish come true. All I want for Christmas is

you,” the singer expresses no desire, needs or interests in anything other than being gifted a man for Christmas. While most covers of this song are done by women such as Shania Twain, Miley Cyrus, and Mercedes from Glee, it’s not any less creepy when a man sings it because the lyrics could be interpreted as bordering on stalker territory...

At number 4 is: I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus. This song was commissioned by Saks Fifth Avenue in 1952 to sell their annual Christmas card and was originally recorded by Jimmy Boyd. It’s still a widely popular holiday song, covered by a variety of musicians from Amy Winehouse, The Jackson Five to Reba McEntire. The song starts with “I saw Mommy kissing Santa Claus underneath the mistletoe last night,” and then it goes on to say “I saw Mommy tickle Santa Claus underneath his beard so snowy white.” The story is about someone’s mom whose cheating on her husband with Santa Claus and the poor kid has to watch the whole thing, or in the best case scenario it’s his dad dressed up as Santa Claus, but either way... bleh.

Number 3: It’s Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas. This Christmas favorite was popularized by Perry Como and Bing Crosby back in 1951, and while they sing about candy canes and silver lanes, they also celebrate and reinforce harmful gendered stereotypes in children’s toys. The lyrics go: “A pair of hop-along boots and a pistol that shoots, is the wish of Barney and Ben. Dolls that will talk and will go for a walk, is the hope of Janice and Jen.” Really? Baby dolls for little girls and guns for little boys? Continuing to segregate and advertise toys based on gender just works to perpetuate those nasty gendered stereotypes, plus it severely limits the development of all young people.

Coming in at number 2 is: Santa Baby. Santa Baby was originally recorded by Eartha Kitt in 1953 and has been covered countless time since then by artists such as

Shakira, The Pussycat Dolls, Taylor Swift, Madonna. This song might seem cute, and sweet and some have even tried to make it sexy, but it's really another tired old stereotype about how women are materialist and shallow. This woman is urging Santa to hurry down the chimney and bring her a convertible, a yacht, a duplex, and a ring. The Gold Digger trope is sadly still pervasive in our popular media from pop songs to Hollywood movies and this particular holiday song gets dragged out every year again and again.

And at Number 1 for the most sexist holiday song: Baby It's Cold Outside. Occasionally referred to as the Christmas Date Rape Song, this duet was written by Frank Loesser in 1936. While the song has a sweet melody to it, this style of duet is often referred to as "mouse and wolf," where the mouse part is traditionally sung by a woman and the wolf part by a man. The predatory style description is amazingly accurate given that the man spends the whole song subtly pressuring the woman into staying with him for the night. In the first verse the woman sings "I really can't stay, I've got to go away, my mother will worry" and the man responds by saying "baby it's cold outside". When she reluctantly agrees to "half a drink more" suspiciously asking "say, what's in this drink." He responds that she shouldn't hurry, she wouldn't be able to get a cab anyway, and oh yeah by the way your lips look delicious. He also resorts to the use of guilt, with lines like "What's the sense in hurting my pride" and "Baby don't hold out". Throughout the rest of the song he uses deceitful and manipulative techniques to constantly pressure her into giving in and getting what he wants, and just in case you aren't clear on this point, what he wants is to get laid. Through his slow and sustained pressure he lowers her defenses by refusing to accept her insistence on leaving. And he may have even

drugged her? I mean, she literally says, “The answer is no” yet he ignores this and keeps persisting. The song concludes with her finally giving in with the shudder inducing line, “well I really shouldn’t....all right”. These lyrics are a perfect illustration of the way men pressure women into experiences that they don’t want, aren’t ready for or aren’t interested in. Songs like this work to normalize this problematic male behavior, a behavior, which contributes and perpetuates rape culture in general.

Yes, most of these songs were written over 50 years ago but every year the airwaves are flooded by the old versions as well as new rerecorded ones by the pop star of the hour. While you probably won’t be able to avoid any of these songs this month, maybe you can use them as a way to engage in a conversation about sexism with your friends and families over the holidays. It will make for interesting and lively conversations, I promise.