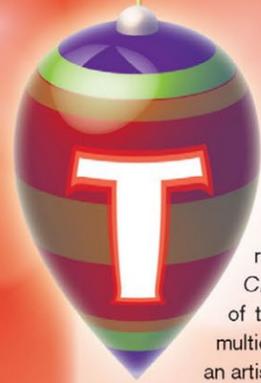


# SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

How to give the music lovers  
in your life  
a very happy holiday

By Chris Neal



The music industry's box-set boom started more than two decades ago with the release of Eric Clapton's career-defining *Crossroads*. The triple-platinum success of that 1988 compilation established the multidisc compilation as not just a signifier of an artist's historical significance but as an ideal Christmas present—heck, it was already in a box, all the giver had to do was wrap it up. Artists like Bob Dylan and Bruce Springsteen had already enjoyed some box-set success in prior years, but *Crossroads* made them a holiday season staple.

Then came the advent of the iTunes age, and we were told that the time of enjoying music as a physical object was over. Indeed, CD sales have been steadily decreasing for the last decade and digital sales have risen accordingly. But a funny thing happened on the way to a fully digital world—the box set got bigger. As the importance of the compact disc has

ebbed, boxes have gotten more and more elaborate, encompassing DVDs, Blu-ray discs and vinyl (itself an unlikely survivor of the MP3 era). The boxes themselves have become art objects, like the Beach Boys' *SMILE* diorama and Queen's USB orb, and inside you can find memorabilia ranging from commemorative marbles (Pink Floyd) to custom-made sunglasses (U2).

Perhaps someday the age of the box will truly be over, as the irresistible march of progress continues. But for this year, at least, you can still give the gift of music in an impressive package instead of on a dinky download gift card. Here are a few of the coolest boxes (and a few other goodies) for the 2011 holiday season. Note that many of this year's offerings are available in a variety of configurations at a wide range of price points, so stocking stuffers are also in order.



## FOR THE JAMMIN' GEN-X-ER

As the first fateful murmurings of '90s revivalism begin rumbling, several acts from that period are looking back with deluxe reissues of their landmark albums. First and foremost, of course, is **Nirvana**, whose 1991 *Nevermind* is now out in a "Super Deluxe Edition" featuring four CDs and a DVD, all limited to a run of 40,000 copies worldwide. Among the extras are rare tracks, demos, rehearsal recordings, BBC performances and a 1991 concert recorded at the Paramount Theatre in the trio's hometown of Seattle. (Also available in two-CD, one-CD and four-LP editions.)

**U2** has often acknowledged its 1991 album *Achtung Baby* as an important turning point for the group's sound, and that moment is explored to the fullest on the new "Über Deluxe" version. This extremely limited, numbered edition comes housed in a magnetic puzzle-tiled box and offers six CDs, four DVDs, five 7-inch vinyl singles, an 84-page hardback book and a dizzying array of other items—including a replica of lead singer Bono's trademark sunglasses. (Also available in smaller "Deluxe" and "Super Deluxe" versions, as well as on vinyl.)

New versions of the epochal first two albums by the **Smashing Pumpkins** will make their way under Christmas trees this season. *Gish* (1991) and *Siamese Dream* (1993) have both been expanded into two-CD, one-DVD sets, sporting bonus material curated from the group's archives by leader Billy Corgan. (The remainder of the band's output through 2000 will receive similar treatment in a series of reissues through 2013.) Each DVD features a different live show from the Metro in Chicago, while the bonus CDs include a raft of previously unreleased demos, alternate mixes and BBC sessions. (Also available in single-CD versions and on vinyl.)

**Phish**'s seven-disc *Hampton/Winston-Salem '97* box set chronicles three complete concerts from a run of shows beloved by fans. Included are the group's Nov. 21 and 22 shows at Hampton Coliseum in Hampton, Va., and its Nov. 23 show at Lawrence Joel Veterans Memorial Coliseum in Winston-Salem, N.C. Among the box's 45 tracks are a few recorded during soundchecks—and only one song ("Black-Eyed Katy," an early instrumental version of "The Moma Dance") is ever played more than once. *Hampton/Winston-Salem '97* is available in several different packages, including knickknacks like a 2012 calendar and a replica of the official T-shirt from Phish's fall 1997 tour.



QUEEN

LIVE AT WEMBLEY STADIUM

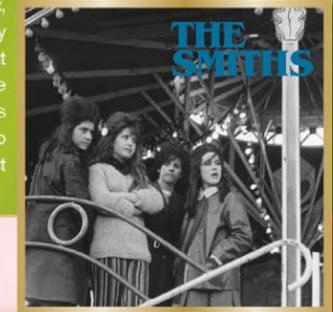
## FOR THE ROYAL SUBJECT

This year marks four decades since the founding of rock powerhouse **Queen**, and the group's surviving members are celebrating in grand style with its first authorized biography. *40 Years of Queen* includes an introduction from guitarist Brian May and drummer Roger Taylor, as well as many previously unpublished photos. Fans can also dig into the *Live at Wembley Stadium* "Super Deluxe Road Case," a limited-edition box set including two CDs, two DVDs, a T-shirt and a variety of memorabilia tied to the band's historic 1986 stand at London's Wembley Stadium. Or for a more compact gift, try the "Orb" gift box, which offers Queen's entire studio output on a USB drive housed in a suitably regal gold-plated package.

For even more uniquely British theatrical flair there's **Andrew Lloyd Webber**'s classic *Phantom of the Opera*, currently celebrating its 25th anniversary with a limited-edition box sporting four CDs, a DVD and a 160-page hardback book. The package also includes a medallion and a replica of the 60-page program from the show's long-ago opening night at Her Majesty's Theatre in London.

## FOR THE NOT-SO-JOLLY

The holiday season isn't so happy for all of us, and few bodies of work are quite so revered among the mopey and melancholy as that of **the Smiths**. The eight-disc *Complete* presents the English quartet's four studio albums, three compilations and the live album *Rank* together in one box, all newly remastered by engineer Frank Arkwright from the original tape sources. "The Smiths have never sounded so good," promises guitarist Johnny Marr.



**FOR THE '70s SURVIVOR**

**Pink Floyd** began cleaning out its vaults with September's elaborate six-disc reissue of its 1973 *The Dark Side of the Moon*, and now that album's classic follow-up gets its due with a similar expanded treatment. The "Immersion Edition" of 1975's *Wish You Were Here* includes a new remaster of the original album, as well as a disc of previously unreleased audio tracks (including a much-sought alternate version of the title song featuring classical violinist Stéphane Grappelli), 5.1 and quadraphonic mixes of the album, and many other pieces of essential Floydiana—including the aforementioned marbles, a scarf and other knickknacks. (A two-CD "Experience Edition" is also available.)



Pink Floyd

**Who** leader Pete Townshend has just unveiled what he calls his "Director's Cut" of the group's 1973 album *Quadrophenia*. The five-disc set includes a freshly scrubbed mastering of the original double album, two CDs of Townshend's home demos (including five songs that didn't end up on the album), and a DVD featuring eight songs from the

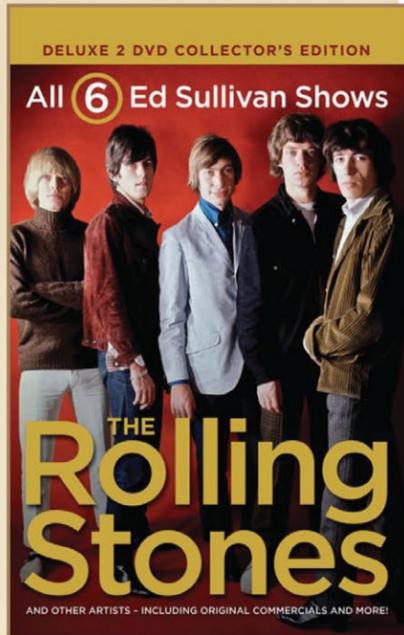
album in surround sound. The package also offers a 100-page hardbound book and other goodies, including a 7-inch vinyl single of "5:15" backed with "Water."

The first 14 years of recordings by Canadian progressive-rock trio **Rush** are assessed in three new six-disc box sets, chronologically arranged as *Sector 1*, *Sector 2* and *Sector 3*. Each includes five original studio albums, with one in each "Sector" also remixed in surround sound and 96kHz/24-bit stereo on DVD—1975's *Fly by Night* on the first set, 1977's *A Farewell to Kings* on the second and 1981's *Signals* on the third. The three packages combine to form a replica of a Rush road case. The Rush-centric drum fanatics on your list might also enjoy *Taking Center Stage: A Lifetime of Live Performance*, the new three-DVD instructional video by the group's revered skinsman, Neil Peart. The discs were filmed during the group's most recent tour, which also produced the new *Time Machine 2011: Live in Cleveland* DVD, Blu-ray and CD sets, as well as the vinyl-only *Moving Pictures: Live 2011*.

Fellow prog-rock giant **Jethro Tull** is celebrating the 40th anniversary of its *Aqualung* with a "Collector's Edition" box-set version that includes—in addition to a new remix of the original album on CD and vinyl—a bonus disc of rarities, as well as surround-sound and quadraphonic mixes on DVD and Blu-ray.

**FOR THE STONES STALWART**

**Rolling Stones** fans have no shortage of rockin' treats to look forward to this season. Foremost is the new reissue of 1978's comeback album *Some Girls*, featuring previously unreleased tracks discovered in the archives by latter-day Stones producer Don Was. The "Super Deluxe" edition includes the original album; a CD of bonus material; a DVD; a replica of the original "Beast of Burden" 7-inch single, which was withdrawn from stores due to its racy sleeve; and a 100-page book featuring previously unseen shots from the group's session with photographer Helmut Newton, among other items. (A set with the two CDs alone is also available.) The band's subsequent tour is documented on film with the new *Some Girls Live in Texas '78*, available on DVD and Blu-ray; each is available in a set that comes with a bonus CD.



Or fans can go back even further in time with a just-released two-DVD set featuring all six episodes of *The Ed Sullivan Show* upon which the '60s-era Stones appeared—17 performances in all. These are full shows that also boast numbers from acts like Ella Fitzgerald, Tom Jones, Louis Armstrong and others. (A scaled-back version with only four episodes is also available.) Or check out former bass player Bill Wyman's solo work with his group the Rhythm Kings, collected on the five-disc *Collectors' Edition Box Set*. George Harrison, Eric Clapton, Mark Knopfler and many other famous friends drop in on these 66 tracks recorded during the late 1990s and early 2000s. "We play blues, reggae, soul music, jump music, early rock—it's a whole mixture," Wyman says. "We can do anything."

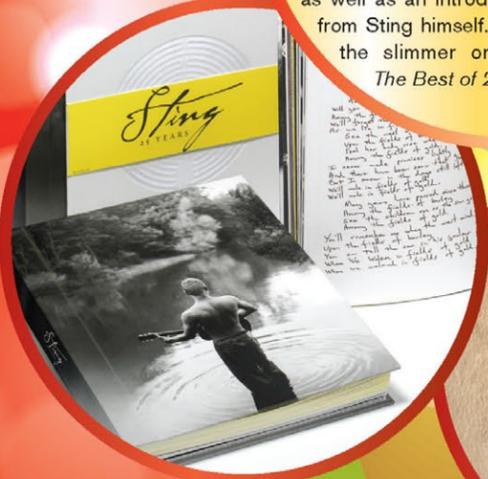
**FOR THE CLASSICAL CONNOISSEUR**

*The Decca Sound* is a massive 50-CD feast chronicling that label's history of great classical music recordings, from Herbert von Karajan conducting Holst's *The Planets* with the Vienna Philharmonic to Benjamin Britten's performance of his own *War Requiem* (offered here complete on one disc for the first time) and Nelson Freire's recent performance of Brahms's *Piano Concerto No. 1*. The set is also available in five-CD and six-LP configurations.



**FOR THE FOREVER STUNG**

Former Police frontman **Sting** celebrates the silver anniversary of his first foray into solo stardom with the three-CD, one-DVD *25 Years*. The set features 45 remastered tracks, including newly remixed versions of nine songs. The DVD, dubbed *Rough, Raw & Unreleased: Live at Irving Plaza*, offers 10 tracks from a 2005 New York City concert. The accompanying hardcover book boasts rare photos as well as an introduction and commentary from Sting himself. (You can also opt for the slimmer one-disc distillation, *The Best of 25 Years*.)



**FOR THE WALL-OF-SOUNDER**

A new seven-CD collection gathers the first six albums issued on **Phil Spector's** Philles Records label along with a disc of instrumental B-sides that capture the legendary producer's fabled "Wall of Sound" in all its glory. *Phil Spector Presents the Philles Album Collection* includes full-lengths by the Ronettes, the Crystals and others released between 1962 and 1964. A more compact alternative, the two-disc, 34-track *The Essential Phil Spector*, is also out now.

The "Wall of Sound" made an enormous impact on **Beach Boys** resident genius Brian Wilson, who used many of the players from Spector's stable in recording his own mid-'60s masterpieces. Wilson took the potential of Spector's widescreen sound to such an outlandish extreme, in fact, that he eventually constructed an album so grand he couldn't complete it: 1967's long-lost *SMiLE*. A new box set gathers a wealth of material recorded for that album, totaling more than six and a half hours of music in all. (A two-CD collection of highlights is also available.)



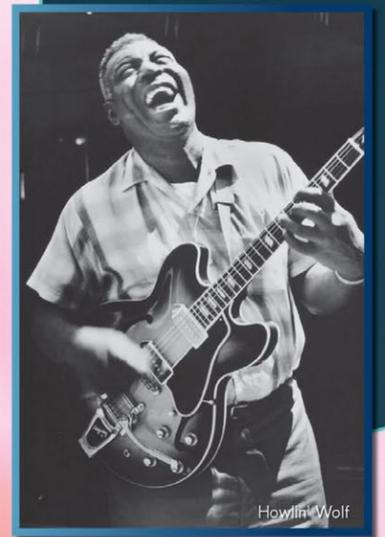
The Beach Boys

**FOR THE BLUES BUFF**

*Smokestack Lightning: The Complete Chess Masters 1951-1960* serves up the great **Howlin' Wolf's** output for that label, a total of 97 tracks spread across four CDs. Among the contents are alternate versions of "How Many More Years," "Dorothy Mae," "I'm Leaving You," "I've Been Abused" and others. The 45-page booklet sports rare photos, as well as liner notes by author Peter Guralnick.

The great **Etta James** recently released *The Dreamer*, which she says will be her final album. If you know someone who's been converted by hearing her take on such unlikely numbers as Guns N' Roses' "Welcome to the Jungle" on that album, *Heart & Soul: A Retrospective* offers a logical next step. The four-disc box sums up 53 years' worth of music drawn from James' recordings for eight labels.

If your loved one has a taste for blues and a functioning turntable, try the aptly named *Blues*, a five-LP compilation of **Eric Clapton's** three most recent albums in that genre. *Me and Mr. Johnson* (2004), *From the Cradle* (1994) and the 2000 B.B. King collaboration *Riding With the King* (the latter two split into double-LP sets due to length) have been newly recut for vinyl and packaged with a unique 12"-by-12" lithograph. Don't wait until Christmas Eve, though—only 2,500 copies are being printed.



Howlin' Wolf

FOR THE QUESTION MARK

If you're just not sure which artist the music lover on your list gets excited about, a couple of various-artists compilations are no-brainers for the all-around music lover. *The Best of Rock and Roll Hall of Fame + Museum Live* is a three-CD set gathering historic recordings from the titular institution's induction ceremonies over the last quarter-century. The one-time-only performances include Prince's jaw-dropping guitar solo on an all-star version of George Harrison's "While My Guitar Gently Weeps," Eddie Vedder filling in for the late Jim Morrison with the reunited Doors, Cream's first appearance together in 25 years and many more.

Also celebrating 25 years of star-studded performances is Neil Young's annual Bridge School Benefit for children with advanced physical and communication challenges, an occasion marked by the release of new two-CD and three-DVD compilations. Among the acts heard on *The Bridge School Concerts 25th Anniversary Edition* are Paul McCartney, the Who, Bruce Springsteen, R.E.M., Metallica, Sheryl Crow and many others—including, of course, Young himself.



Sheryl Crow

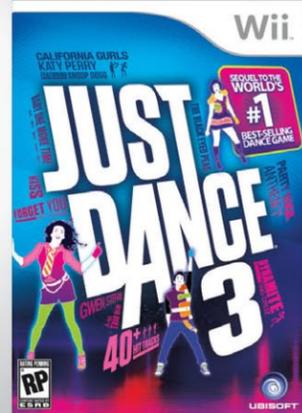


FOR THE SOUL DISCIPLE

The four-disc box set *Singular Genius: The Complete ABC Singles* presents the late Ray Charles' A and B sides for that label between 1960 and 1972 together for the first time. Among the 106 songs are well-known hits like "Georgia on My Mind," "I Can't Stop Loving You" and "Crying Time," as well as 30 tunes making their CD debut. "This compilation provides an opportunity to hear Ray's evolution into a full-fledged artist and creative force," says Ray Charles Foundation president Valerie Ervin. "The ABC singles comprise an epoch of essential Ray Charles music and a window into how his genius evolved." A no-brainer stocking stuffer to accompany the box is the new DVD *Live in France 1961*, which presents just-discovered footage from Charles' shows that July at the Antibes Jazz Festival.

FOR THE DANCING DYNAMO

*Just Dance 3*, the latest in the multimillion-selling video-game franchise, allows players to try out their moves to thumping tunes by acts like Katy Perry, the Black Eyed Peas and dozens more. The new edition is available for Xbox 360's Kinect and Nintendo's Wii. The Kinect version introduces four-player simultaneous game play for the first time, while the Wii iteration sports an improved "Just Sweat" mode to track personal progress. Tracks include recent hits like Cee-Lo Green's "Forget You" and Janelle Monae's "Tightrope," as well as dance-floor classics like Donna Summer's "I Feel Love" and Wilson Pickett's "Land of 1000 Dances."



Sheryl Crow/Mark Salinger

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