

Writing Christmas/Seasonal Songs

by Rick Lang

As a songwriter, I have noticed that most other writer's in the Bluegrass field stay pretty much with traditional/familiar song themes, most of which we have heard before. Not a bad thing, yet a lot of repetition. For my part, I try not to lose sight of topics that are pretty much neglected by others where there is a real need for new songs that noone seems to be covering - that somehow slip through the cracks - stories that haven't been told.

It is actually pretty difficult to come up with something really new and different. You have to work at it. I have come to realize that there are important topics most writers never seem to explore much, including Christmas/Seasonal song themes.

I have always been a big fan of Christmas music since I was a child, including all the "classics" - most of which were written in the 40's 50's & 60's. To this day millions of people play them over and over during the holidays and never really tire of them. There is a "timeless" quality to songs like "White Christmas" and "Let It Snow...Let It Snow" that has become part of the fabric of our society.

About 10 years ago I thought to myself, "Man we need some new Christmas songs, maybe I can take a stab at writing some." I explored the existing Bluegrass Christmas Song catalog and couldn't find very many except "Christmas Time Is Coming" which had become popular and has been recorded by several bands and artists. I started spending time trying to come up with new Christmas/Seasonal themes as well as music that had not been done before. It was really hard! I was looking for fresh ideas to bring something new to the table.

Eventually I had some success and today have a catalog of about 30 original Christmas/Seasonal songs I've written. Back in 2003 I released "The Season Of My Heart" by Rick Lang & Friends - a collection of 14 of these tunes. Each year we put on Bluegrass Christmas Concerts in our area where we can perform these for folks who seem to really enjoy these numbers.

If you are a songwriter & a fan of Christmas music, you might want to consider taking a stab at it yourself if you haven't already. The world needs new Christmas songs to keep the music fresh and continue to celebrate the traditions we embrace around that time of year. If you do, here are a couple of thoughts I'd like to share on the subject.

1. Listen to your favorite Christmas Music (any genre) to draw ideas from. Try to find topics that haven't been covered or put a new spin on an idea that has been used before.
2. Think back to your childhood and remember how much fun it was the first time to ...see the snow fall ...build a snowman ...decorate the tree ...skate on the ice, etc.
3. Come up with some music that has a "seasonal feel" to it to create an appropriate setting for the lyrics.
4. Try to capture the "spirit" of the holidays and the "wonders of season" in your song.

I'll leave you with the lyrics to a reasonably new Christmas tune I wrote a few years ago entitled "Homemade Christmas". I had been thinking back to my childhood days, and the excitement my brothers and sisters shared as we looked forward to upcoming Christmas Season. I remembered times when our family was pretty destitute and really didn't have the money to buy nice gifts for each other. That never discouraged us. We all made things for each other with whatever we could find. Some of our most memorable Christmases were ones where we exchanged our homemade gifts, because they were made with love from deep within our hearts. I hope to record another Christmas album someday. If so, will surely include "Homemade Christmas".

Happy writing!
Rick