

A Cultural Christmas

by Kory Lefebvre

Christmas in the United States is celebrated in a mixture of different cultural traditions.

For example, in England, the festival for the birth of Christ is known as "Christes messe" which means Christ's mass. From this comes the word Christmas.

In today's society, Christmas is often referred to as "Xmas". The symbol "X" is the Greek equivalent of "Ch" which represents Christ.

The tradition of celebrating Christmas on December 25 originated in

Rome. On this day, the birthday of Mithras, a prophet of the sun worshippers, was celebrated. St. Chrysostom, the Bishop of Constantinople, made the decision that on this day, the world would celebrate Christmas.

The actual origin of the custom of singing Christmas carols is unknown. However at approximately 129 A.D., the Bishop Telesphorus of Rome introduced the singing of songs to celebrate Christmas. The word "carol" is derived from the Italian word "carolare" which is a medieval circle dance accompanied by singing.

The decorating of trees for Christmas was begun during the feast of Bacchus in Rome.

Mistletoe was hung by the door of homes to keep evil spirits from entering and the Yule log was thought to burn evil spirits and the sins of the past year.

Finally, concerning Santa Claus, the most well known origin is from St. Nicholas. St. Nicholas was born in Paris and when his parents died, he decided to spend his inheritance in a way that would benefit others. For instance, he heard of a man who had decided, for lack of money, to sell his three

daughters into slavery. On three occasions, Nicholas dropped bags of gold through the window of the man's home.

In various legends, Nicholas dropped the bags down the chimney, while in another legend, one of the bags of gold fell into a stocking that was hanging on the mantle of the fireplace, hence the tradition of Christmas stockings.

In Czechoslovakia, it is believed that St. Nicholas comes down from the heavens on a gold chain to bring gifts. Descending with him is an angel dressed in white and a devil dressed in

black. The devil carries a whip and rattles a chain to remind children that they have misbehaved during the past year.

In Russia, a white-robed maiden called Kolyada, drove a sled from house to house. She brought along with her elf-like children who handed out gifts and sang carols. Hence Santa's sleigh and elves.

The way in which Christmas is celebrated varies from culture to culture but the feeling is universal. With that in mind, the Lumberjack would like to wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

The Bottom Line: Joe Satriani & Rush

After obtaining his first gold record, Joe Satriani has just released his third full length lp entitled "Flying in a Blue Dream".

Upon listening to it one finds it impossible to categorize just what kind of music it is. There are AOR type tracks like the title cut, along with ZZ Top blues style numbers such as "The Phone Call", tracks like "Can't Slow Down" which lends itself to today's heavy metal and the Prince-like "Strange" which is one of the lp's highlights.

As for the sound, the disc is clean, well produced and performed magnificently. The most interesting fact to mention is that Satriani does

sing for the first time. Master vocalist he is not, but he does not sing out of his range and

is very attentive to the chord progressions and this approach works very well.

Guest performers include Stu Hamm on bass and Simon Phillips on drums and other than the few cuts they are on, the rest of "Flying In A Blue Dream" is performed by Satriani. Taking this into consideration one can see that Joe's versatility is not only in being able to his music on guitar, but on bass, keyboards and drums as well.

"Flying In A Blue Dream" is definitely worth a listen for just about anyone. There is enough versatility to appeal to all.

What does one make of Rush? Are they a heavy metal band or are they kind of thinking man's rock band.

With the release of their

seventeenth album "Presto" the verdict is in and they are definitely the thinking man's rock band.

"Presto" marks the beginning of the fourth chapter of Rush and with that the musical approach and their record label are different.

Now recording for Atlantic Records, Rush has managed to combine the early '80's approach of "Permanent Waves" and "Moving Pictures" with later efforts like "Grace Under Pressure" and "Hold Your Fire" and somehow have pulled it off successfully.

"Presto" sees the band changing lyrically as well. Themes speaking of "Atmospheric Changes" and current issues have replaced the references to space, time and dimension. Mind you

they still exist, but they are not the focus of "Presto"

Featured cuts include the first release "Show Don't Tell", "Red Tide" and "The Pass". These songs give a lot of insight into what "Presto" like.

As one would expect the album is performed masterfully and with the totally digital recording and mix, "Presto" sounds great. Geddy Lee's bass playing is constantly improving and Alex Lifeson's guitar has been moved back to the foreground replacing the synth as the primary instrument.

Neil Peart, who many feel is the best drummer around has, for some reason, changed his approach. There are not as many drum highlights on "Presto" as in albums past, but his rhythms

and flare for decorating songs is better now than it has ever been.

"Presto" should appeal to all Rush fans. It has combined the characteristics of old with those that are new; to create a very good piece of work.

Specter of Fate

by: R. Michael Rhea

The soldier leaves his native land,
For freedom and love, he makes a stand
Fighting and dying on foreign sands,
For the specter of fate has played its hand.

Fighters, lovers, patriots all,
Go to war at their nation's call,
With luck and skill along the way,
They'll live to see another day.

But fate will rear its ugly head,
Maiming the living and claiming the dead,
Fighters, lovers, patriots all,
Dying, for answering their nation's call.

Again and again the call is made,
The specter of fate's hand is played,
Fighters, lovers, patriots all,
No longer heed the nation's call.

Fighters have fought, the lovers are dead,
Of the patriots we know naught.
The specter of fate has reared its head,
And the nation, it is lost.

"It's Snowing, Again"

"It's snowing, again." stated Joe Michaels, air personality and sports director at WATZ am-fm radio in Alpena.

Joe, a recent transplant from Toledo, moved to Alpena in early August this year. He is very active in local sports and is a member of the Thunder Bay Theatre cast for the production It Had to Be You.

Joe plays two roles, putting in a short cameo appearance, as he also plays the offstage voice of the casting director.

The play is a romantic comedy about a struggling actress who attempts to get a part in a play by trapping the

producer in her apartment on Christmas Eve.

Coming next from the TBT is a play called The Foreginer. Joe says he will not be involved in the production, due to work considerations.

ACT Performs Tolkien's "The Hobbit"

Alpena Civic Theater's musical performance of "The Hobbit", based on the book by J.R.R. Tolkien, was very entertaining and delightful.

The story focuses on a journey of one small Hobbit and seven mighty dwarfs, who sought to regain their

fortune usurped by the dragon, Smug.

The costumes and props were very unique. For instance, the spiders of Murkwood, dressed in glowing costumes and weaving fluorescent green webs, gave the audience an eerie, yet fascinating,

I get a lot of chances to go out and meet people, and I love to do that."

When asked to comment about his experiences so far in Alpena, Joe had only one thing to say,
"It's snowing, again."

sensation. The singing and acting was rather good, considering, most of the players were area youth.

The sets were simple, which facilitated constant changes as our heroes traveled from the home of the Hobbits to the lonely mountain to slay the greedy dragon.