

The Blind Boys of Alabama & Taj Mahal – Talkin' Christmas! (2014)

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1. *Do You Hear What I Hear?* 2:50 2. *Christ Was Born On Christmas Morn* 3:27 3. *What Can I Do?* 3:09 4. *Talkin' Christmas* 3:37 5. *Merry Christmas To You* 3:55 6. *Silent Night* 2:44 7. *There's A Reason We Call It Christmas* 3:17 8. *The Sun Is Rising* 3:53 9. *No Room In The Inn* 3:16 10. *Jesus Was Born* 3:00 11. *Who Will Remember?* 4:57 12. *Merry Christmas!* 2:22
Paul Beasley Vocals Jimmy Carter Vocals Michael Jerome Drums, Percussion, Shaker, Tambourine Jonny Lam Lap Steel Guitar Taj Mahal Banjo, Guitar, Guitar (Acoustic), Harmonica, Ukulele, Vocals Ricke McKinnie Vocals Ben Moore Vocals Mark Nishita Celeste, Keyboards, Organ, Piano Ben Odom Bass, Vocals Joey Williams Guitar, Guitar (Acoustic), Vocals

Although this wonderful Christmas set is billed as a joint project between Taj Mahal and the Blind Boys of Alabama, and Taj does play guitar, banjo, ukulele, and harmonica here and sings on a couple of tracks ("What Can I Do?" and "There's a Reason We Call It Christmas"), it's really a Blind Boys holiday album, which is hardly a bad thing. It isn't a blend of blues and gospel, either, as some of the promotional material suggests. It's a seasonally bright and sincere mix of gospel and lightly swinging R&B, which is exactly what the Blind Boys have been doing so well for so many years. Four of the tracks are originals, and they fit nicely with covers of traditional Christmas songs and hymns like the opener "Do You Hear What I Hear?," speeded up and done with a graceful dash of funk, and the lovely, delicate and halting acoustic version of "Silent Night." The original "Who Will Remember?," a gentle gospel waltz, is another highlight. All of it is delivered in signature Blind Boys style, making this one of the season's nicest releases. ---Steve Leggett, AllMusic Review

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