American Record Guide
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Caliban Bassoon Quartet

ATMA 2334—-58 minutes

The Caliban Quartet of bassoonists from Canada is joined by friends from many other musical disciplines. There are male and female singers—jazz, folk, and more; there are guitars, a bass, percussion, trumpet, trombone, and many sound effects. Certainly this album classifies as humor, but not classical, not folk, not jazz, and not even Christmas in a traditional sense.

There are familiar tunes and not so familiar tunes. The program begins with a rather ordinary arrangement of 'Sleigh Ride' for the quartet with a few cleverly but conservatively administered sound effects. Then the pace picks up with 'Santa Claus is Coming to Town' and many other well-know tunes that use singers and a combination of the others that suddenly transform the quartet into a stiffer version of a jazz ensemble saxophone section. Many of these arrangements might be passed off as legitimate jazz and folk arrangements of popular holiday music to be played in the background of parties. It would, of course, be an astute party-goer who points out that there are actually bassoons playing in the background!

Where there are bassoonists, there is good humor. In several pieces—'Christmas Carol', 'The 12 Days After Christmas', 'Too Fat for the Chimney', and 'The Same Christmas Cake'—musical comedian Mary Lou Falls has me in stitches. Her musical mannerisms and enunciation remind me very much of Anna Russell, and the songs she sings are hilarious. There is also the lyric-less '12 Days of Christmas' with the quartet and very well-timed sound effects. On a more serious note, singer Heather Bambrick's sensuous and sultry voice is perfect for the laid-back tunes like 'What Are You Doing New Year's Eve?'

There are some other surprises and oddities, such as a traditional Georgian tune, the theme from 'Hockey Night in Canada' and a stunning arrangement of the Troika from *Lieutenant Kije* that set this album apart from any other Christmas compilation I have ever heard. I cannot imagine a more original Christmas album than this, and it is certain to put a smile on your face.

SCHWARTZ

The Wonder of Christmas

Mormon Tabernacle Choir & Orchestra
MTC 47—59 minutes

These are dreadful arrangements—schlocky,