



Amy Grant's unmistakable voice has become the soundtrack to nearly four decades of Christmas memories for generations of family and friends the world over. With six GRAMMY awards to her credit, over 30 million records sold worldwide, an annual "Christmas At the Ryman" residency with country music superstar husband Vince Gill, and a national symphony Christmas tour with her friend Michael W. Smith, Grant has poured her heart and soul into her latest release in anticipation of a music-filled holiday season.

*Tennessee Christmas* beautifully captures the joy, laughter, anticipation and even melancholy the Christmas season brings. While the album's title track was originally written and recorded over twenty-five years ago, Grant's fresh take on this holiday standard is warm and welcoming, and perfectly sets the tone for a more intimate musical experience. "I have spent so many Christmas seasons touring from coast to coast, but nothing feels better at Christmastime than coming home to Tennessee," Amy muses.

Coming home is the theme and context of this 13-song collection of heartfelt originals and Yuletide classics. Producers Mac McAnally (Jimmy Buffett, Martina McBride), Marshall Altman (Marc Broussard, Frankie Ballard), Ed Cash (Chris Tomlin, David Crowder Band) and the album's musicians gathered at Amy's house to record *Tennessee Christmas*, which created an environment rich with laughter, nostalgia, and storytelling.

"Vince has turned our house into a fabulous studio," Amy says, laughing. "You open the front door and the piano and organ in the living room are already wired to record. The Leslie B-3 occupies the coat closet. The hallway is the vocal booth. You get the picture! We even added Christmas decorations for our recording sessions, so every time we took a coffee break or shared a meal, the musicians would be reminded of another Christmas memory....'oh man, when my kids were little' or 'when my brother and I were kids'...and the stories just kept coming. That's what I will remember most about making this album together."

"We have two Christmas traditions," Amy says. "Christmas morning we have a big breakfast together. We all help out in the kitchen, but Vince is at the helm manning the stove. That only happens once a year. The other tradition is taking a Christmas morning photograph of all the kids before anyone has had a chance to brush their hair or teeth. For the most part, they aren't flattering shots, but I love them."

"To Be Together," an uplifting original written by Grant and long time co-writer Christ Eaton, feels like an instant classic and carries a deep and lasting memory for Grant. "Chris and I had just finished writing that song when my daughter Sarah and her boyfriend were in an awful automobile accident," Amy says. "During those tough hours in the emergency room and the days that followed in the hospital, that chorus cycled through my brain on repeat...'coming home just the way you are, knowing this is all that really matters, to be together'...and was so

comforting to me.”

Recognizing the amazing healing power of music and the solace “To Be Together” brought to her in a time of trial, Amy intentionally included songs on this record that accurately portray the feelings of sadness and grief that so often accompany the holidays. With offerings like “December,” “Another Merry Christmas,” and “Melancholy Christmas,” her hope is that those who are struggling will find a sense of peace by realizing that they are not alone.

“Everybody has had difficult holidays,” Amy says. “Maybe it’s the first Christmas after a loved one passes away or you’ve just had your heart broken. If you live long enough, you’ll experience every kind of holiday imaginable.” Amy jokes that the subtitle of “Melancholy Christmas” should be “making friends 101,” and that it really is as simple as inviting someone over and just being together. She’s seen firsthand how that small amount of effort can have an immeasurable impact. “It’s all about love. Everyone needs to be loved.”

Love comes in a variety of forms. The slow groove of the whimsical “Still Can’t Sleep On Christmas Eve” captures the childlike anticipation of the day, while “Baby It’s Cold Outside,” a duet between Amy and husband Vince, playfully explores the giddiness and romance of the season. “We’ve performed that song together for years during our Christmas show at the Ryman,” Amy says laughing. “This time, we decided to slow it down so that people could really enjoy the lyrics. It is such clever songwriting. The lyrics are so funny and so typical of males and females. The woman is worried that it is getting late and insists that she needs to leave, but the guy has other plans.”

Even with classics like “White Christmas” and “I’ve Got My Love to Keep Me Warm,” Amy’s approach to the production of this record remains more organic and simplistic than her previous Christmas albums. “I’ve done big beautiful string charts and full orchestra arrangements and am so proud of them. This record, though, has been a unique opportunity for me to record music that way I love hearing it most – created with friends and family at home around the Christmas tree,” Amy says.

This simplistic approach pushed Amy outside of her comfort zone when recording one of the most traditional carols of Christmas. “‘Joy To the World’ undid me,” Amy recalls. “Ed Cash wanted a very slow version of the song. Every time I’ve sung this song, it has always been in a more rousing context. For a while, I couldn’t even figure out how to interpret it, but the depth of the text hit me so differently when we slowed it down. It gave the lyric time to really sink in.”

From Amy’s perspective, the heartbeat of *Tennessee Christmas* is the belief that no matter where we’ve been or what we’ve been through, we are always better together. Her hope is that the music will summon up the best memories of Christmases past, while also encouraging us to create new and incredible memories with those around us. Grant urges, “Don’t worry about opening gifts - open your home, open your ears, and open your hearts. Share a meal, share a song, or just a quiet moment. Whatever you do this holiday season, take a moment to just be thankful for the magnificent gift of simply being together.”