



***O Come All Ye Faithful* by M.C.Taylor Hiss Golden Messenger**

A little backstory: In December of 2020 I went into Target to pick up some wrapping paper and was overwhelmed by the aggro full-tilt Christmas anthems blaring from the tinny overhead speakers. It was a moment of such cognitive dissonance—belligerent holiday music soundtracking a time of such collective confusion, exhaustion and grief—that I actually laughed out loud. When the shopper next to me glanced over in apprehension, I point up towards the music and asked her, “Do *you* feel like this?”

The more I thought about the gap between the brash, brassy music that is so often played in public spaces during the holidays and the way that so many people seem to *feel* around this time of year, the more I felt compelled to make a record specific to this season. Some of my friends thought I was going a little crazy. My go-to holiday record has always been Vince Guaraldi's soundtrack to *A Charlie Brown Christmas*—a perfect record for *any* time of year because of the deep emotional places it goes—and I wanted to try to make an album that lived in that universe: Lush, bittersweet, contemplative. Hopeful and sorrowful in equal measure. That's always been my sweet spot. Maybe I was I looking for an antidote to the chaos that seemed to have enveloped our world, a project that could serve as a meditation.

And so, in the early months of 2021, I holed up in my studio with a bunch of instruments and holiday records as inspiration—the aforementioned Vince Guaraldi record, Jacob Miller's *Natty Christmas*, albums by the Waterson family and Shirley Collins, Nashboro's *Christmas Nativity* compilation—to write and arrange the music that would eventually become *O Come All Ye Faithful*. I was particularly drawn to old hymns like “Silent Night,” “Joy to the World,” and the title track. Other songs, like Spiritualized's “Shine a Light” and Creedence Clearwater Revival's “As Long As I Can See the Light,” became seasonal songs by association. Woody Guthrie's “Hannukah Dance” seemed to be begging to be included. And I wrote several songs that felt thematically consonant with the tunes I was gathering, including “Hung Fire,” “Grace” and “By the Light of St. Stephen,” which draws on the Waterson's “Joy, Health, Love and Peace.” The idea of light—as something to guide or inspire or pine for—is all over this album. I'm not a churchgoing person; music has always been my way of connecting with the divine. I wanted to be in those deep waters with *O Come All Ye Faithful*. I feel very close to this music.

O Come All Ye Faithful was recorded largely by the same cast of players as June's *Quietly Blowing It*, including Chris Boerner, Matt McCaughan, Devonne Harris, Matt Douglas, Scott Hirsch and Sonyia Turner, and features guest appearances by Nathaniel Rateliff,

Erin Rae, Aoife O'Donovan and Buddy Miller. The artwork was created by acclaimed visual artist Cody Hudson, who works under the name Struggle Inc.

O Come All Ye Faithful exists as a standalone album or as a deluxe version that includes a remixed, completely reinvented set of music called *The Sounding Joy* that was created by Cameron Ralston, my partner in a new project called Revelators (more on that later), based on our shared love of free and spiritual jazz, dub reggae and electronic music. Along with the album, you can order other Hiss holiday merch including sweatshirts, T-shirts, ornaments, Chanukah candles and more. I'm leaning into it all.

Making this record brought me some peace, and I hope you enjoy it enough to let it soundtrack your days, wherever you might be and whomever you might be with. Grace be on us.

—M.C. Taylor, Durham, NC
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