



ABOUT “WHITE CHRISTMAS”: THE SONG

Background, Trivia, and Statistics

Background:

Irving Berlin wrote “White Christmas” for the 1942 movie musical *Holiday Inn* starring Bing Crosby and Marjorie Reynolds. It won the 1942 Academy Award for Best Song of the Year. It was also sung by Crosby in *Blue Skies* (1946) and as the title song in *White Christmas* (1954).

Bing Crosby’s recording:

Bing Crosby’s definitive recording of “White Christmas” has sold over 100 million copies worldwide. (Source: Guinness World Records.) *It is the best-selling record in history.*

Other recordings:

“White Christmas” is the most recorded Christmas song of all time with over 500 different “cover versions” to date. (Source: ASCAP). Among the more than 150 different artists who have recorded “White Christmas” since 1942 are: Tony Bennett, The Carpenters, Jose Carreras, Rosemary Clooney, Nat King Cole, Perry Como, John Denver, Neil Diamond, Placido Domingo, Ella Fitzgerald, Lena Horne, Peggy Lee, Barry Manilow, Willie Nelson, Elvis Presley, Frank Sinatra, Barbra Streisand, Donna Summer and the Supremes.

Recent recordings:

Kenny Rogers, Kenny Loggins, Babyface, Aaron Neville, Gloria Estefan, Vince Gill, Michael Bolton, Melissa Manchester, Willy Nelson, Garth Brooks, Hanson, Ann Hampton Callaway, Kenny G., Mandy Patinkin, Mannheim Steamroller, Destiny’s Child, Brooks & Dunn, and Lee Ann Womack. For 2003: Barbara Cook, Bette Midler, The Vienna Boys Choir, and The Flaming Lips.

Translations:

“White Christmas” has been translated into dozens of languages, including Dutch, Latin, Portuguese, as well as Italian (“Bianco Natale”), French (“Noel Blanc”), Spanish (Navidades Blancas”) and even Yiddish (“In Vayse Nitl”).

Sheet music sales:

It is virtually impossible to determine total quantity of sheet music sold, since this song is, by any estimation, the biggest selling Christmas song of the 20th century and has been a bestseller for over 60 years. As point of reference, however, in the USA in 2000, the Irving Berlin Music Co. sold over 15,000 copies of the “White Christmas” sheet music.

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Licensing:

In February 2004, the Harry Fox Agency, which processes and administers over 5 million individual mechanical licenses for audio recordings on behalf of the music industry, stated that “White Christmas” is the most licensed-song in the HFA catalogue.

About Irving Berlin:

Born Israel Beilin in a Russian Jewish *shtetl* in 1888, he died as Irving Berlin in his adopted homeland of New York, New York, USA, in 1989. Songwriter, performer, theatre owner, music publisher, soldier and patriot, he defined Jerome Kern’s famous maxim that “Irving Berlin has no place in American music. He *is* American music.” Berlin wrote over 1200 songs, including “Easter Parade,” “Always,” “Blue Skies,” “There’s No Business Like Show Business,” “Alexander’s Ragtime Band,” and “God Bless America.” For more, visit www.irvingberlin.com.

[Statistics current as of 05.18.04.]

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