

NEW COUNTRY presents

# MUSIC *of* CHRISTMAS



# REBA



20 ALL-TIME  
**BEST**  
CHRISTMAS  
ALBUMS

**INSIDE**

**COLLIN RAYE**

**ALABAMA**

**CARLENE CARTER**

**ALAN JACKSON**

**KENNY ROGERS**

**SHENANDOAH**

**BELLAMY BROTHERS**

**AND MUCH MORE...**

\$8.95



HOLIDAY SPECIAL 1996

# CRYSTAL CAROLS

BY KARLY RANDOLPH

## Family And Family Traditions Come First For Crystal Gayle



ALTHOUGH SOME PEOPLE HAVE A TO-DO LIST 10 PAGES LONG FOR the Yuletide season, Crystal Gayle's goals for the holidays are simple:

"I'm going to get my Christmas shopping done early," she says,

chuckling with the bashful laugh of someone who's made the goal year after year, only to find it elusive.

But it's not as if Gayle is spending the month of December relaxing in her Nashville home with her husband and two children, Catherine, 13, and Chris, 10. Instead, the multi-award-winning singer will be doing a nationwide holiday tour. Why tour at the busiest time of the year? Because Gayle's fondness for the Christmas season overrides her desire to rest. In fact, it would be safe to label the singer a Christmas junkie—someone who sneaks Christmas carols into the CD player in October and puts up the tree before Halloween. "I would perform Christmas carols in November if I could," she says. "I get into the spirit of Christmas before everyone else does."

That love of the holidays propelled Gayle to record an album of Yuletide tunes, *A Crystal Christmas*, back in 1986. The album has been digitally remastered and is

being released this year for the first time on CD. The collection sticks to traditional interpretations of such classic carol stalwarts as "White Christmas," "Silent Night" and "O Holy Night." Most are accompanied by an orchestra for an eggnog-by-the-fireplace feel. "This particular album is one of my favorite albums I've ever done. They're the songs I grew up with—they're special songs," Gayle says.

Although some artists mix traditional, age-old carols with original Christmas tunes, Gayle opts to stick to the classics. "To me, it's hard to write really good new Christmas songs, and to find a whole album of all-new songs is real difficult. It's hard to improve on already great songs. It's like the old standard hymns—you don't want to listen to some of the newer songs because you want to hear the ones that you're familiar with."

Although Gayle agrees that Christmas carols, shopping and embarrassingly gleeful Yuletide films all make the season more fes-

tive, for her, Christmas is about what matters most: family and friends. "I think family and family traditions are the first thing I think about when I think of Christmas. It's not the presents or anything like that," she confirms. Growing up in the Appalachian mountains in Kentucky, Gayle was the youngest of eight children. Their holiday family tradition was simply being together, all under one roof.

"When my mother was alive, everyone would come home to her house—I always knew my brothers and sisters were coming home. That was what I looked forward to for Christmas," Gayle remembers. And with tight finances, Christmas gifts weren't toys circled in the Sears and Roebuck catalog but replacements for shoes that had gotten too small or clothing that had worn thin. "Growing up, what you got for Christmas was really what you needed. If you needed socks, you got socks. It wasn't about toys," she says.

Gayle's Kentucky roots also influenced her appreciation of and gift for music, since

music was the primary form of entertainment. She remembers: "Music was just a way of life. People would sit on their porch and play their guitar and sing, and they would gather around the radio and listen to the Opry on Saturday night."

It also didn't hurt that Gayle's older sister, Loretta Lynn, had already conquered the charts as the country's biggest female star. "I knew every one of [Loretta's] songs inside and out," says Gayle. "But she was the first to tell me not to sing them when I started recording. She was right—they didn't need another Loretta Lynn. She knew that if I didn't change my sound, I would not do well. She told me to be a little more middle-of-the-road so people wouldn't start to compare us. And you know what? I don't sing the type of songs my sister does as well as she does, either."

These days, Gayle has grown a long way from her humble roots. With nearly three dozen records, her own Nashville gift shop,

Crystal's (which carries music boxes that play "Don't It Make My Brown Eyes Blue"), and enough accolades to fill her spacious home, she can enjoy the success that her silky pipes have afforded her. But her priorities—her friends and family—have not changed. Aside from Christmas shopping, Gayle's other holiday plans center around her husband and children.

"With my family, we open our presents on Christmas morning, although we might let them open something on Christmas Eve," she says. "We have our big dinner on Christmas—we cook Southern and Greek. My husband's Greek, so we have a lot of Greek stuffings. Plus I have to make the cornbread stuffing. And of course, we usually decorate our yard with a lot of lights. We always put quite a bit out."

"But my basic thing is being with family—Christmas is a time to spend with family," Gayle affirms. "You wonder why you don't take that time during the whole year." ❧

### Selected Discography

#### CRYSTAL GAYLE

*Greatest Hits*

CAPTOL (1991)

★ ★ ★ ½



#### CRYSTAL GAYLE

*The Best of Crystal Gayle*

WARNER BROS (1987)

★ ★ ★ ½

#### CRYSTAL GAYLE

*A Crystal Christmas*

INTER SOUND (1986/1996)

★ ★ ★ ½



#### CRYSTAL GAYLE

*Crystal Gayle's Greatest Hits*

COLUMBIA (1983)

★ ★ ★ ½



#### CRYSTAL GAYLE

*Classic Crystal*

EMI (1979)

★ ★ ★ ½