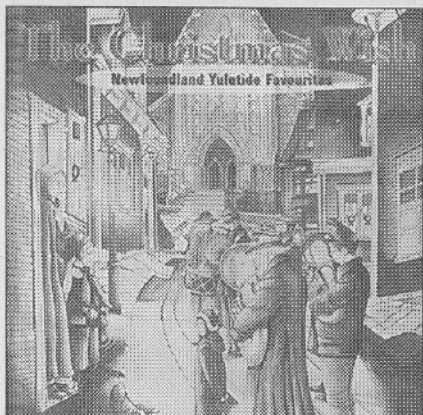


CHRISTMAS ALBUMS

'Tis the season for rock and schlock



THE CHRISTMAS WISH

Various Artists

Avalon Music

If sales and airplay figures are anything to go by, this disc is set to become one of the biggest Christmas hits to come out of Newfoundland for a while.

Already it's hit No. 3 in the Newfoundland market and No. 188 on the national top 200 recordings as tracked by SoundScan.

And once you hear it, you realize that it is with good reason that the disc is doing well.

Perhaps what's best about it is what it isn't — a sugary, overly sentimental collection of seasonal pap.

Great Big Sea appears with its already familiar Seven Joys of Mary, the Irish Descendants turn out a new one, and the Ennis Sisters hit us with Mary's Lullaby.

The Fables show us a completely different side with a wonderful a cappella version of Silent Night with Dave Fitzpatrick in the lead vocal seat.

Celtic Connection does a fine job on I Saw Three Ships and Children's Winter, and Pamela Morgan shows why she's one of our leading singers with The Cherry Tree Carol.

Other ingredients in this winning recording include Shanneyganock on a moving What Child Is This, Tickle Harbour in a tag-team Piper in the Meadow/Ding Dong Merrily on High, and good tracks from Wince Coles, The Walsh Family, Ray Lake and John Philips.

All in all, a solid collection of good — but not overdone — tunes for the holidays as performed by some of the best musicians in the province.

I foresee this being an annual favourite for several years to come.