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The Brunswick News

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Some Christmas songs deserve lump of coal



We all know what makes a good Christmas song. The season is filled with them, and one of the best parts of the holiday is getting to listen to these songs that we’re not really allowed to hear until this one month.

Everyone has a list of favorites, but no one really talks about the ones we’d rather not hear anymore. So this week, we’re doing a sort of reverse on the Download This riff. In fact, I guess you could call this “Don’t Download This: Christmas Edition!” So let’s get started.

Do They Know It’s Christmas? – I get that this

song is a well-intentioned attempt to bring people’s attention to a serious situation. It’s also outdated, ethnocentric and, well, horribly depressing. Seriously, nothing takes you out of the moment like Bono and the gang singing about bells “clanging chimes of doom.” When I’m sitting by the tree, downing bowl after bowl of Christmas Crunch, I just don’t need that.

Happy Christmas (War is Over) – The sad part about this song is that it starts out sounding like the stuff classic Christmas songs are made of, but then John Lennon and Yoko Ono seem to, kind of, sort of, maybe, try to make an anti-war statement in the end. Almost like they had two separate good ideas, but didn’t have time to pull them both off. So they

put them together. To poor effect.

Feliz Navidad – You cannot convince me that with the millions of Spanish-speaking people all over the world and the richness of all the cultures that this is the only Christmas song worth playing year in and year out. And I bet other Spanish Christmas songs have more than just two verses repeated over and over again. Why don’t we find those other songs and give them a chance?

Grandma Got Run Over By a Reindeer – A bad novelty song that somehow refuses to go away. And, worst of all, at every Christmas party there’s always some goon who seems to think that this is, hands-down, the funniest Christmas song ever written and insists on breaking out with it every half hour or so.

Any song strongly featuring a synthesizer –

There’s a reason most classic Christmas songs are considered classics. They capture some timeless essence that, despite being originally performed 50, 60, or 70 years ago, still manages to speak to us today. So that’s why I’m still baffled that synthesized songs from the 1980s are still getting airplay. Maybe they’re meant to be audio museum pieces, tributes to a long bygone age. If that’s the case, then I humbly ask that the curator close the exhibit.

So there you have it. Looking at that list, when you think about it, four bad songs out of thousands isn’t too bad. Well, until next time, keep the e-mails coming to mega_icon@yahoo.com, and have a happy holiday.

American Girl for 2009 won’t give up

By SAMANTHA CRITCHELL
The Associated Press

NEW YORK – The American Girl of 2009 is a newbie at school, lives in an extended-family household and loves to swim and work on crafts. And she’s learning to stand up to a bully.

She’ll also be the first contemporary American Girl character brought to life in a movie, which previously were centered on girls from other eras.

“Chrissa” is the latest creation of the Mattel-owned American Girl brand that includes dolls, mega stores with restaurants and theaters, books and a monthly magazine. The company offers a new Girl of the Year each January.

While the movies have covered such eras as the Great Depression and Colonial times, the annual dolls are always contemporary, created to reflect the always changing interests and lifestyles of tweens, said Shawn Dennis, senior vice president of marketing.

The Chrissa doll has a bouncy medium-brown hairstyle, blue eyes and an overall free-spirit look that reflects her creativity with some patchwork and floral prints.

On Jan. 5, a full-length DVD of her story “An American Girl: Chrissa Stands Strong” will debut on HBO and then be available for sale the next day.

The young actress Sammi Hanratty, who has appeared on TV’s “Pushing Daisies” and “The Suite Life of Zac and Cody,” will bring Chrissa to life on screen.

Even though she’s a bit older – an eighth grader! – Sammi sees similarities between her life and Chrissa: they love animals, they’ve both been “the new girl” and they both learn to stand up for themselves and their friends.

She hopes other girls relate to Chrissa and learn from her. “I was on the swim team in ‘American Girl’ but I had never been on a team before. I love swimming, and I play tennis all the time with my cousins, but now I’d think about being on a team for something.”

Team sports resonate with American Girl tests groups, said Dennis, and so does the bullying theme.

“Bullying isn’t something that was invented this year, but it is something that in some ways has gotten more difficult,” she said. “Giving girls tools and different ways of handling it and a guideline for when it’s bullying or not, when to stand-up for yourself or your friends or not, is something that’s a part of the American girl’s life.”



This is the American Girl Chrissa doll for 2009. The Mattel-owned American Girl brand offers a new Girl of the Year each January.

American Girl/AP



College 101

The case for staying close to home



Bobby Haven/The Brunswick News

At College of Coastal Georgia, student Bianca Germano says she has easy access to classes and professors.

Coastal Georgia turns new page

By KRISTA HARRIS
The Brunswick News

The decision to go to college can be a big one. There is a lot of research to do and choices to make.

With the transformation this year of College of Coastal Georgia from a two-year community college to a four-year college where you can earn a bachelor’s degree, there may be reasons to look closer to home.

Bianca Germano, 22, a nursing student at the college, made the decision to go to college in Brunswick and shares some reasons to consider it:

You can save a lot of money.
“I’m excited (that) I’ll get my bachelor’s degree and not be in major debt,” said Germano.

She decided to live at home with her parents until she is able to support herself, which means she is saving hundreds of dollars each month. This lets her have money for an evening out every once in awhile with friends and a new outfit here and there.

Her big recommendation for incoming students is to qualify for the state’s HOPE Scholarship and to keep it. It, along with a nursing scholarship from the college, has kept her out of major student loan debt.

To take advantage of her savings, she has opened

a savings account where some of her earnings from a part-time job goes every month.

The campus is convenient.
It does not take Germano very long to get to school and she’s not wasting time shuttling from class to class.

“You can get a lot done in a short amount of time, and it’s convenient,” she said.

All her classes are within walking distance and it “takes five minutes” to get to them. Compare that to a large campus that can require buses to get around.

The parking at Coastal Georgia is hassle-free. You can easily park and walk to class without worrying about getting a parking ticket because the lots are so full. There’s enough parking for students and faculty.

The class size is just right.
Germano says that her core classes only had about 30 people in them. The largest was a nursing class with 80 people. She was able to learn and approach professors with any questions she had on an assignment.

In contrast, introductory lecture classes at a large university can top out at more than 1,000 students.

“They (the professors) all know me by name and they sincerely tell you to come to the office” if you need to see them, said Germano.

Coastal Georgia is a good transition.
It was not a big culture shock entering the local college from high school, said Germano.

She knew a lot of people and was able to meet a whole lot more. Many of her friends moved on to bigger colleges and universities, but Germano made the choice to stay close to home and has not regretted it.

She has been able to get a lot done, not only through learning, but growing up. She was able to focus on her classes and get ahead.

She will graduate in May with an associate degree and without any worries, and hopes to continue in the fall to earn a bachelor’s degree in nursing.

You can find a job.
As a nursing student, Germano is able to work part-time at the nearby Brunswick hospital of Southeast Georgia Health System. It has taught her valuable life experiences and given her a foot in the door on a career.

She will have a full-time job out of college in a place she is comfortable. It was not even hard for her to find a part-time job while in school, because she knew people who were hiring.

“Honestly, I would advise anybody” to attend the College of Coastal Georgia, said Germano. “The education is just as good, if not better, and as advanced as some bigger schools.”



Try these ideas for the holiday break

The Associated Press

The holiday break can seem never-ending. Some ideas on how to get through it.

If you are staying at home ...

• A pajama day.
Be totally lazy, says Melissa Stanton, a mom of three and author of the “The Stay-at-Home Survival Guide.” Don’t even get dressed. Cook together, watch

movies, play board games. “I find that if we have a day when we don’t leave the house we don’t spend money that day,” she said.

• Playdates.
Invite friends over for the day or to sleep over, said Stanton. “It is a hard day for mom, but at least we’re in the house and everyone is occupied,” she said. “Hopefully another parent will reciprocate and take my one, two

or three kids.”
• An obstacle course.
Build one inside or set-up a scavenger hunt using furniture and household objects, said baseball star Evan Longoria, spokesman for The Sportys Baseball DVD, which teaches children about baseball.
• A game day.
Set up several board games, such as Monopoly, Risk, Battle-

ship, and rotate every 10 minutes from game to game, said Jen Singer, creator of MommaSaid.net.
• Some exercise.
Take walks, jogs or races around the neighborhood every morning or afternoon, said Longoria.
• Play outside.
Organize a soccer or football game outside.