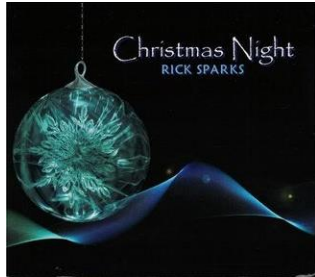


Rick Sparks

## Christmas Night



A tintinnabulation of bells and a chorus of angelic voices opens the first tune, **Christmas Night** by **Rick Sparks**. It is the title tune and it is so pleasing on the ear, but more so on the soul. It is a Sparks original that offer a childlike view of that special night. Using a music box manner with tinkling sounds and a dulcet inorganic choir, it becomes a fantasy, the stuff that dreams are made of.

There are ten glorious gifts of music on Christmas Night which feature traditional music reimagined for a modern world, and with the addition of a pair of original works for further enjoyment. Most of these carols are quite familiar, but Sparks reworks the themes into a pleasing electronic experience. For example, Rick offers up a tender rendition on **In the Bleak Midwinter**. Snow falls, flames crackle in the fireplace, and all is well with this gentle composition. His music reminds us that even the coldest night will give way to a new day.

Rick offer two pieces with which I am not acquainted, but I enjoyed them nonetheless. **Infant Holy, Infant Lowly** is one of the songs. It is a 13<sup>th</sup> century Polish carol that is evocative and gentle. Using flute and choir, Rick transformed this old world hymn into an iridescent soundscape. The other is **Once in Royal David's City**. Written more recently in 1888 by Irish poet Cecil Frances Alexander. She has written many more hymns, but this one to me is resplendent with reverence and it turned out to be my favorite on the album. The music is basically harmonious choir, but the melody is heartfelt and tender.

No Christmas compendium would be complete without a version of **Silent Night** and Sparks delivers perfectly. Soft music that falls like new snow combined with angels we have heard on high make their appearance. Rick finalizes the tune with a brief piano interlude. The last track is called **Nativity** and it is a Sparks' original. Strong chorus generates a comfort that is hard to find these days while the music creates a peaceful atmosphere. Highly listenable.

- R J Lannan, Artisan Music Reviews