Life

Sufjan Stevens unveils new Christmas song on holiday compilation

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On first thought, Christmas music and indie darling Sufjan Stevens might not seem to go together. The grief-stricken nature of his 2015 album "Carrie & Lowell" and the poignant longing of his soundtrack contributions to the 2017 film "Call Me by Your Name," two of his most celebrated works, don't exactly scream holiday cheer.

But between 2001 and 2010, Stevens built up a catalog of over 100 Christmas songs across 10 EPs. The first five EPs found their way onto the 2006 box set "Songs for Christmas," while the second half of releases ended up on the 2012 box set "Silver & Gold."

That was all for Stevens' Christmas music until Monday, Nov. 2, when he released "On This Christmas (It Only Gets Better)," his first new Christmas song in over 15 years. It came as the first and only single for "Worst Christmas Ever!" a compilation of his Christmas music released on Friday, Nov. 6.

The compilation brings together 15 of Stevens' holiday songs from across his career, along with the new offering, "On This Christmas (It Only Gets Better)." Despite his departure from Christmas tunes, the track still channels the magic that makes his festive originals so special.

The opening lines, "On this Christmas / I ask forgiveness" are the only overt connections to the holiday. What transpires afterward, amidst a piano's gentle guide, is an existential exploration of remorse and redemption. The chorus sees Stevens questioning whether things can get worse, prompting a response from an unnamed "you" who reassures: "Don't put it past the Earth to get better in the end."

During the last go of the chorus, Stevens adds unexpected volume by overlaying his own vocals, bringing the song to its emotional peak before a calming instrumental outro. While not as cheery as someone might want from their holiday music, the new cut is unmistakably Stevens. It'd be hard to tell that at least fifteen years passed between its release and everything else on the compilation.

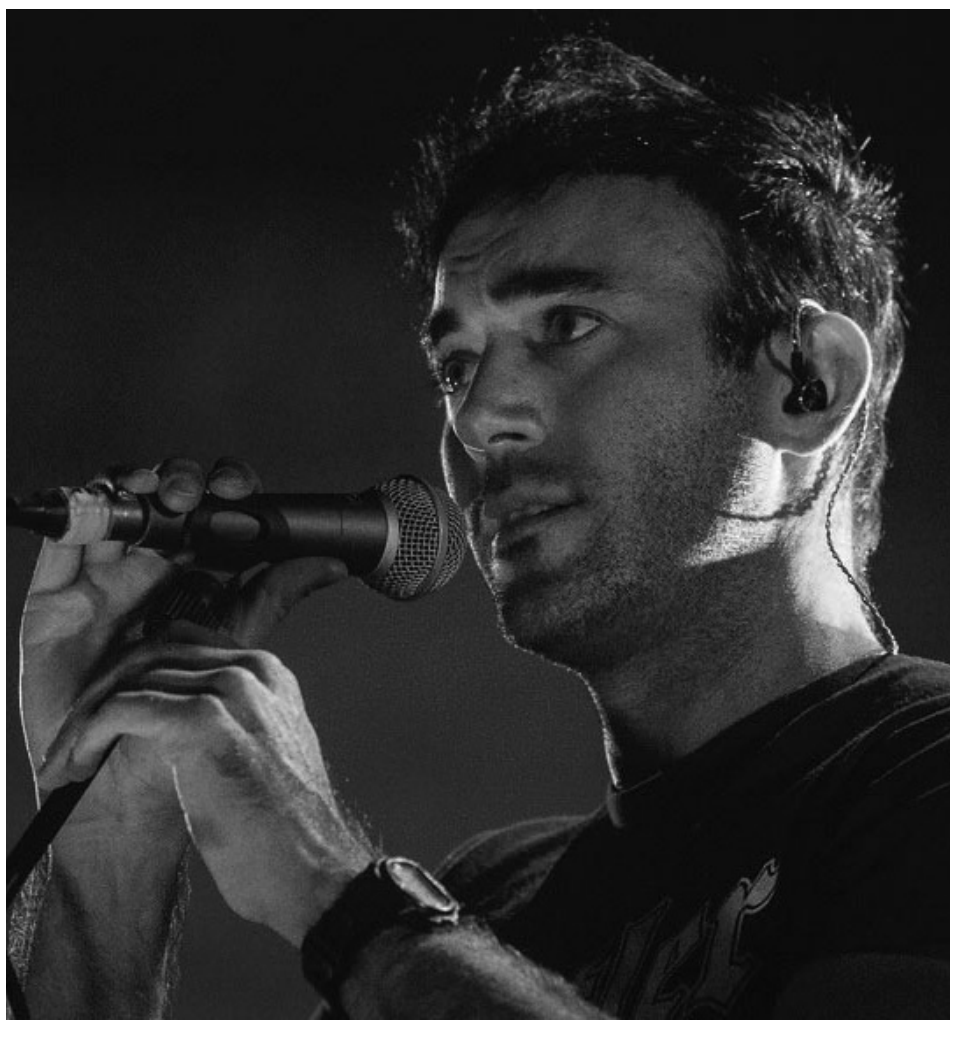
Stevens has quite the habit of mixing unexpected themes within a holiday setting, and it comes out in glimmers of the older tracks included on "Worst Christmas Ever!"

There's "Christmas In The Room," which conveys how the joy of being with someone you love can be more powerful than any Christmas gift or decoration. But to show how profound this love can be, Stevens juxtaposes this with a startling reminder of mortality when he sings "Oh, I can see the day when we'll die / But I don't care to think of silence / For now I hear you laughing." Stevens loves incorporating thematic twists like this, which is part of what makes his Christmas music so fun.

The complete opposite experience is conjured by "Sister Winter," a despondent piano ballad focused on having a heart that's "returned to sister winter" and "as cold as ice." But the second picks up with new instruments and "la la las" that eventually explode into jubilant wishes for a Happy Christmas.

Another staple of Stevens' is the incorporation of Christian themes. The original "Put the Lights on the Tree" has the bouncy rhythm you'd expect from the average Christmas song and makes mention of Jesus Christ as consolation for a crying family member. In contrast, the banjo-led "That Was the Worst Christmas Ever!" points toward the Lord rising as a far-off hope that future Christmases can get better.

"Worst Christmas Ever!" features a handful of faithful traditional Christmas songs as well. Calm and jolly renditions of "Silent Night," "Joy To The World," "Sleigh Ride" and "Auld Lang Syne," among others, appear on the tracklist. For the most part, Stevens picked these from his first five EPs, where the music was more acoustic and approachable, and not the versions from the later EPs, which infused more experimental and electronic compositions.



American singer and songwriter Sufjan Stevens performs on stage. Stevens has created over 100 Christmas songs across 10 EPs.

PHOTO COURTESY OF FLICKR

The most confusing part of the project is why Stevens included his two electronic instrumental versions of "It Came Upon A Midnight Clear," both under a minute long, but not the fully fleshed-out version with vocals, one of his catchiest covers. But randomness like that might sum up his approach to Christmas music best.

As a whole, the compilation brings together a reasonable selection of Stevens' Christmas music at its most accessible. While it misses some of his most dramatic and eclectic cuts, it serves as a warm invitation to what the compilations have to offer.

CT Hall hosts a Magical Lunch

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Students used floo powder or rode their broomsticks to Connecticut Hall's Magical Lunch on Tuesday. The dining hall invited students to step into a Harry Potter themed dining experience.

Dining hall workers dressed in robes and tables were set with house colors; the overall attention to detail was splendid to see. Some students even came prepared for the event. Seventh semester communications major Sydney Chow was wearing a Hufflepuff shirt.

"CT hall had a Harry Potter themed lunch," Chow said. "So I decided to wear my Harry Potter t-shirt and Harry Potter socks."

Entering through the brick-like entrance reminiscent of Diagon Alley, "wanted" posters appeared everywhere. Each Hogwarts house was represented by several menu items. Gryffindor had herb roasted chicken, mashed potatoes and "Mrs. Weasley's Meat Pie," which was vegetarian. Ravenclaw went with Fish & Chips and Coleslaw. Hufflepuff's menu was more unorthodox for the dining hall: popcorn, soft pretzels and "Weasley Wraps" which had an option for turkey and cheese or tofu.

The final house, Slytherin, was rocking in the Sizzle and Serve section. Their menu had the classic dining hall grilled chicken, sidewinder fries, "Hagrid's Stout Sandwich" (a Rueben) and the "Basilisk Burger."

That's not all the food options, however. The Leaky Cauldron featured two soup options: "Gryffindor Fire Roasted Tomato Soup" and "Ravenclaw Wise Old Owl Chicken & Rice Soup." The more the merrier!

The drink selection at The Hog's Head was a huge hit, serving up some classic drinks and potions. The main draw was Butterbeer, a butterscotch soda with whipped cream and caramel on top. Then there were two potions; Polyjuice was made of ginger ale and pineapple juice, while Amortentia was made of lemonade and strawberry syrup. The only thing missing after sipping on a Butterbeer is a ride on Velocicoaster!



Decorations at the Hog's Head during CT Hall's Harry Potter themed lunch. The magical lunch took place from 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. on Nov. 10, 2026.

PHOTO BY ALEX KLANCKO, CONTRIBUTOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Many dessert items were available, too. Treacle Tart, vanilla and chocolate cake, Golden Snitch Donut Holes and Monster Book Brownies.

The Honeydukes Express made an appearance and was a huge hit. Seventh semester psychology major Kaitlyn Dunn called it her favorite part of the event.

"I really like the chocolate frogs and the candy they were giving away," Dunn said.

The famous chocolate frogs were being given out from the trolley from the films. Jellybeans, lollipops and chocolate coins were also on the cart.

The event even brought out non-Harry Potter fans. Fifth semester actuarial science major Juaquin Aliste is not familiar with the book and film franchise, but he talked about his experience.

"It was interesting to see all the Harry Potter stuff I don't know," Aliste said. "I think they should happen more often and do more franchises like Hunger Games — it'll make the experience of eating with your friends more interesting."

Events like this are important and can give students a change of plans for their day. Chow lives off campus and talked about why she was there.

"I am limited to a certain amount of meal swipes," Chow said. "So, when I saw the Harry Potter themed lunch, I wanted to go."

SUBOG Weekly Events:

November 9th - November 15

November 9th - Heated Rivalry Trivia @ 7pm in the Student Union Theatre

November 12th – Potato Fest Food Truck Edition @ 2 pm on the SU Mall

Any questions? Email subog@uconn.edu and check out @subogatuconn on Instagram for updates on our events!