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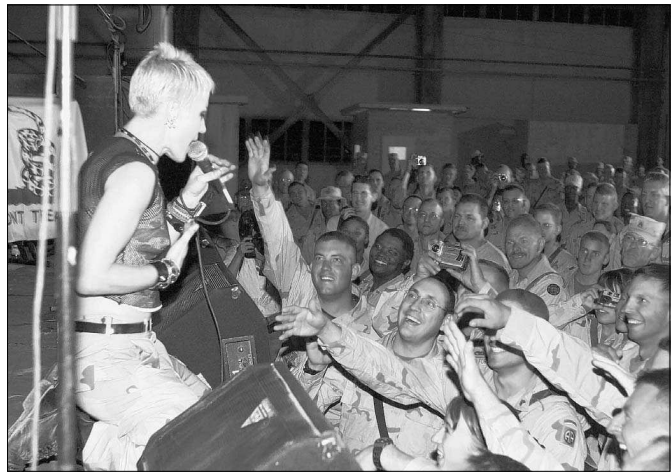
Special performances by:
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Associated Press file

U.S. soldiers cheer as rock star Joan Jett performs at the air base in Bagram, near Kabul, Afghanistan, in 2002. Jett was the first female rocker to perform in Afghanistan. Now she has released a holiday album, "A Blackheart Christmas."

CD & DVD ideas

BY PAUL FREEMAN
For The Daily News

Music is a gift that keeps on giving. So fill those stockings with CDs and DVDs matching the diverse tastes of friends and family.

Legacy Recordings has reissued rock's all-time Yuletide classic "A Christmas Gift For You," produced by Phil Spector in 1963 (when he was still primarily known for record play, rather than gungluy), the collection features rousing performances by such greats as The Ronettes and Darlene Love. A highlight is the heart-wrenching "Christmas (Baby Please Come Home)," co-written by Brill Building stalwart Ellie Greenwich, who passed away recently.

Seeking something edgier for cool friends on your shopping list? How about "A Blackheart Christmas?" It includes label head honcho Joan Jett's classic "Little Drummer Boy," as well as standards and originals from Girl In A Coma, The Dollyrots, The Cute Lepers and The Vacancies. Available as a download or on vinyl or CD at www.blackheart.com

You might opt for "Backtracks," the AC/DC collector's dream come true. Available in two editions, the lavish packages offer rare songs on CDs and the long-awaited debut of "Family Jewels Disc 3," a DVD showcasing music videos, live performances, and promotional clips. The deluxe version comes with tons of bonus goodies. Visit www.acdcbacktracks.com for details. Imagine Santa's sleigh route taking the "Highway To Hell."

For an even darker, but unforgettable gift, choose "At Your Service," a two-disc set of unreleased and live recordings from Boston band Morphine. The distinctive "low rock" sound, fueled by a spine-rattling baritone sax, came to an abrupt halt in 1999, when vocalist Mark Sandman suffered a fatal heart attack on stage. The music still packs an enormous wallop.

If pals are attending the Leonard Cohen concert at HP Pavilion tonight, they're sure to love the new release of "Leonard Cohen Live at the Isle of Wight 1970." It includes the complete audio concert on CD, plus a DVD documenting Cohen's

performance and newly shot interviews with Kris Kristofferson, Judy Collins, Joan Baez and music producer Bob Johnston.

"Trio West Plays Holiday Songs Volume 2" is a crowd pleaser. Following up on their acclaimed 2007 album, the trio's new collection delivers treasured songs with a fresh, modern jazz verve. Tango and bossa nova beats enliven the proceedings. "O Tannenbaum" gets a funk treatment and "Silent Night" is transformed into a soothing samba. Cheeriness abounds.

A Fine Frenzy offers a holiday delight. "Oh Blue Christmas," available from Target. The EP features "Blue Christmas," "Winter Wonderland," and "Christmas Time is Here" (from the Charlie Brown TV special), as well as three engaging Alison Sudol originals.

One of Northern California's finest singer-songwriters, Jeff Larson, is back with "Heart Of The Valley." Produced by Gerry Beckley (America), the album presents outstanding folk-rock-country sounds, enhanced by evocative lead vocals, gorgeous harmonies and richly realized guitar work.

Oakland-based Nancy Wright is a scintillating saxophonist who can give the listener chills one moment and sensuous sizzle the next. She has recorded with such luminaries as B.B. King and Elvin Bishop. On her own emotive album, "Moanin'," she's joined by a dynamic trio that includes Hammond B-3 organist Tony Monaco.

Want to provide laughs for the holidays? How about "The Essential Weird Al Yankovic"? Giggle at 25 years of Al's spoofs, from "Eat It" to "White & Nerdy," on two CDs.

Brit rock fans will fall on bended knee in gratitude when you fork over the 20th anniversary special edition of "The Stone Roses." When the Manchester band released their eponymous debut, NME declared it "The greatest album of all time." Hyperbole aside, the work stands the test of time.

If you prefer earlier pioneering British bands, a couple of tantalizing DVDs are now available. The documentary "The Who, The Mods and the Quadrophenia

Connection," with rare interview and performance footage, tells the fascinating story of Pete Townshend and company's impact on the Mod movement. Even better is "Odyssey and Oracle: The 40th Anniversary Concert." Last year, The Zombies performed their classic album in its entirety. Colin Blunstone's exquisitely ethereal vocals and Rod Argent's dazzling keyboard flourishes are more impressive than ever.

Is there a more cherished gift than intimacy? San Francisco singer-songwriter Corinne West's deeply personal new album, "The Promise," resonates with rich characterization and riveting storytelling, sung with powerful beauty. She plays a CD release party at Berkeley's Freight & Salvage on Nov. 20.

The 40th anniversary of the ultimate music festival brings a series of "Woodstock Experience" double-disc releases. Each features the artist's complete Woodstock performance plus their classic album of that time (with reproduction LP sleeve). You also receive a commemorative poster. Volumes are available for Janis Joplin, Jefferson Airplane, Sly & The Family Stone, Johnny Winter and Santana.

Bay Area indie power-pop band The Corner Laughters return with an irresistible new album, "Ultraviolet Garden." Produced by the Orange Peel's Allan Clapp and released on John Wesley Harding's Popover label, it brims with clever songs that will increase the fun quotient at any gathering.

Introduce someone special to Kristina Train. Her Blue Note debut, "Spit Milk," reveals a vibrant and velvety, sinfully soulful voice. A gospel feel enriches instantly memorable, skillfully crafted R&B/pop compositions. This Georgia peach is destined for stardom.

Latin jazz, with a Brazilian flair, could spice up your holidays. A Bay Area theater, poet and anesthesiologist, Anna Estrada has released a new album, "Obsession" that will awaken you. She lends her incredible vocal range to a collection of moving love songs. Get the mistletoe ready!

E-mail Paul Freeman at romper333@comcast.net.

Movies Opening Today

"2012" (PG-13): Hey, the world's about to come an end — again. This special effects-drenched apocalyptic tale is the latest from the folks who brought us "Independence Day" and "The Day After Tomorrow."

"Art & Copy" (NR): A documentary about the real "Mad Men," the advertising geniuses like George Lois and Hal Rainey who changed the ad business in the 1960s. *San Francisco only.*

"Dust of Life" (NR): A coming-of-age story set in 1990s Orange County where young Vietnamese are trying to find their place in American society, two decades after the Vietnam War. *San Francisco and Berkeley only.*

Where have we heard this before: Baby sitter gets hired to watch over a baby who doesn't exist for a very odd couple who live in a creepy old Victorian deep in the woods. And there's a creepy guy lurking around as well. It's your basic satanic thriller! *San Francisco only.*

"The Maid" (NR): Set in Santiago, Chile, this film tells the story of a woman who has been the live-in maid for a family for 23 years. When the family brings in more household help, the woman finds herself frantically trying to maintain her place in the household. In Spanish with English subtitles. *San Francisco and Berkeley only.*

"Pirate Radio" (R): The latest ensemble comedy from British writer-director Richard Curtis ("Love Actually") is a fact-based tale about rogue rock 'n' roll disc jockeys broadcasting from an old tanker off the coast of Great Britain in the 1960s. The cast includes Philip Seymour Hoffman, Bill Nighy and Kenneth Branagh.

"Precious: Based on the Novel 'Push' by Sapphire" (R): A fan and critic favorite at recent film festivals, this film looks at the life of an abused 16-year-old girl growing up in 1980s Harlem who finds hope in her life with the help of a strong teacher. *San Francisco and Berkeley only.*

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