



Heather Rankin follows her 2016 Juno Award Nominated solo album, *A Fine Line*, with a Christmas album, *Imagine*. Her angelic voice wraps her listeners in coziness and nostalgia in this ten-song collection, which includes both original songs, cowritten by Rankin, and traditional songs she grew up singing at Christmas. The evocative imagery in Rankin's contemplative lyrics inhabit the same deeply personal world Rankin created in *A Fine Line*, while songs like "Wrap it Up" harken back with frivolity to the music she created with her siblings as The Rankin Family.

*Imagine* begins in contemplation of Christmas Past with Rankin's soaring rendition of "Once in Royal David's City," a song that conjures memories for her of the traditional carols that were sung during the Midnight Masses of her childhood. She also lends her ethereal voice to a definitive rendition of "Silent Night," a song she remembers being sung with verses in six different languages at St. Mary's Parish in Mabou, Nova Scotia. The orchestrations of these two carols by *Imagine*'s producer, Steven MacKinnon, as well as the addition of the St. Michael's Choir School, root them gorgeously in the divine origins of the season. "Olde-Fashioned Christmas," written by Rankin, MacKinnon and David Tyson, weaves the magic of Christmas into the "humble abode at the end of the road" Rankin and Tyson so beautifully conjured in *A Fine Line*'s "We Walk As One." It is simultaneously a poignant snapshot of the warmth and innocence of childhood Christmas, and an exploration of how rapidly technology has dramatically changed the way we connect with one another. Yet, ultimately, our desire to gather for a Christmas meal and raise our voices together in song have remained unchanged over centuries. Along the same theme is "Picture Perfect," written by Rankin and Jamie Robinson, a song reflecting on how our memories are so often tied to the houses and the haunts where we played as children.

Rankin and Robinson celebrate Christmas Present in "Wrap It Up," a rollicking tune destined to become a Holiday Kitchen Party staple. Inspired by a batch of Joy of Cooking eggnog that Rankin once, accidentally, made three-times too strong, "Wrap It Up" perfectly captures the joyful playfulness that makes her a fan-favourite during her live performances. She imbues Hugh Martin and Ralph Blane's "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" with similar levity and immense charm.

Rankin and MacKinnon didn't set out to write a Christmas song with "Tale of the Lost Black Skimmer," but realized the parallels between their story of a misplaced soul trying to find its way back home, and the imagery of Mary and Joseph searching for a safe place to bring their child into the world. This Christmas there continues to be millions of people displaced from their homes through war, "Tale of the Lost Black Skimmer" reminds us that one of the Christmas story's most enduring, and pertinent teachings is to open our hearts to those in need, and to greet them with empathy, respect and friendship.

In the holiday spirit of friendship, Rankin has collaborated with her friend Latin Grammy/ Juno Award winner Alex Cuba on "Dark Eyes (Lullaby)." A mixture of Gaelic, Spanish and English lyrics, the song is an imagining of a lullaby that a mother might sing to her newborn, having given birth under precarious circumstances and facing an uncertain future. "Dark Eyes (Lullaby)" focuses as much on the courage and strength of the young mother, as on the birth of the baby, and the hope and promise he represents. It also is at once specific to the Nativity story, and a universal meditation on the incredible power of a mother's love. She also sings her friend David Tyson's haunting "A Text to God," which plays with how we reconcile the ancient traditions and rituals of Christmas with our Contemporary age.

Rankin's thoughtful wish for Christmas Future is the album's title track, John Lennon's "Imagine," which dares to dream of a world devoid of greed, where all people can live in peace.

In all, Imagine captures the full depth of emotions evoked at Christmas, a time for introspection, serenity, wonder, jubilation, coziness and wishes for the coming year.