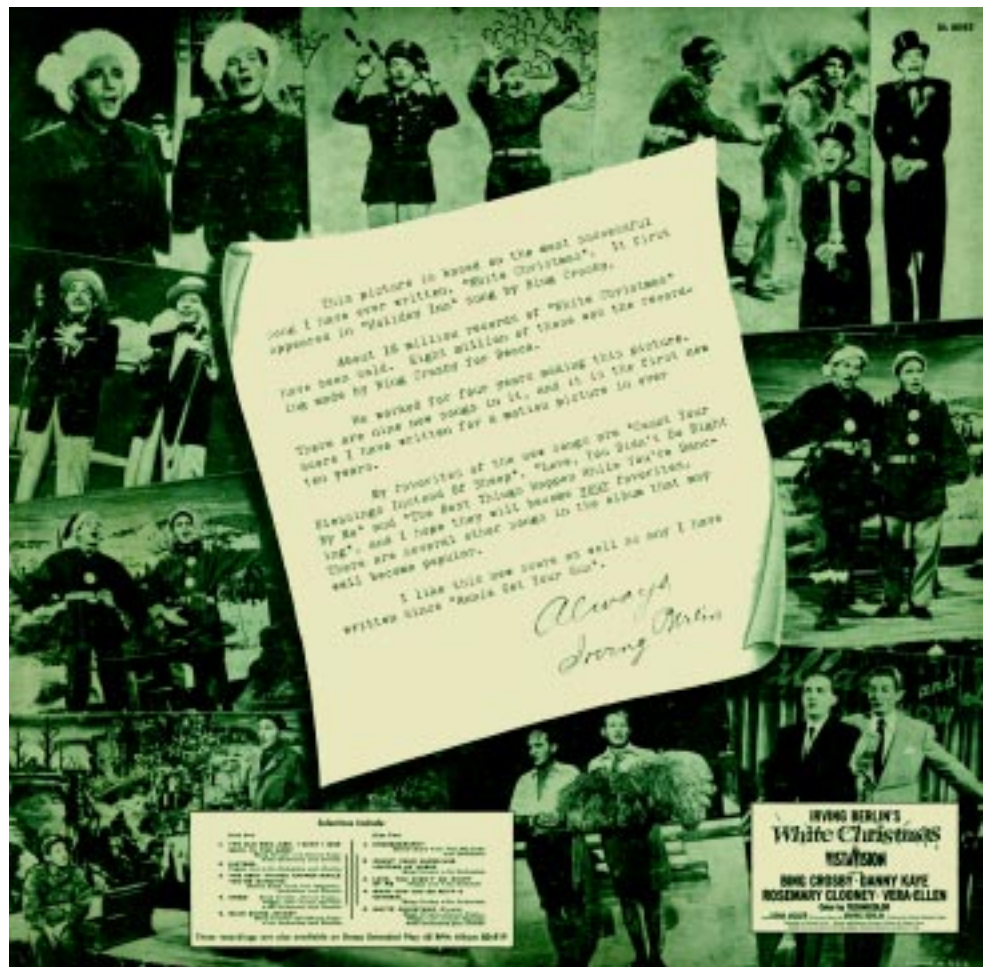


Caught between two worlds, when Berlin first sat down to write “White Christmas,” he concocted an opening verse with a refined cocktail shaker mentality leftover from the glam days of the 1930’s. Its story included everlasting sun, balmy palm trees and green grass growing in Beverly Hills. It was written for “sophisticates having martinis around a swimming pool.” During the war “when he realized the verse was wrong, he pulled it very quickly,” adds

Furia, “and didn’t want anybody singing it.”

With the threat of war ominously lurking on the horizon, Berlin’s intuition continued to push him away from urbane cocktail and slick city skyscraper tunes. He moved more toward home hymns like 1938’s “God Bless America,” and movie songs of white Christmas longing, tranquil rural living, and happy dreamy holidays, which to him had become much more important now for a somber nation yearning for domestic bliss. “Like ‘God Bless America,’ *Holiday Inn* would serve as a vehicle for endorsing the American way of life at a time when all hell was breaking loose in Europe.”⁷

“In September, 1941, my father went to Hollywood to work on *Holiday Inn*, in production at last,” said Berlin’s daugh-



ter Mary Ellin Barrett. “All spring and summer he had been writing the songs, on keyboard and typewriter, a whole new batch to accompany the one written a year or more earlier called ‘White Christmas,’ a secret song he felt from the start so strongly about he’d made it part of the contract with Paramount.”⁸

As time went on that secret song took on an enormous life of its own, unexpectedly upstaging *Holiday Inn* and spawning an unexplored consumer market for secular Christmas music, picking up where “Silent Night” left off. The story of its creation, cultural imprint and growth is legendary.

Irving Berlin wrote “White Christmas” at his New York City home in one long overnight session, unlike many of his ear-