



For Immediate Release

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## **High School Kids and Rascal Flatts** **Crowned Most Popular in 2006**

*High School Musical Soundtrack Shares Top Certification Honors with Rascal Flatts*

**WASHINGTON, December 22, 2006** – The soundtrack to the Disney Channel’s original TV movie *High School Musical* proves popular with kids and parents alike, as it closes out 2006 tied with country superstars Rascal Flatts for the highest certified album of 2006, according to the Recording Industry Association of America’s (RIAA) year-end wrap-up.

Released in January, High School Musical earned Gold, Platinum, and double-Platinum certifications before spring break arrived and reached triple Platinum before the opening bell of the new school year . High School Musical is Disney’s best-selling soundtrack since the 2003 double-Platinum Cheetah Girls soundtrack.

Rascal Flatts continued its reign with Me and My Gang, the group’s fourth release on Lyric Street, selling more than 3 million copies. The band’s best-selling album to date, the 2004 release Feels Like Today, stands at quadruple Platinum, while Melt and the group’s self-titled debut are both double Platinum.

Columbia’s Beyoncé Knowles’ birthday gift may have been belated, but it sure was sweet. The appropriately titled and strategically released B’day hit the shelves one day after her twenty-fifth birthday in September and garnered Gold and Platinum close to one month later. And the gifts keep coming: marking an early Christmas, B’day certified double Platinum in December.

Def Jam Records president and Roc-A-Fella recording artist Jay-Z’s eagerly awaited post-retirement album, Kingdom Come, closed out the year certified double Platinum for sales of more than 2 million copies. The rap mogul’s combined catalog sales are more than 25 million units.

Jive recording artist Justin Timberlake did not disappoint with this year’s Gold, Platinum, and double Platinum certified FutureSex/LoveSounds. Timberlake’s debut album, Justified, is currently certified for sales of more than 3 million copies.

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The Now That's What I Call Music! series continued to be an irresistible sales force, with the latest three installments selling more than a combined 4 million copies in 2006. Vol. 23 reached double-Platinum status, while Vols. 21 and 22 were each certified Platinum. Not to be outshined by its non-holiday compilation counterpart, Now That's What I Call Christmas Vol. 3! reached Platinum this December.

Atlantic Records introduced the music world to Gnarls Barkley, the duo of Danger Mouse and Cee-Lo Green, who dropped St. Elsewhere, their Platinum-selling debut album, just in time for convertible weather. "Crazy," a smash hit of the summer, was downloaded enough to earn both a Platinum Digital Singles Award and a Master Ringtone Award.

Platinum certification became a reality for Danity Kane, the five-woman group hand-picked by Bad Boys Records CEO Diddy for the reality TV series *Making the Band*. The group's self-titled debut includes the single "Showstopper" – popular enough as a ringtone to merit the band a Gold Master Ringtone Award.

Arista recording artist Carrie Underwood continued to ride the wave of her successful debut album Some Hearts all the way to quadruple Platinum. Fellow American Idol champion Kelly Clarkson reached five times Platinum with her sophomore effort on RCA Records entitled Breakaway.

American Idol champs weren't the only veterans of the popular TV show to have a big year. 2005 Idol contestant Chris Daughtry delivered his debut effort for RCA, Daughtry, to more than 1 million adoring fans, earning him his first Gold and Platinum records. Bo Bice stuck to his down-home Southern rock roots on his Gold certified The Real Thing, and Clay Aiken found 500,000 ways for his most recent offering, A Thousand Different Ways, to be certified Gold.

Capitol Records artist LeToya, one of the original members of the multi-Platinum selling group Destiny's Child, established a new solo career with her Gold and Platinum certified self-titled debut on Capitol. Labelmate Cherish – an all-sister R&B quartet – was more esteemed than the group may have imagined, as their debut, Unappreciated, sold more than 500,000 copies for Gold certification.

Have no doubt that Mary J. Blige broke through long before her most recent studio album, The Breakthrough, was certified double Platinum. The triple Platinum selling 1992 debut What's the 411, 1994's My Life and 1997's Share My World remain her highest certified albums to date.

Nothing stopped Hinder, a five-piece rock band from Okalahoma, from selling more than 2 million copies of Extreme Behavior, thus earning the first Gold, Platinum, and double-Platinum awards of the band's career.

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Denver native rockers The Fray earned Gold and Platinum awards for their Sony/Epic release How to Save A Life. The title track, “How to Save a Life,” and popular single “Over My Head (Cable Car)” both sold more than 1 million digital downloads, earning Gold and Platinum Digital Single certifications. The band’s music was featured on several popular TV shows, including *Scrubs*, *One Tree Hill*, *NCIS*, *Grey’s Anatomy*, and *Bones*.

In the fourth decade of his career, in which he has more than 65.5 million albums sold, country icon George Strait earned his thirty-fourth and thirty-fifth Gold records for the Gold and Platinum certified It Just Comes Natural on MCA Nashville and George Strait Fresh Cut Christmas on Hallmark. Strait’s compilation of hits, aptly titled Greatest Hits, reached quadruple-Platinum status, and the 2004 collection of his 50 career No. 1 singles, 50 #1’s, sold more than 6 million copies to be certified six times Platinum this year.

The RIAA unveiled its new Master Ringtone Award in June. Of the more than 160 ringtones certified, the triple Platinum certified trio of “Ridin’” by Chamillionaire (Universal), “It’s Goin’ Down” by Yung Joc (Bad Boy), and “I’m N Luv (Wit A Stripper)” by T-Pain (Jive) all shared top honors as the highest certified master ringtones of 2006.

Among those artists earning their first Gold record in 2006 were explosive rock band Underoath (Tooth & Nail), Southern rap group Dem Franchize Boyz (Virgin), indie rock quintet Blue October (Universal), singer/songwriter Daniel Powter (Warner Bros.), and country pop duo The Wreckers (Maverick).

The RIAA awarded a total of 74 multi-Platinum, 108 Platinum and 224 Gold albums in 2006. All certifications are calculated by Gelfand, Rennert & Feldman.

**December Highlights**

As one of country music’s living legends, Vince Gill continues to deliver hits. In collaboration with artists including Phil Everly, Bonnie Raitt, Michael McDonald, Diana Krall, and Sheryl Crow, Gill’s four-disc box set entitled These Days sold more than 1 million records in less than two months. Thematically arranged, the four discs feature bluegrass, rock, country, and modern jazz and are sure to deliver even more hits for the multi-platinum selling artist.

Reprise recording artist Josh Groban took home two awards this month, as his latest release, Awake, certified Gold and Platinum, and his Billboard chart topping album Closer hit five times Platinum.

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Grunge rock band 30 Seconds To Mars acquired its first Platinum award this month with the band's sophomore album, A Beautiful Lie. Frontman Jared Leto is perhaps best known for his work as an actor in films such as *Fight Club* and *Panic Room*.

Hailing from across the pond, Capitol recording artist Corinne Bailey Rae debuted with her self-titled solo album Corinne Bailey Rae, earning a Platinum award this month. This soul-songstress formally began her singing career at the age of 15 with the indie rock band Helen.

Cash Money Records executives Lil Wayne and Bryan "Birdman" Williams celebrated the success of their Gold certified Like Father, Like Son collaboration. Like Father, Like Son debuted No. 1 on the Billboard Top R&B/Hip Hop albums chart.

John Legend does it one more time, taking home Gold and Platinum awards this month for Once Again. His Columbia Records debut, Get Lifted, is currently certified for sales of more than 1 million copies sold.

The RIAA awarded a total of eight multi-Platinum, 18 Platinum and 20 Gold albums in December 2006. All certifications are calculated by Gelfand, Rennert & Feldman.

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The **Recording Industry Association of America** is the trade group that represents the U.S. recording industry. Its mission is to foster a business and legal climate that supports and promotes our members' creative and financial vitality. Its members are the record companies that comprise the most vibrant national music industry in the world. RIAA® members create, manufacture and/or distribute approximately 90% of all legitimate sound recordings produced and sold in the United States.

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