



HOLIDAY PREVIEW

DECK THE HALLS WITH THESE HOLIDAY ALBUMS



98 Degrees, *Let It Snow*
The veteran boy band slips back into the Christmas spirit with its second holiday album, due Oct. 20. The group considers its audience primarily female, but 1999's *This Christmas* had a broader appeal. "Guys come up to us and say, 'I love the Christmas album. My mom bought it for me,'" says member **Jeffrey Timmons**.



Cheap Trick, *Christmas Christmas*
"We put up some Christmas trees in the studio, picked out songs we all loved and voila!" says the group's **Robin Zander** of *Christmas Christmas*, out Oct. 20. Four months after releasing its last studio album, the band covers holiday classics from **The Ramones** to **Chuck Berry** and pens three original tracks.



Hanson, *Finally It's Christmas*
Twenty years since their debut Christmas album, *Snowed In*, the brothers swing back just in time for the holidays. "[*Snowed In*] has resonated with so many as a part of their family tradition for two decades," says the trio in a joint statement. *Finally It's Christmas* arrives Oct. 27 with four original songs.



Lindsey Stirling, *Warmer in the Winter*
The electronic violinist's first Christmas album, out Oct. 20, will pair classics with originals written by Stirling and featuring **Sabrina Carpenter**, **Trombone Shorty** and **All Time Low's Alex Gaskarth**.



Sia, untitled
The pop star will christen her new label home at Atlantic with her first Christmas album at the end of 2017, featuring all original holiday songs written by Sia and collaborator **Greg Kurstin**. —L.H.



Stefani had wanted to write and record a Christmas album for years, but never found the time until now. Inset: *You Make It Feel Like Christmas* arrives Oct. 6.



Gwen's Winter Whim

After waiting 10 years between solo LPs, Stefani's first holiday album "just came right out"

BY LYNDSEY HAVENS

Gwen Stefani was going for a run on boyfriend **Blake Shelton's** Oklahoma ranch when inspiration struck. "What if I *did* write a Christmas song? What would it be?" recalls the **No Doubt** frontwoman, 48. Within minutes, a melody and lyrics came to her, and she returned to the house to make a voice memo on her phone. Weeks later, she had recorded her first solo holiday song, "Christmas Eve."

The symphonic ballad serves as the closing track to Stefani's first Christmas album, *You Make It Feel Like Christmas*, out Oct. 6 on Interscope. The 12-song collection is filled with classic covers and six original songs, including the lead single/title track, which features Shelton. "It all came together quickly," says Stefani, "like it was meant to be."

What was your favorite Christmas album growing up?

I always remember [1979's] *Light of the Stable*, an **Emmylou Harris** record my parents used to play. Such a pretty record. I tried to do a cover of one of the songs off that record, but when I [tried] to sing it, I just [couldn't]. I was like, "It's not my style."

Why this album now?

I wanted to do it for years, but when do you find the time? After [2016's *This Is What the Truth Feels Like*], I felt like, 'Wow, maybe I'll do the Christmas record.' It was really a whim. The way it works is you have to get it done really early, and I had no idea that I would be able to write so quickly, because I'm such a slow writer. It just came right out. I did six songs in three sessions.

You wrote with Shelton, [producer] busbee and [songwriter] Justin Tranter on this album. How did you all come together?

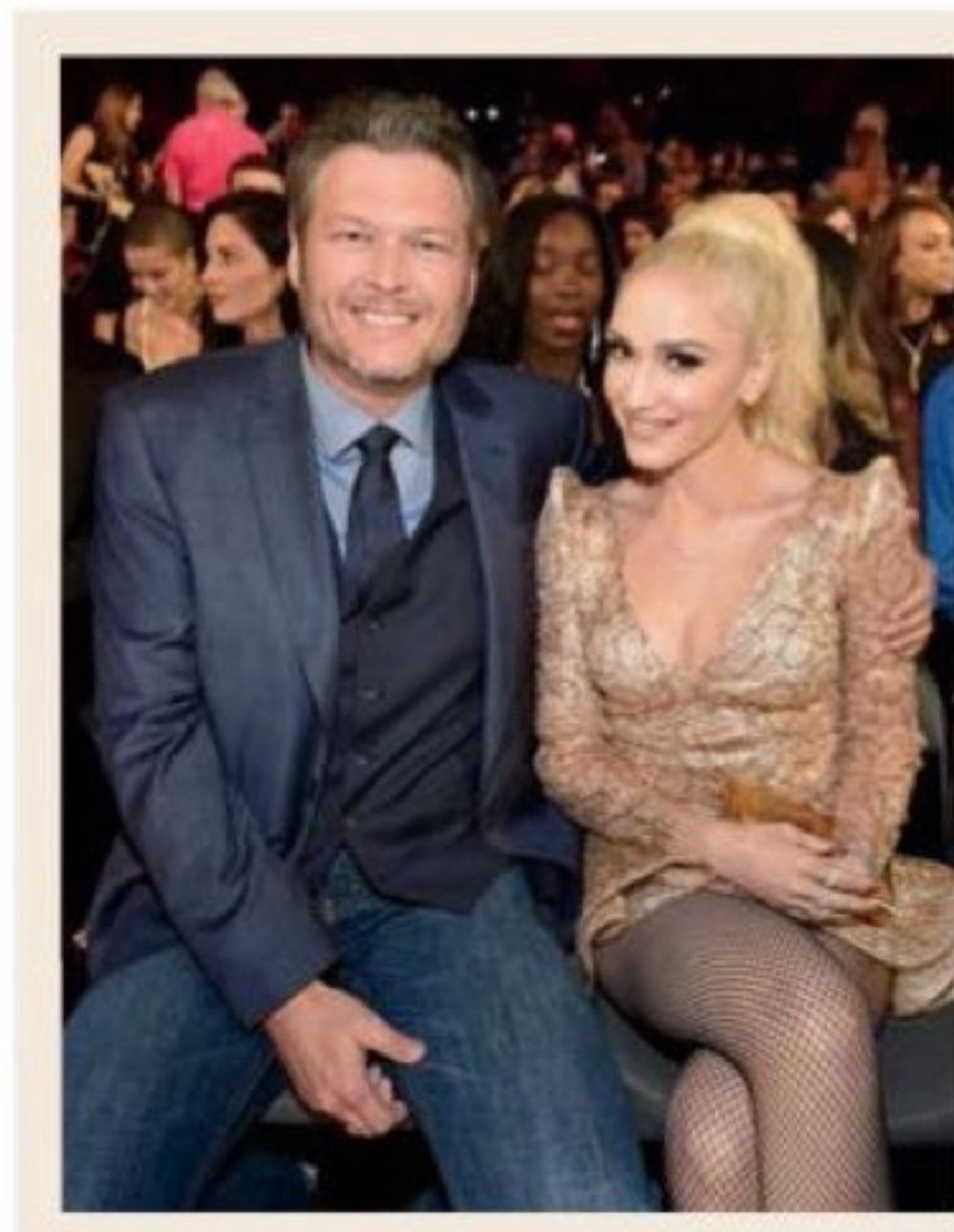
I've done so many styles and worked with so many different people. When you make a Christmas record, you want it to be something that's not going to be dated — you want it to live forever. So I asked Blake [who to write with] and he goes, "Have you worked with this guy busbee?" I'd never heard of him. I listened to some of what he had done, like **Pink's** "Try," and was like, "He wrote that? I want to work with him." I brought [past collaborator] Justin in because he could write a hit, but for me, he's a cheerleader [when I'm writing].

What's different about making a Christmas album?

For this, I was like, "I'm not going to get in my own way." It doesn't have pressure on it. Whoever wants to listen will listen. It's not like I'm trying to say, "Get this on the radio!" It's just fun, and Christmas is a special time. Being part of music, you can have such an impact on people. I don't think I ever was able to really admit that before, because it just seems arrogant to be like, "Oh, yeah, I'm part of your life," but I've had so many people come to me and say that I am. It's such an incredible feeling — it doesn't get old.

Which cover was the most fun to record?

"Last Christmas," the **Wham!** song, is a masterpiece as far as the music goes and how [producer **Eric Valentine**] created it. To me, that's the most, of all the covers, that was really flipped. But yet, it still has the spirit of the original. Lyrically, that song speaks to me and things I've been through. ●



Stefani and Shelton at the Billboard Music Awards in May.



98 DEGREES: VINCENT SANDOVAL/WIREIMAGE; HANSON: ASTRID STAMBAK/GETTY IMAGES; SIA: GREGG DEGUIRE/GETTY IMAGES; STEFANI: TIM MOSENFELDER/GETTY IMAGES; SHELTON: JOHN SHEPHERD/REX USA/GETTY IMAGES