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ENTERTAINMENT MUSIC

Idina Menzel Doesn't Understand Why Her Christmas Album Is Out in October

Nolan Feeney @NolanFeeney | Oct. 14, 2014



The Broadway star talks "Let It Go," *Love Actually* and her new Christmas album, which she says is out way too early

Winter must really be Idina Menzel's season. Last year she taught the world how to "Let It Go" as the voice of Elsa in Disney's *Frozen*, and on Oct. 14, she's releasing *Holiday Wishes*, a Christmas album covering classics from "All I Want For Christmas Is You" to "Baby It's Cold Outside." The Broadway veteran, who's currently starring in the musical *If/Then*, tells TIME about her holiday plans.



TIME: Have you always wanted to make a Christmas album?

Idina Menzel: My parents split up on Thanksgiving, so holidays can be hard for me. I've always felt that Christmas albums were a sensitive thing. To sing happy music in peoples' faces is sometimes not always the way to go. I wanted to make sure I did something that covered everyone's experience during the holidays.

The album is mostly Christmas songs, though you're Jewish.

Most of them were songs that I've always wanted to sing. "Do You Hear What I Hear?" is a song Whitney Houston sang back in the '80s. Her version is incredible. I've always loved that song. If Barbra Streisand can make a Christmas album, I can.

What are your holiday traditions?

I celebrate both Hanukkah and Christmas. I do like to decorate a tree. I do collect ornaments. I'm excited that my son probably won't take them and throw them on the ground and break them. Now he's 5, so he might understand the importance of a good ornament. That's something I'm looking forward to doing with him, and buying a couple new ones that represent the year. Just decorating a tree with him. And putting on music — not my own. God, I couldn't listen to myself, that'd make me crazy.

Some of these songs, like “All I Want For Christmas Is You,” have pretty iconic versions. Were you nervous about finding your own spin on them?

I was, actually, because I grew up listening to Mariah’s version. But the thing is, Walter Afanaseiff is my producer — he wrote that song with her. It was fun for me to say, “Let’s do your song.” There was an arrangement he always had in his head that he didn’t do that he thought would be really cool.

That song is also featured in *Love Actually*, which is a polarizing holiday movie.

Not to me! I love it.

So for the record, you’re Team *Love Actually*?

Definitely Team *Love Actually*.

That’s a bold choice. How do you defend it to people who don’t like it?

I don’t know why they don’t like it! All these movies are so honest, and they’re a little bit more idiosyncratic. They’re not perfect, I don’t think. I just love the actors. That hits the nail on the head for me.

Do you have thoughts about when it’s okay to start playing Christmas music ?

I have very strong feelings. The album comes out October 14. I think that’s ridiculous! I don’t understand. I’ve been asking the label to tell me why. Apparently that’s when people start buying stuff for Christmas. Okay, that’s cool, but I’m barely into Halloween with my son! I completely understand if people aren’t ready for it until Thanksgiving. That’s when Christmas comes alive for me. My record label will hate me for saying that, but it’s the truth!

What will you be for Halloween?

I'm one of those curmudgeons that's never into Halloween. Maybe because I'm in a show right now, currently eight shows a week — the last thing I feel like doing is that. But because I have a child, it's fun. He's going to be Toothless from *How to Train Your Dragon*. I've got his costume all made from scratch. I feel like I can get into it with him. I don't need to put on a costume.

That's fair.

I sound like the Grinch of Halloween!

You could always go as your *Wicked* character Elphaba — no one would guess it was you.

No one would think I'd be so stupid as to put that makeup back on my face, right? That's funny.

Can you believe we're coming up on one year since *Frozen*?

It's just a remarkable thing. Usually you do a project and it has its moment. This just feels like it keeps going. Every day there's some parent or friend with a video of their daughter singing. We just worked on a short for *Frozen*. I'm always asked to perform the song.

There are so many covers, remixes and parodies of "Let It Go." Which one is the most memorable?

There are so many I wouldn't even pick a favorite.

Not even the awesome dance remix?

The club version! Don't you love it? I love that. When it first became successful I was like, "This has to have a club version — and a gay club version." It's the anthems of all anthems.