



Positively Gleeful

The showbiz whiz kids do it again

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Fifteen years ago, as Usher and *Destiny's Child* crooned out their slow, soul-baring ballads, Britney Spears and Christina Aguilera started getting down and dirty and Eminem and Ja Rule essentially thugged it out, you'd never have guessed that by 2011 a group of joyful high school mishaps singing show tunes would make it to the top of the charts. Well, surprise – that's exactly what's happened. Except they're not really high school mishaps, they're actors with some serious singing chops, delivering happy pills in the form of delicious pop music covers and – since their fifth album – original songs.

The most recent addition to *Glee*'s discography is their sixth. Wrapping up their second season, the album follows the success of their previous offering with three brilliant new original tracks – a wise move, considering the fifth volume only boasted two of them and sold 90,000 copies in the USA alone.

But that's not all the producers are relying on. *Glee: The Music Volume 6* boasts a smattering of all the different covered bits and bobs that have proved such a draw in the past, ensuring this one's going to be a runaway success. Vocal powerhouse Adele's smash hits provide the means for heartfelt emotion, 80's favourites ABBA and Stevie Nicks bring the nostalgia, Otis Redding and Stevie Wonder serve up funky rhythm and blues and Lady Gaga provides the modern anthem: there's a little something for everyone. There's even a signature *Glee*-style mash-up combining old-school TLC and *West Side Story*, and a romantic number from Disney's *Lady and the Tramp* dredging up childhood memories, proving once again that these 'kids' (who are

actually mostly in their 20s) can sing pretty much any genre they like and blow it out of the water.

At a first glance, such a varied song list might make you think "Whoa. Too much variety crammed in to one album. It's too overwhelming". But somehow, it works and not only is the main cast bringing their A-game, recurring guests Gwyneth Paltrow, Kristen Chenoweth and Jonathan Groff get a little voice-time too. In fact, fans who felt that the previous albums sounded a little too samey will find this variety a welcome relief.

Serious Gleeks may be devastated that Chris Colfer and Lea Michele's rendition of Wicked's *For Good* is nowhere to be found, nor is Amber Riley's moving performance of Aretha Franklin's *Ain't No Way* – a glaring omission, some might even say. Meanwhile, Paltrow's version of *Turning Tables* prompted mixed reactions, making us wonder if sacrificing one of the season's more well-received songs for her solo slot on the track list was worthwhile. The album is a little heavy on the *Fleetwood Mac* covers and lacks the upbeat, contemporary appeal of Vol. 5. But if you take into account one of the producers' aims this season was to provide a reflective selection of songs that gave more of the cast a chance in the spotlight, they've pretty much nailed it.

It's no wonder this baby's sold 112,000 copies and counting, and we can only imagine how much bigger the phenomenon will get as the show goes on. This is one not to be missed, even if only to hear a cover of *Willie Wonka & the Chocolate Factory's Pure Imagination* so spine-tingling it'll bring a tear to your eye.