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**RHYTHM & BLUES FOUNDATION
ANNOUNCES 20th ANNIVERSARY PIONEER AWARD HONOREES**

*Chaka Khan, Teena Marie, Bill Withers, Sugar Pie DeSanto, Kool & The Gang,
The Whispers, The Funk Brothers, Donny Hathaway and Al Bell
to be honored in Philadelphia -- "The Home for Rhythm & Blues"*

**The GRAMMY Foundation[®] Grant Program Awards \$10,000
To Establish the R&B Foundation's Archival Program**

PHILADELPHIA (April 30, 2008) – Members of America's entertainment royalty gathered today at a standing room only press conference at the Loews Hotel in Philadelphia to witness the announcement by the Rhythm & Blues Foundation of its 20th anniversary Pioneer Awards.

The 2008 Pioneer Awards will be presented at a star studded extravaganza on Tuesday, September 9, 2008. It is being produced by the Foundation in association with Kimmel Center Presents at the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts in Philadelphia.

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Patricia Wilson Aden opened the press conference, welcoming media with a review of the R&B Foundation's mission. She introduced R&B Foundation chairman, Kendall Minter, who elaborated: "Two decades into the mix, the R&B Foundation has stood alone as a beacon of support to the extraordinary artists who define the legacy of R&B. These artists created the soundtracks of our lives. With the support of the City of Philadelphia, we are establishing R&B, once and for all, as the 'soul of world music,' and Philly as "The Home for Rhythm & Blues."

Kenneth Gamble, R&B Foundation board member, who was recently inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, joined legendary crooner, board member and Pioneer Awards reunion ambassador Teddy Pendergrass in announcing 2008 honorees:

Lifetime Achievement Award: Chaka Khan; Individual Artists Awards: Teena Marie, Bill Withers and Sugar Pie DeSanto; Group Awards: Kool & The Gang and The Whispers; Sidemen Award: The Funk Brothers; Legacy Award: Donny Hathaway and Leadership Award: Al Bell of Stax Records.

NOTE: Photos and press release on honorees are available at www.rhythmblues.org > "Pioneer Awards" banner at top of page > "media only".

Kool & The Gang attended the press conference in anticipation of their Group Award. The penultimate messengers for R&B music on a global scale, Kool & The Gang have been performing continuously for the past 35 years. They have sold over 70 million albums worldwide and influenced the music of three generations. Two Grammy Awards, seven American Music Awards, 25 Top Ten R&B hits, nine Top Ten Pop hits, and 31 gold and platinum albums later, they are still going strong.

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"We are very honored indeed to receive this award," said Ronald Bell after the announcement, "especially here in Philadelphia. People used to think we were from Philly because we performed here so much. It feels good!"

Patricia Wilson Aden, executive director of the R&B Foundation, accepted \$10,000 from The GRAMMY Foundation® Grant Program. "The goal of the GRAMMY Foundation Grant Program is to reflect on our past and reward the significant research and preservation work of our present," said Neil Portnow, President/CEO of The Recording Academy® and President of the GRAMMY Foundation. "Through these efforts, the Grant Program serves to safeguard our rich musical heritage and support groundbreaking projects at the forefront of music and science." Ms. Aden expressed the gratitude of the Foundation by saying "It will enable us to preserve 20 years worth of videos, oral histories, rare photographs and other memorabilia that document the history of Rhythm & Blues."

Artists came out in force to support the Foundation. Legends Chubby Checker and members of the Delfonics, the Three Degrees, the Drifters and the Philly Intruders were acknowledged. Teddy Pendergrass received a standing ovation from the assembled crowd. Kool & The Gang and the Delfonics reminisced about sharing tour buses.

Representing the new sound of Philadelphia were Kindred the Family Soul; Vivian Green; Carol Riddick; Lion King star Cody Wise and Jasmine Sullivan, among others.

Fatin Dantzler and Aja Graydon of Kindred the Family Soul were "honored and joyful just to be in the house... to rub shoulders with these artists who are such a big influence on what we do." They both felt that "Our generation has to take time and effort to acknowledge and respect those musical pioneers who paved the way for us."

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For 15 years, the Pioneer Awards has held the distinction of being the *only* event of its kind to honor the musical artists who pioneered and continue to keep soul music alive. It is the major annual fundraising activity for the R&B Foundation. In past years, legendary artists in the upper echelons of the soul music industry have attended the event to receive awards. Honorees for 2006 included artists Chubby Checker, Bettye LaVette, Barbara Mason, the Delfonics, Frankie Beverly and Maze. Berry Gordy, founder of Motown Records, received a Lifetime Achievement Award. The Legacy Award was presented to the late Otis Redding. Patti LaBelle and Smokey Robinson hosted the event, which included presentations by Jill Scott, the late Gerald LeVert and comedian Bill Cosby.

The 2008 Pioneer Awards event is being supported by American Airlines and other national and local corporate sponsors. Kool & The Gang want everybody to know that "There's a party going on in September and the whole world is invited."

ABOUT THE RHYTHM & BLUES FOUNDATION

Founded in 1988, the Rhythm & Blues Foundation is a 501(c) (3) not-for-profit service organization. It is dedicated to the historical and cultural preservation of Rhythm & Blues music. The Foundation provides programs and emergency medical and financial assistance to support R&B artists of the 1940's through 1970's. Founders of the organization included Ahmet Ertegun, Ruth Brown, Ray Charles, Dan Akroyd and many other luminaries who appreciate the value of R&B to America. The Foundation brings generations together by offering Rhythm & Blues-themed educational and community outreach programs to the public. www.rhythmblues.org

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