



TICK
TOCK, IT'S
GWEN'S
TIME

SONGSTRESS AND FASHION DESIGNER **GWEN STEFANI**
LENDERS HER SPUNKY STYLE TO TURA FOR TWO NEW
ROCKIN' EYEWEAR COLLECTIONS **BY VICTORIA GARCIA**

From 1998 to 2008, the Millennial generation was in awe of MTV, meticulously following one of its most watched shows, “Total Request Live.” More commonly known as “TRL” with its now famous host Carson Daly, the live show featured an endless amount of musicians, celebrities, live performances and music videos, quickly becoming one of the most popular platforms for new and up-and-coming music. For me, it was a chance to see what some of my favorite artists were doing, wearing and talking about. One particular female vocalist always seemed to pave her own path with an earthy, mesmerizing tone and a no bounds sense of style. From the beginning of her career, Gwen Stefani asserted her dominance in music, fashion and everything in between. I was in awe.

With her bleached blonde hair, signature red lips and rocker vibe, Stefani was a standout in

her performances and music videos with No Doubt, the Grammy-award winning band that perfectly captures what the '90s were all about. Songs such as “Don’t Speak,” “Underneath it All” and “It’s My Life” easily became pop culture anthems. I was entranced by the band’s ability to create music and write lyrics that skewed away from what others were doing. Especially apparent in their music videos (which I intently watched almost every day on TRL), the band’s eclectic style and diverse genre of music is exactly what Millennials were looking for, or at least what I was looking for. Stefani’s style was also an attribute that caught my attention. Her wholehearted ability to mix fabrics, colors and prints to create fascinating and funky outfits adds an extra element to the allure that is Stefani. Although her success originated with No Doubt, she expertly and effortlessly found her personal sound while the band took a hiatus after their

first few albums. One of my first CD purchases was of her debut solo album, *Love. Angel. Music. Baby.*, released in 2004. After debuting hit after hit, this album ensured Stefani’s place at the top of the charts and truly laminated her into the spotlight. Classic “throwbacks” such as “Hollaback Girl” and “What Are You Waiting For?” are still common requests and favorites from fans all over the world.

Along the way, Stefani morphed into a style icon. Intentionally or unintentionally, her style became sought after by many who wished to emulate her keen eye for fashion. Around the same time her first solo album was released, Stefani was also creating and designing her L.A.M.B. apparel collection (an acronym for her solo album *Love. Angel. Music. Baby.*). What started as two weeks of designing in her own kitchen, the luxury collection now consists of apparel and fashion accessories that emit all the

PHOTOGRAPH BY YU TSAI, ON BEHALF OF TURA INC.

funk and flair associated with Stefani's style. In 2005, the collection hit New York Fashion Week and quickly became a household name, adding fashion designer to Stefani's long list of talents.

A simple Google search or flip through any magazine immediately prompts numerous stories about the 46-year-old and her personal life. With her recent makeup collaboration with Urban Decay, her stint as a judge on NBC's "The Voice," as well as nearly every aspect of her life magnified, Stefani's fame has catapulted on the cover of every tabloid magazine imaginable. As the rumors continue to fly and paparazzi snap more and more pictures of the starlet, she continues to rise above it all and release new music, new collaborations and new designs. It's hard to believe that her career is capable of blossoming even more, but it is doing just that.

So this is where *20/20* steps in. Stefani has been busy designing and promoting her new eyewear collections in collaboration with Tura. We got a sneak peek of the collections this past Vision Expo West, where all of our editors were immediately enthralled with the idea of featuring these fantastic styles in upcoming issues. We met with Tura's Jennifer Coppel (see sidebar), who showed us behind-the-scenes footage of Stefani and the Tura team collaborating and designing each and every frame. Stefani is the face of the campaign, which makes everything that much more exciting. We were all thrilled to see a collaboration so vibrant and filled with passion. After our initial meeting with Coppel, our art and editorial teams began brainstorming ideas on how to incorporate this major brand license and stunning eyewear into our upcoming issues. We discussed with Tura our ideas and options, and managed to score an interview with Stefani herself. I was giddy with my teenage self when I found out I would be the one to interview the voice who brought me some of my favorite lyrics and dance tunes. Of course, we would mostly be discussing her new collections and future in the eyewear industry and not my obsession with how she came up with the idea for "Hollaback Girl," but nonetheless I couldn't wait. Stefani was tremendously excited and

enthusiastic when discussing her new eyewear venture. I have to admit, I was rather nervous before we initially started our conversation, but she put me at ease with her genuine passion and interest about her designs and new collections.

Stefani and Tura have created two eyewear collections inspired from Stefani's brands, L.A.M.B. and gx by Gwen Stefani. Although there are different characteristics and details from each collection, they both exemplify the creative and edgy vibe that Stefani is famous for. The L.A.M.B. collection perfectly embodies the apparel and other accessories associated with the fashion line including a contrast of masculine and feminine attributes and street influences. gx by Gwen Stefani is a line of affordably priced accessories that also emit Stefani's rock 'n' roll edge but on a softer, more colorful level. "This was crazy because I was able to do two separate collections at one time," says Stefani. "I think the L.A.M.B. collection is if you want to be a little more extravagant, and the gx collection is a little more colorful and fun." It's apparent in all of these designs that inspiration came from Stefani herself. "I actually wear glasses now so it's really fun to be able to dive into the optical world, which I wasn't expecting to do. I always thought my eyes would be perfect for the rest of my life but I've always loved sunglasses. I feel like it's another accessory that tells a story of who you are, your mood, your personality. To be able to design them is really an honor, in an exciting way." It's safe to say Stefani's personality and mood are perfectly reflected through her designs. The L.A.M.B. collection consists of 13 sunwear styles and 12 ophthalmic styles, and features graphic uses of checkers, stripes and geometric prints with retro influences. The gx by Gwen Stefani collection features 12 oph-

thalmic styles dominated with colors and eccentric shapes inspired by Stefani's punk rock roots. "What's really fun about doing eyewear is when you're actually designing, and you know there's not a limit to who can wear them. When I'm designing, I try to do something for every day. I love sunglasses that are really masculine, and I also like sunglasses that are quite glamorous, womanly and have that old Hollywood look. I see a lot of both of those in the collections. I like color. I like layers. I like details. I think the eyewear turned out incredible. I think it's fun to do stuff that's not typical." Stefani is constantly wearing and being photographed in her own accessories, allowing herself to become a brand ambassador for all her apparel and accessories.

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Each one of her designs, eyewear included, emanates her personal style. “The feeling I get when I look at the collection is that it just feels like me,” she explains. “It definitely feels like an accessory to what I would wear. That to me is what I love, is that every single pair I would actually wear.”

Each of the styles from both the L.A.M.B. and gx by Gwen Stefani collections have similar attributes to the apparel and other accessories that Stefani has designed. Details as simple as color fades, pyramid studs and zipper textures are all common aesthetics from her past designs. “For the first collection I wanted to do some of my signature things such as black and white, stripes and some studded details. Another detail would probably be the mixing, matching and clashing of things and putting colors and patterns together. For me, in a lot of ways more is more. I also like just a simple pair of black glasses, but I do love to get kooky, and I think the collections have that in there.” With the success and popularity of her already existing accessories, there is no doubt Stefani’s eyewear collections will take on the same pattern. With a prosperous future on the horizon, Stefani is already thinking about new styles and designs to add to her collections. “Now that I’ve got one under my belt, it’s almost like it’s only going to get better because I know what it means and what an opportunity it is. So now I’m getting more comfortable with that, and I’ll just keep going, and it’s going to get better.”

One question I really wanted to ask Stefani was to define style. Immediately after asking this question, I knew I wouldn’t get a categorized or textbook definition from her, which is exactly what I wanted. Someone who truly expresses themselves and their moods through fashion like Stefani, would never have a concrete answer for this question. “I always have a hard time defining style,” she says. “I feel like style is always something you see as opposed to something you talk about. But style to me is literally an extension of your personality, your mood,

and that’s always changing. But there’s always that thing, the backbone of who you are and what you like. I love personal style, I love knowing someone who is a jeans and T-shirt person, and that’s their personal style and who they are.” If this doesn’t truly

express what her new eyewear collections are about, I’m not sure what does. Stefani’s popularity and admiration is continuously expanding, and fans are still hanging onto her every move. So when will Gwen stop? Not anytime soon. ■

Going on Tura with Gwen

Designing eyewear is a difficult feat. But designing eyewear for an already established brand while keeping in mind certain brand aesthetics is even more challenging. Cue Jennifer Coppel, vice president of Brand Management for Tura Inc. and one of the designers for the L.A.M.B. and gx by Gwen Stefani collections. Tura connected with Stefani serendipitously—as Stefani’s agent visited Vision Expo East looking for a license, Tura had also been thinking about the star for a joint venture. Stefani’s team believed Tura understood each brand very well, and the two teams instantaneously clicked with one another.

Unlike many of the other brands that Tura licenses, Stefani’s two brands are much more daring and geared toward a specific audience. “It was a very targeted decision to take on these brands,” says Coppel. “They are much more fashion-forward than other brands in our portfolio. I think by collaborating with Stefani in doing such bold collections, this will put Tura in a really different perspective to the eyecare professional.” With a background in design, Coppel was very involved with the whole process behind these brand new collections and had the opportunity to use her talents while collaborating with Stefani’s team and designers. “I really took these collections on as my own personal project in the beginning,” she explains. “I worked hand-in-hand with her design team, as well as her to really define what the collections are going to look like. It started with her team sending us trends, news boards, color palettes and really meeting with them to talk about the DNA of the collections and how they reflect Gwen of course, because that’s really critical, and what is inherent and important to each one of them.” According to Coppel, Stefani is a huge collector of sunglasses, and it has been a dream of hers to have her own eyewear and sunwear collection. Eyewear is a signature look to Stefani’s style so her involvement with the collections was rather influential. “Gwen was very involved. When all of our prototypes were finished, I got the opportunity to go to her house where her design studio is. She gives us a lot of inspiration. What I love about it is it’s all her signature, it’s clear who she is. It still feels very fresh and updated, and nothing like what we are doing in any other collection in our company.” The popularity of her already successful L.A.M.B. apparel and accessories can be traced back to Stefani’s personality and particular style. “They are all about her,” says Coppel. “The truth is both of these brands take different facets of Gwen. It’s her style—she’s the master of fusing all these different styles together. Of course she’s going to wear them—it’s like finally she has the perfect set for her.”

With the popularity and success behind her current and past L.A.M.B. apparel and accessories, there is no uncertainty that this addition to Stefani’s accessories collections will be just as sought after from her fans. “I think because she recognizes from a business perspective that this is her strength, people are really turning to her for accessories,” says Coppel. No doubt they will fall in love with her eyewear collections, just like we did.

—VG

