



# GWEN STEFANI SPEAKS HER 'TRUTH'

Gay

## Pop Star on the Gays Who 'Made Me Feel Pretty When I Didn't Feel Pretty,' New Album & Having an LGBT Son

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

**D**on't speak? Gwen Stefani can't help it as she opens up about her latest release — the “record that saved my life.”

Featuring a multitude of diary-like outpourings related to Gavin Rossdale, whom the No Doubt frontwoman divorced in 2015 after 13 years of marriage, “This Is What the Truth Feels Like” is Stefani’s third solo album

and first since 2006’s “The Sweet Escape.”

“It’s so therapeutic to talk about it,” she says the day before the album’s release. “And I hope it saves some other lives. I really, really truly do hope that. That’s the message I wanna

give.”

During our candid tell-all, Stefani also talked about her gay besties who “made me look pretty when I didn’t feel pretty,” being a (mostly) respected woman in a man’s world

and how she and boyfriend Blake Shelton hang with the same "big posse" of gays.

**In the last year, when the going got tough, which gay friends of yours could you count on to have the wine cupboard fully stocked?**

Most of my gay friends are talented, close people who work with me: my hairdresser, my makeup artist. Those are probably my two closest gay friends, and what I love about them is how unique they are and how spirited they are and how talented they are. I think "passionate" would be a really good way to describe them. They're not representing all gay men, but they represent the ones in my life who've had a huge impact on me. I turned to them this whole time period, during my whole tragedy, and they have been really, really super supportive and loyal and made me look pretty when I didn't feel pretty.

**How did collaborating with Justin Tranter of Semi-Precious Weapons, who's gay, affect your recording sessions for "This Is What the Truth Feels Like"?**

I didn't know who he was or anything, but the thing that was so great about working with Justin was that he had followed my career for the longest time. He knew everything about every song I'd ever done, whatever I'd worn, every piece of jewelry. It was like, whoa. And he'd wanted to work with me for a long time and I didn't know that, but it was like God put us in the same room at the perfect time because I needed his understanding and compassion. He was so supportive of me and so confident in me, and I had lost a lot of my confidence, so he really brought that out of me. I felt so comfortable around him from the moment that I met him. So, he was a huge support in making this record and a good friend – an instant friend, weirdly, because I didn't know him at all. But now I feel like he's one of my closest friends.

**I don't think it's too far of a stretch to say that any gay man would instantly connect with you.**

Awww! That makes me happy.

**Did Blake have to get your gay friends' approval?**

Well, I mean, Blake's definitely like – how would I describe it? All the same people all the time are always in the room together and we do everything together, so it's like we're all a big posse. It's funny, too, because Blake's mom was a hairdresser growing up, so he was definitely introduced to that world a looong time ago.

**As the frontwoman of No Doubt, there have been many times you've been the only female rocker on a festival bill. For you, what's that experience been like? Did the boys take you seriously from the beginning?**

No, it's crazy. I've been so unbelievably blessed. I grew up in a man's world and it really doesn't make any sense either. In the past, as a girl – a baby girl – I was a girly girl and I wasn't guyish at all, but when I did

discover music, I really got into this niche music, which was ska. I really related to it. All of the people who were my mentors as far as music, they were all guys, and to be in a band with my brother (Eric Stefani) and then my boyfriend (Tony Kanal), I was in this little family and very protected. I always felt like my opinion was counted, and not even counted but even counted with double stars. My creativity was respected.

There was a moment back in the day when I was doing festivals and we were just getting known and I do remember being disrespected here and there – they'd want me to take my top off or whatever – but it really didn't take long for me to be able to prove that I wasn't gonna stand for that. I don't know where the confidence came from, but I would get up there and I just knew I was gonna win them over and do whatever it took to win them over. I was not gonna leave the stage until I had a pit going. That's it. No question. It was a fire that was inside of me. I wasn't rebellious; I had this really normal, easy, beautiful, loving family. But I feel like I've always been respected and never had to really worry about, "Oh, I don't get respect because I'm a woman." And that's a really good thing, because that means if I can have that, other women and other people can have that and we are making some progress.

**You're known for your sonic soul-barings, but lately, you also seem especially candid in interviews. Why did you decide to be so open about your life in the last year?**

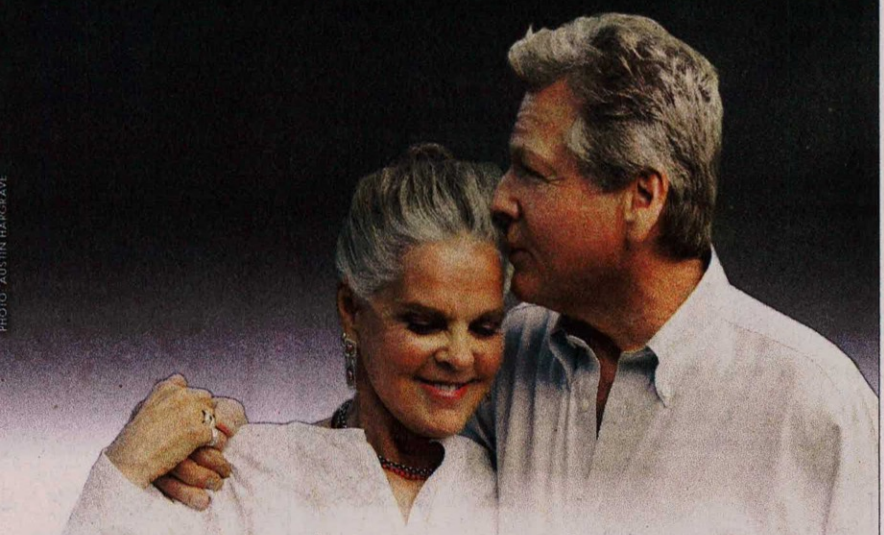
Because I'm the kind of girl that's just not good with secrets. I tell everybody everything. If I ate too many Oreos, I'mma tell you about it! I grew up Catholic, so I just need to confess everything.

I feel like I've always been really open, but there was a point in my marriage and in my relationship (with Gavin Rossdale) – because maybe we born out of the '90s – it felt cooler and more protected to not talk about the relationship, or it felt awkward because maybe we were both doing the same thing and I didn't wanna say something and he'd be like, "Why'd you say that?!" There were probably some limits during that relationship. And then with my children, obviously I can't talk about them because they're gonna be 15 and like, "Mom, why did you say that? You're embarrassing me!" I have to think a little bit about that now. But I just think... I don't know how else to be. Everybody knows what happened to me. I got a divorce. It's the worst thing that can happen to me besides death.

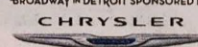
My whole life all I wanted to do was be a mother and a wife, and I had the dream of having this family because that's what I had. I have parents who've been married since high school, who are in love, and they're still in love and having their big wedding anniversary. I had a perfect example, so

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## ► Gwen

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it's super tragic for me. My dreams are shattered and I feel so embarrassed about what happened. I don't feel embarrassed to talk about it though, with respect to my kids. I just think what happened was: In February (2015), my family fell apart. It was devastating. I didn't know what to do. It was a real big secret, but as I just explained, I'm not good with that. I tried everything to fix it. By June (2015), I went into the studio and started writing. I was praying. I had already started on a spiritual journey when I got pregnant with Apollo (in 2013) that was sort of like, "Wow, really? I'm gonna be blessed with a baby... now?" That was a miracle. It just started me on this spiritual journey and thank God it started then because I was prepared when I had the tragedy. I had that nest of spirituality in me.

### They say everything happens for a reason.

And you kind of can't see it until you go through it and look back at it and see all the signs. I had the baby. Then I got "The Voice," which was so needed. I needed to do something like that. I needed to play that role, and I also got in the room with Pharrell again who's been like a guardian angel to me.

**You mentioned Apollo, and you also have two other sons: Kingston and Zuma. There are people who don't appreciate the fact that you allow them to explore their feminine sides by painting their nails. How would you respond to those critics?**

Obviously I've lived my life with criticism for a very long time and my personality is, I live in truth and reality, and if somebody says something about me and I don't know them and they're not my friend or part of my life, it really doesn't affect me. Of course everyone's gonna have their perspective and their opinion, and I know what's real and what's honest and true, and that's really all that matters to me and all that's important. So, it doesn't really bother me. As long as my boys are protected and happy and I'm spending quality time with them, whether it's doing sports or doing nails, it really doesn't matter.

**What would you say to one of your boys if they came out to you one day?**

I would be blessed with a gay son. You know that I would feel blessed about that. I just want my boys to be happy and healthy, and I just ask God to guide me every day to be a good mother because it is not an easy job.

I've been lucky enough to have such a blessed life. I've been able to travel the world and meet so many different kinds of people. And it doesn't really matter if you're gay,

straight, whatever. There are good and bad people, and I would be happy. I just want my kids to be happy, and whatever journey God gives them is their journey. I just need to be there to be the most supportive mom that I can be and that's what I'm gonna be. I always ask my gay friends, "OK, so what was it like when you were a little boy?" Because I do know that it's gotta be difficult to be the alternative, to not be the mainstream, or to be different, if you want to call it that. I feel like it's less and less (like that) these days, and it's hard for me to understand because it doesn't seem different or weird or anything anymore because it just seems so normal to me. I just saw that movie... what was it... "The Dutch Girl"?

### "The Danish Girl"...?

Yeah, "The Danish Girl." I think what was so incredible about that movie was just - that was so long ago. I mean, can you imagine back then? Whoa. Now it feels like nothing anymore.

### As a pop star over 40, what's it like navigating the pop world with so much pressure on youth, age and beauty?

There was a moment right before I did "The Voice," in between (2012's No Doubt release) "Push and Shove" and "The Voice," where I was concerned about it and desperate to have new music and it took a little earthquake to be like, "OK, let's get some perspective here. You've already had the longest career. You're so blessed to have any of this and any of this that happens after this is literally icing on the cake."

I'm not delusional about where I'm in in my career. I know that this opportunity to have new music is magical, and there's not one second that I don't appreciate it and I think it is what it is. I feel proud of the career that I've had and I feel so grateful for it and I mean, we all have to go through life. This is life. Life is... "born to blossom and bloom to perish." That's it. That is what it is. And the way to do it is to be grateful and to be spiritual and try to do the best you can every single day - to be in the moment.

I'm not thinking about the future. I'm really trying to focus on right now, today. I wanna be in the moment right now because it's so much better if you're not thinking about the past or the future.

**Gwen, you have such a healthy perspective on life.**

Oh, I have to work on it! I work on it every single day. Some days I'm a mental case.

*Chris Azzopardi is the editor of Q Syndicate, the international LGBT wire service. He once made Jane Fonda cry. Reach him via his website at [www.chris-azzopardi.com](http://www.chris-azzopardi.com) and on Twitter (@chrisazzopardi).*



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