

SUMMER PREVIEW ISSUE

INSIDE How Live Nation Is Filling Its Sheds • Why The Concert Business Is Looking Up While The Economy Is Going Down • Political Anniversaries Chill China's Live Biz • 7 Picks For Must-Have Merch • Can Eminem's 'Relapse' Save Summer Sales?

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**THE RETURN
OF NO DOUBT**

HOW THE BAND GOT BACK TOGETHER FOR A BLOCKBUSTER TOUR—AND THE BIGGEST MUSIC GIVEAWAY OF THE YEAR



return of saturn, again

No Album? No Problem. No Doubt Re-Enters Orbit With A Summer Tour—And Lures Ticket Buyers With A Download Of Its Catalog /// **By Cortney Harding**

In between bites of a Cobb salad at New York's Tribeca Grand Hotel, Gwen Stefani is explaining why No Doubt is going on tour for the first time in five years without a new album to promote.

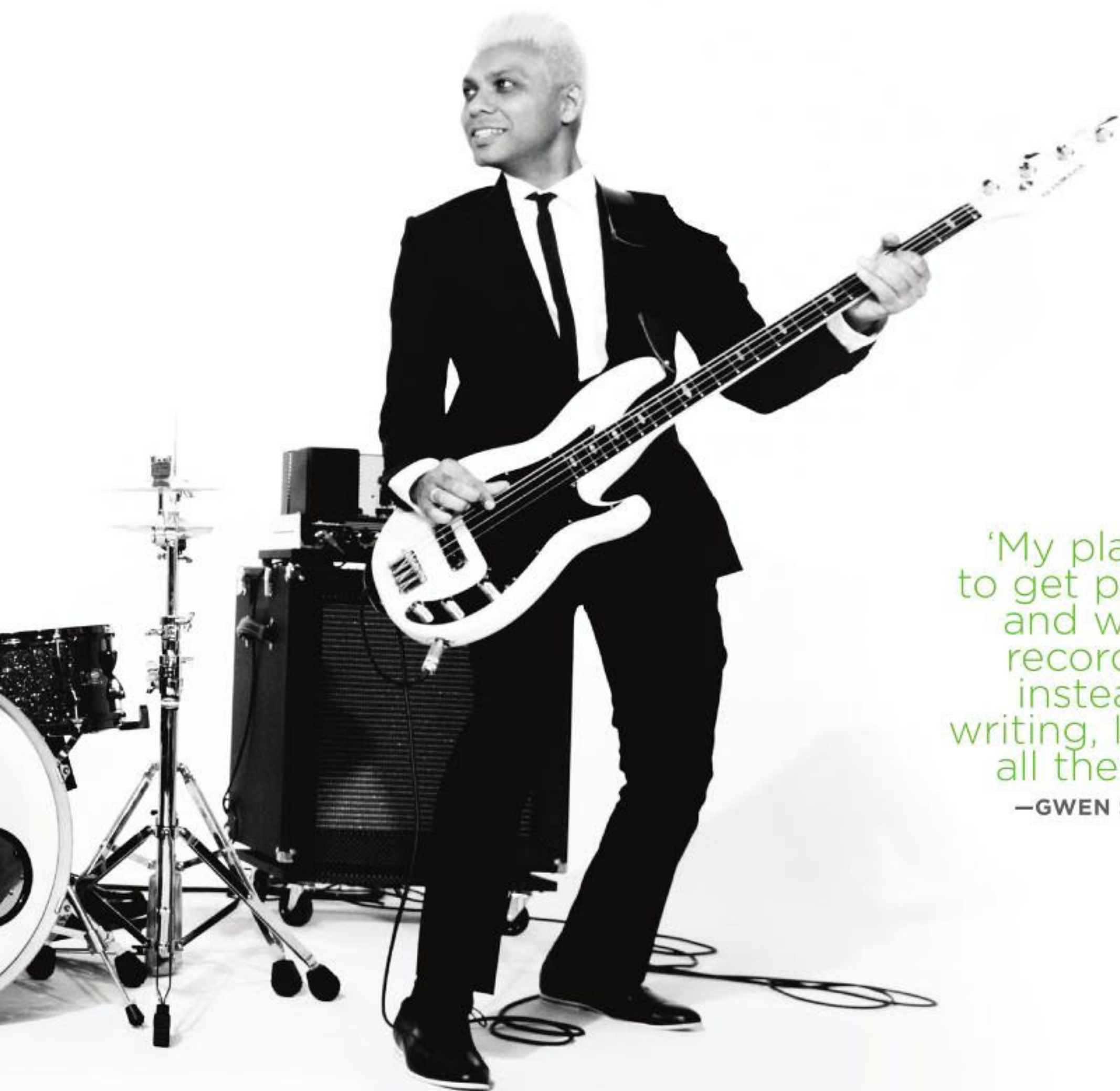
"Honestly, it's procrastination," she says with a sigh. "My plan was to get pregnant and write a record, but instead of writing, I just ate all the time."

Stefani laughs as she pops a tomato in her mouth. "Writing is always really hard for me—I hate it and hate it and then I do it, and I'm happy it's done," she says. "I was blocked and I needed to get inspired, and I thought playing live would get the creative juices flowing again."

Which isn't to say Stefani and her No Doubt bandmates haven't been busy since the 2001 release of their last album, "Rock Steady." Stefani, who has two sons ages 8 months and 3 years old, released two solo albums, "Love. Angel. Music. Baby.," which sold 4 million copies, and "The Sweet Escape," which sold 1.7 million, according to Nielsen SoundScan. Bassist Tony Kanal did production work on Stefani's albums and wrote songs with artists like Pink. Guitarist Tom DuMont produced two records, scored a documentary and was a stay-at-home dad. Drummer Adrian Young did session work and played golf.

Now they'll be together for a tour that starts May 16 in Las Vegas and ends Aug. 1 in Irvine, Calif.

While hitting the road without new material after years of relative silence might seem like a risk, the band's manager, Jim Guerinot, was delighted when the group approached him with



'My plan was to get pregnant and write a record, but instead of writing, I just ate all the time.'

—GWEN STEFANI

the idea. "I think it's the right move," he says. "Even though they remained friends throughout the hiatus, they've all been working on other projects and haven't spent a lot of time together. They've become more of a unit in the time they've been rehearsing together and played a few shows, and I think this will change things for the positive."

So far, the reception has been enthusiastic. Tickets have been selling briskly for the shows; seven dates in Southern California

have sold out, according to Live Nation spokesman John Vlautin, as have shows in Houston, Denver and at Jones Beach on New York's Long Island. (Stefani's 2007 solo tour grossed \$31 million, with 18 of 56 shows selling out, while No Doubt's 2002 tour grossed \$9.6 million, according to Billboard Boxscore.)

The band started rehearsing in Hollywood, then set up shop in Atlantic City, N.J., to prepare for some East Coast dates. "As soon as the pressure to make a new album was

off, it was like a weight was lifted," Stefani says. "I could get back into learning the songs and planning the show, and it was so much more fun than banging my head against a wall in the studio."

No Doubt wants to make it clear that it's not another '90s band looking to hit the road and cash in on the band's greatest hits. "I don't see us as being part of that '90s revival," Kanal says. "We were always a band, even when we weren't playing together."

The group also wants to make sure its audience doesn't consist of twenty- and thirtysomethings who loved "Just a Girl." So it will give away digital copies of its three studio albums to anyone who buys tickets in the top two price tiers.

"Tom had the idea to give the albums away electronically for free with the ticket purchase," Guerinot says. "A lot of people like Gwen's solo work but might not be as familiar with No Doubt. There are people who might not have listened to the records in a while."

DuMont says that giving away the catalog seemed like an obvious value-add. "Lots of bands give away their new CDs, but we didn't have one of those," he says. "I've always thought you should be able to go and buy an entire catalog in one

click, so you could get a broad representation of a band's work." In his mind, giving the music to fans is a continuation of No Doubt's time-tested strategy. "When we first started out, we had mailing lists and parties where we'd sit and lick stamps for hours. This is a more modern version of that. And we won't get high off of licking stamp backing, either."

It was more complicated than sending out envelopes. "There were literally 40 hurdles we had to clear in terms of getting permissions from rights holders.

Even though no one else has as big a share as the band, there were lots of people to clear it with," Guerinot says. "I spent hours sitting down with people, explaining why this was so important and what the band was willing to give to make this happen. Some of the people at Interscope got it right away, which was refreshing."

In the end, the band licensed its catalog for a period of time ranging from the first on-sale date to 30 days after the last show. "People have raised the question of whether the band is losing money on this, and I don't think they are losing the opportunity to sell a certain amount of songs by doing this," Guerinot says. Sales of No Doubt's catalog have risen slightly since the band announced its return, but the act rarely sells more than 1,000 albums per week, according to Nielsen SoundScan. And while the catalog is available at the usual online outlets, the closure of Tower, Virgin and other CD-centric stores that stock catalog make it difficult to find new copies of the band's work.

Not all ticket buyers are getting the catalog, however. Seats for No Doubt's run of summer dates range from \$10 for lawn

buy one, get one free

No Doubt Is The Latest Band To Bundle Music With Tickets

No Doubt's offer to give its back catalog to those buying the high-tier seats for the band's upcoming tour is certainly unusual, but it's not the first time artists have tied ticket sales to recorded-music incentives.

Ticketmaster has used this model for more than five years, and not just with digital music. Its first offering involved the Cure in 2004, when fans who bought tick-

ets to the band's tour online could also purchase its self-titled CD. But the logistics of storing and shipping physical albums made it a limited effort, says Ticketmaster VP of music services Vito Iaia.

Once digital distribution came of age, everything changed. In 2005, Ticketmaster began offering fans who pre-ordered a participating act's album on iTunes a presale code for tickets to the act's upcoming tour. The initiative began with Depeche Mode, Bob Dylan and Red Hot Chili Peppers and has since expanded to more than 20 other acts.

"That really does move incremental units on the recording-music side and incremental units for us on the ticketing side," Iaia

says. "We're getting the marketing power of iTunes behind the tour. The promoter loves it because they're getting increased marketing, the band loves it because they're selling more records, and iTunes loves it because they get some share there."

That's led to the more recent trend of bundling music downloads. Ticketmaster first offered buyers a sampler playlist of other bands on tour, then expanded bundling to such acts as Metallica and Dave Matthews Band.

"That's the model that's going to start breaking through more and more this year," Iaia says. "The artists are viewing their business holistically and saying to themselves, 'We have a consumer en-

gaged when we put the tickets on sale. If we have recorded product, or a fan club subscription or we have a T-shirt, let's engage this fan base that's coming in to buy tickets.'"

Instead of offering ticket buyers new material, No Doubt is providing downloads of its back catalog as a way to re-engage old fans and snare new ones who are familiar with Gwen Stefani as a solo artist.

Iaia believes that tying music to tickets could reduce piracy. "We hope this program gets even a fraction of those units that would have been sold before the age of piracy into an environment where they get counted toward the charts."

—Antony Bruno

seats to \$80 for the best seats, with \$59.50 and \$24.50 price points in between. Live Nation's Vlautin says only the top two price levels have the ability to download the catalog for free; Guerinot's office fulfills the orders. The promise of free music could help upsell casual listeners, those who only know Stefani's solo work or fans of opening bands Paramore or the Sounds (see story, below).

No Doubt's albums seem to be ubiquitous in many CD collections; while its self-titled 1992 debut sold 328,000, its 1995 breakout, "Tragic Kingdom," sold 8.1 million copies. Follow-up "Return of Saturn" sold 1.6 million, while 2001's "Rock Steady" sold 2.8 million. The greatest-hits collection "Singles 1992-2003," which was released in 2003, sold 2.4 million, according to Nielsen SoundScan. Vlautin points out that "any avid fan of the band will be coming to this tour, and they'll try to buy the top-tier tickets. People lose their music as they grow up and move around, and this is a good way for them to reacquire themselves with the tracks."

'TODAY' AND TOMORROW

If the band is worried about fans forgetting the hits, it shouldn't be. At recent performances on NBC's "Today" and at the Bamboozle festival in New Jersey, the audience sang along as the band ripped through a set of its greatest hits, including "Spiderwebs," "Don't Speak" and its cover of Talk Talk's "It's My Life." The audience at both events leaned slightly older, and at Bamboozle, when Stefani asked those in the crowd to raise their hands if it was their first No Doubt show, many did. Still, they proceeded to sing along to most of the songs. (Live Nation also produced Bamboozle, but the band's catalog wasn't given away with festival tickets.)

After the joys of parenthood and channeling their inner Tiger Woods, the band members will do their best to maintain a semblance of normalcy on the road. All admit to being fitness fanatics, and they're indulging their need to jog while touring. "We travel with two personal trainers," Kanal says. "We make hotels keep their gyms open late so we can work out. We're getting older, and we can't party like we used to."

But Kanal says that being older has plenty of perks. "We got to live though the record industry in its heyday. When we started, we were in a van and looking for change under the seats so we could buy food. We went from that to having a hit and getting to do things like make music videos with million-dollar budgets."

Stefani says she and the rest of the band aren't interested in "gratuitous fame," but she still finds herself in the spotlight. "I have to wear makeup to the gym because I get some dude doing sit-ups next to me and surreptitiously taking pictures," she says.

And although Stefani cheerfully shows off pictures of her sons Kingston and Zuma, she'd rather talk about her ventures as a businesswoman, albeit in a self-effacing manner. Her clothing line, LAMB, is in its seventh year, and she also has her own perfume. Still, Stefani is slow to take credit for it all.

"I'm a good collaborator," she says. "I'm always open to other opinions, and I can do things like have meetings at my house and juggle it all. I'm actually heading to a five-hour meeting about the new line of handbags after this, and I'm pretty excited. I started it seven years ago and never thought it would last, but here we are."

During the "Today" performance, Stefani and her cohorts were self-assured, despite worries the day before that they might forget parts of the set. There was a moment during the intro solo of the track "Don't Speak" where a slight tension rose among the members, but quickly dissipated as DuMont hit every chord and Stefani's voice kicked in. Backstage, the visibly relaxed band conducted an interview with a local morning news anchor, who had attended some of the act's mailing-list parties in the early '90s in Orange County.

No Doubt seeks to connect with fans in other ways, too. When the group announced the tour dates, it introduced a widget that could be embedded on users' Facebook and My-



Special guests on a totally '80s episode of "Gossip Girl": **NO DOUBT**

Space pages called "Seven Days of No Doubt." Every day for a week, the band members posted a new video of themselves talking about their shows, rehearsals and history. Live Nation ran a contest where the fan that got the most people to install the widget won a chance to see the band in a city of his or her choice. The widget generated 2.6 million views in the week prior to the on-sale date of the first round of tickets, according to Live Nation.

The band also performed on "American Idol" and covered Adam & the Ants' "Stand and Deliver" on the May 11 episode of "Gossip Girl." "All the TV and online stuff—Twitter, Face-

book, all that—those just seem like bases that need to be covered," Guerinot says. "We do get lots of licensing requests, and we've always felt that the right ones can benefit the band."

"We're from Anaheim," Stefani says with a laugh as she considers her opportunities. "This is cliché to say, but we never thought this would happen to us. We built a studio in the garage, and now we're driving around on tour with a bus that has a studio in it. We survived it all and we're still friends, and that's great."

Additional reporting by Keir Bristol and Patrea Patterson.



Red means go: **THE SOUNDS**

sounds of summer

No Doubt Tour Could Help Swedish Act Connect In U.S.

A word to folks in the cheap seats who arrive early to a No Doubt concert: The first blonde to take the stage won't be Gwen Stefani. That role goes to the Sounds front-woman Maja Ivarsson, whose band will be opening the tour, along with Paramore. While the Sounds owe more to Blondie than the Specials

or Madness, they should be a hit with the No Doubt crowd.

The Swedish band's new album, "Crossing the Rubicon," will be released June 2 on Original Signal Recordings.

"We've done big festivals in Europe but never anything of this size in America," Ivarsson says.

She hopes the tour marks another milestone for the new wave band. "Radio has never picked up on us in the U.S.," she says. The group's new label is working to change that. The Sounds' album will be the first one released under Original Signal's new venture with Universal Motown.

The band was previously signed to New Line Records, a division of the movie studio. Its 2007 record, "Dying to Say This to You," sold 106,000 copies, according to Nielsen SoundScan, based largely on critical acclaim and word-of-mouth.

"When we were looking for a new label, we got a lot of offers, but we wanted to have bargaining power," Ivarsson says. "So we kicked out everyone in our circle and paid for the recording ourselves. We talked to big labels, but they didn't feel right. Original Signal felt like a good home, and they were just as passionate about music as we are."

—CH