

FOR WOMEN WITH SOMETHING TO GET OFF THEIR CHESTS

FEB/MAR '07

BUST

THE LOWE ISSUE

Gwen Stefani Kim Gordon + Thurston Moore **Lily Allen**
John Waters **Mickey Avalon** Dating Myths Defanged
Bridesmaids Revealed Farm Girl Fashion and more

\$4.99US \$6.99CAN





Hey, Baby

BY TARYN HIPPH PHOTOS BY MARK SQUIRES

California dreamer Gwen Stefani has proven that she's much more than "just a girl in the world." Here the pop icon, new mom, and fashionista gets real about her baby, her band, and living in a bubble

IT'S FRIDAY NIGHT in N.Y.C. when Gwen Stefani enters the conference room at the Ritz-Carlton, where I've been waiting for over an hour. There aren't fireworks or rounds of applause or any big fanfare—actually, it's not much different than when I entered the room, except that she's Gwen Stefani and, well, I'm me. Her platinum hair is perfectly coiffed; her eyelashes are thick with mascara. She's wrapped up in a long black coat that she seems to be getting lost in, and she's holding her seven-month-old son, Kingston, who is decked out in a L.A.M.B. onesie. It's exactly what I imagined the scene would be like.

She sits down next to me and puts Kingston on the table; he smiles at me and I smile back, tempted to pinch his chubby baby cheeks. Gwen hands him off to his nanny and says she'll see him in a bit. I feel a pang of guilt knowing I'm the reason for the handoff. She seems tired, leaning her head on her hand as we begin to talk.

Not surprisingly, she's just as down-to-earth as she's said to be. She doesn't act like a rock star but more like an excited artist inspired by life. She reminds me of my friends.

It's hard to imagine that it's been almost 20 years since Gwen started her musical career, as a teenager singing backup vocals for her brother's band in Anaheim, CA. In the years since, she's succeeded in gaining widespread commercial success fronting No Doubt, as well as receiving numerous awards, but she'll be the first to tell you, it's still surreal. In 2002 Gwen married her long-time boyfriend, Gavin Rossdale, singer of the British band Bush. A year later, L.A.M.B., Gwen's clothing label, premiered with a line of bags by LeSportsac. That same year, No Doubt put out *The Singles*, a best-of record featuring songs from 1992 to 2003. With the band on break, Gwen saw her chance to put out a solo record. In 2004 she released *Love. Angel. Music. Baby.*, an '80s-inspired dance

record. Then in May 2006, she gave birth to her first child, Kingston James McGregor Rossdale. With her second solo record, *The Sweet Escape*, out now, an upcoming world tour in April 2007, the Gwen Stefani Fashion Dolls, and two clothing lines—L.A.M.B. and Harajuku Lovers—this 37-year-old is only getting started, providing a bit of fireworks for old fans and new along the way.

When I ask one of the hardest working gals in showbiz questions about her life, music, and projects, she replies with well thought-out answers pulled quickly from her "I know exactly what to say" file. It makes me wonder if she's protecting a secret or just protecting herself. She knows what we want to hear, and she says it. She's not one to talk trash or start trouble. Gwen Stefani is happy being a good girl with perfect hair and perfect teeth. She doesn't care what you say and, really, I love her for that.

Since this interview is going to appear in BUST's "Love" issue, what are you lovin' these days?

Well, everything I love has to do with that guy that was just in here. It's really hard to focus on anything else. I really love having him in my life. It's so insane, 'cause it makes everything so much funner, as you can imagine. Do you have any babies?

No. But I have a niece. She's six. She's rad.

I understand that, 'cause I have a niece who's 11 now. She lived with me from when she was 2 until she was 5. And now I have a nephew that's 2 1/2. But when they're yours and they come out of your stomach, it's really crazy.

Do your niece and nephew get along with Kingston?

Um, everybody's obsessed with him.

Yeah? [laughs]

Like, we were sitting at dinner the other night, and my stylist and hairdresser were trying to tell me how much they love him, and my video girl that makes my videos—they're all, like, my best friends—they're like, "But you don't understand, I don't know why I love him so much," and starting to cry.

Awwww!

And I'm like, "I know, it's so crazy!" And then we're all kind of crying about how

much we love him. And we don't really know why. Just that he's so great. And he has such a great personality.

So, will there be more?

I hope so. You know, I was always so worried about how I was going to fit [having babies] in.

Is it hard?

It's definitely hard, but it's *nothing* like I thought it would be. He's just so chilled out and he goes everywhere with me, and I'm really lucky, because I have a job where I can take him everywhere, and it doesn't matter. Like, I could have kept him here with us if I really wanted to, but it would probably be distracting...

[Laughs]

...so, I was, like, I'll just get [the interview] done and then go have my hamburger upstairs with him. But I'm just really lucky, 'cause I can take him everywhere with me, and I have a nanny that can help me. If I had a job where I had to leave him somewhere and then go to work, that would be really hard. I wouldn't wanna do that.

What do you think is the most important thing to teach him?

You know, I feel like I'm in this mode right now of trying to live in the moment. Gavin and I always wondered about things like, when are we gettin' married? Where are we gonna live when we get married? If we have kids, where are we gonna raise 'em? If I have a baby, how will I fit him into my life? But what I'm learning is to not worry about those things and just let it happen. So I'm not gonna think right now about what I'm gonna teach my son, I'm just gonna take every day and love him, and let him have as much fun as he can. You can't predict the future, but, obviously, I also want him to be a good person. I never thought that my life would be like this. I always just thought I'd end up being a mom and having kids. I mean, I do worry about "How will my life affect his life?" and I wonder if he'll ever look back at me and think, "What a weird mom I had," you know what I mean? [laughs]

What was growing up like for you?

I had a rad, super, really cool family. My parents met in high school. They fell in love. All they ever wanted was to have four children.

And they had four children: two boys, two girls. Catholic. Everything was about us—every project, every weekend, every holiday. So I was really blessed. Also, my parents are real creative; my mom sewed, my dad did music.

So is that how you got into sewing? I know that you used to make your clothes back when you first started in No Doubt...

[I was sewing] before No Doubt, even. Like, my whole life. My mom made my clothes when I was a little girl, so every time we would have something coming up, we'd go to the fabric store. We'd pick out the pattern, material, zippers, and buttons.

Does your mom still sew?

Well, she made Kingston one outfit so far. It's this little outfit she makes for all of her grandkids. Like, it's not a christening outfit, but you know, it's a cute little white thing.

So your mom's a role model, obviously.

Oh, yeah. I guess you'd say my mom would be the one person that I look up to. She's an amazing person.

What does she think of your life? I mean, I guess she's used to it, by now....

You never get used to it.

Are you used to it?

Oh, no. You never get used to it. You still go, "Whoa, this is crazy."

Right, and you can't just go, like, "Oh, no. We're out of milk. I'm just gonna run to the store."

Yeah, it's gotten kind of weird in that way. But the thing that I've been really lucky about is that it's taken years to get to that. I mean, I started in about '87! In the '80s!

Crazy.

So like, I've been doing this forever. And the first nine years, I was just a big fish in a small pond. It wasn't until I was 26 that I started having commercial success, so it was this gradual kind of thing, over this long period of time. But it has gotten kind of crazy on a different level, recently, with the baby and everything. I mean, I've always had paparazzi at my house, but not at that level where they're there every *single day*, in lawn chairs waiting for me. It was, like, *really* to another level.

You have some pretty serious fans. Is it more guys or girls?

I have more of a girl audience, which is really awesome. The one thing that got me through my whole pregnancy tour was seeing those girls from around age 8 to 14 at their first concert. I look out and I see myself in 'em, and there's just something about that. I just always have this place in my heart for that age, you know, where you're just getting into music and you're just getting into your style and defining who you are through what you're into.

What I'm learning is to not worry about those things and just let it happen. I'm not gonna think right now about what I'm gonna teach my son, I'm just gonna take every day and love him.

What were you like at that age?

In eighth grade, I was chubby, and my little sister, my brother, and I were just getting into Madness and discovering England, all the ska music—Fishbone, and the Untouchables, and the Specials, the Selector, Bad Manners. My friends and I were into that music, so that defined our group of people. I thought we were really cool 'cause we had that. We knew that we were not part of the popular group, but we didn't care, because we were into this [music]. I loved that time period. It defined who I was.

I read somewhere that Courtney Love was talking about how you were such a good girl and you have a good-girl image. Is that true? Do you have a bad-girl side?

No, I've always been pretty much a goody two shoes. I never saw the point of trying to be bad. I want to be a good person. I just like being creative and making things. I don't wanna be a drug addict. I don't wanna miss part of my life because I did that.

Do you consider yourself a feminist?

Well, I'd have to get a definition of it, first. I mean, I'm pro-woman, and I feel like I'm in an exceptionally lucky position being in an all-guy group and being able to do music. And clearly, I work with a lot of

women—my video directors, my stylists; my management. Working with L.A.M.B. and all the people around me, I definitely have been able to see the power of my position. So I guess I don't want to say I am a feminist because nobody will ever define it for me.

Do you think women play an important part in rock?

It seems like rock is pretty much nonexistent at the moment and pop and hip-hop have taken over, and in the hip-hop world,

they're collaboration records. What happens is, you go in and they'll have a track for you, and sometimes there'll be a hook, meaning a chorus or a melody for a chorus. Most of the time, it's the words I'm doing on these records. And the idea is to just go in and collaborate. It's hard on your ego, especially if you're used to doing the whole thing yourself or with a band. But there's also something great about being part of a collaboration.

This might be shit-talkin' but I read on a

I see that it's been very male-dominated. The pop world is pretty much female-dominated, but it's embarrassing, you know? I love pop music and I'm very easily entertained. And I'm not really hypercritical, but there's a lot of really bland, manufactured, disgusting stuff out there.

Like what?

I'm not gonna give you specifics. I'm no good girl if there's bashing on people.

What do you think about the critics calling your new record "pop fluff"?

They're exactly right. It's called *The Sweet Escape*. That was the idea. I didn't want this process to be painful. I made [the album] right after I had a baby, and some of it I did when I went down to work with Pharrell, which was like a year ago. When I was doing those songs, there was really no direction; there wasn't anything so deep, it was just the idea of dance music. Although I did end up writing "Orange County Girl" because I was thinking, "Flying first class into Miami to work with one of the greatest producers of modern times—how the fuck did I get here?" Like, how did this happen to me? How can I be so lucky?

Do you write all your own songs?

I'm part of every single song. When I came out with both of these records, I told everybody they weren't solo records, because

blog somewhere that someone said that Fergie is totally biting your style. Agree? Disagree?

You know, I took Black Eyed Peas on my last tour, and she's a really nice girl, and if she bit anything off of me, it would be a compliment.

That's a great answer.

But it's the truth. I have seen a bit of a wake from the last album—of things that have happened [that seem to be] inspired by [it]—and it's a really incredible feeling. It really is inspiring to me, because it makes me move forward. I'm not saying, "She did that and I'm moving on" or anything, I'm just saying that anything that happened after that record is inspiring me to move forward.

How do you handle the critics?

The thing is, I never do anything for anyone but myself. It's very selfish. I don't do anything unless I'm completely passionate about it, so what can you do? You put stuff out there, and they're always gonna say something negative. There's just no way around it. And, sometimes when they get it so wrong, I'm like, "That's so wrong. That was so not the way I intended for you to see it."

What about the stuff that Margaret Cho wrote on her blog about the Harajuku

Girls being a racist stereotype? How do you not let that hurt you?

It didn't hurt me. It made me embarrassed for her, because she did not do the research. She's totally wrong. Basically, if you look at the lyrics of "Harajuku Girls," all it is is me glorifying a culture and saying how great and how stylish and how much a fan I am of these girls and how inspired I am. And if you go to my website, HarajukuLovers.com, you can see interviews with all the girls talking about where they came from, who they are. They inspired my entire last album. The whole thing was my fantasy come true. It's an art project. She embarrassed herself. She needs to go back and do the research before she talks shit.

When you're at home and it's just you and your family, what's home life like?

I don't have a lot of spare time. Like, if you want a day-in-the-life kind of thing, I'll wake

for the relationship.

Do you ever face temptation when you're on the road? I mean, do you have groupies?

Oh, you mean all the guys that wanna get with me and wanna marry me? I don't really have that problem. Never have.

What about Gavin? I'm sure he has groupies.

Well, Gavin's always gonna be a chick magnet. And I always have to have my gun *right* in my pocket, just in case. *[laughs]*

Do you have any crazy stalker fans?

I don't, really. I've been living in a bubble, you know what I mean? I just moved to a new house that has a gate behind a gate, because it was just getting out of control at my other house; you couldn't really go anywhere. Now that I'm in the new house, my life's a little more normal again, be-

the next ones. And the meetings go by like that *[snaps]*, and Kingston will be sitting on my lap. We're playing and ordering lunch from Jerry's Deli and everybody's over and it's superfun. Next thing you know, four hours have gone by, and then I have to do e-mail.

What do you do to chill?

I like to lie in bed and watch movies and eat. I don't cook, but Gavin cooks. And we just like that kind of stuff, chilling out like that. Just hanging out and eating and watching TV and playing with the baby.

I remember No Doubt had a Vans shoe. Is there gonna be a Gwen Stefani Vans shoe?

Well, there's the tennis shoes that L.A.M.B. did that are really cool. I just came from the L.A.M.B. showroom, and there were big boards up of all the fantasy clothes that I'd ever want, and then you just try to convince

Gavin's always gonna be a chick magnet. And I always have to have my gun *right* in my pocket, just in case.

up with my baby and nurse him. I'm still nursing, so that's one way that I get to make sure that we're always together. Then I go and I have to work out, which I hate doing, but I do it because it makes me feel good. And then it's e-mails and we're just there at the house. There's never any real free time. I mean, like, tonight after this [interview], I'll go back up to the hotel room and I'll have my hamburger, and I'll play with Kingston, and we'll go to sleep.

Are you gonna take Kingston on tour? Does Gavin go on tour also?

We haven't fully figured that out yet. I mean, Gavin did go on the last tour, but it wasn't for very long. Kingston will probably come out to a lot of it, I'm sure. Gavin is working on a record right now, too. We're kind of used to being apart from each other. Something kind of makes it good, 'cause when you have time apart, you have time to be yourself and be creative and be selfish, and then when you have time together, you get to be excited about each other. I think it's kind of good

cause I can go places and there's not 100 cars following me, you know what I mean? It's not the people that make it weird; it's the paparazzi that make it weird. It's nothing that I'm complaining about, 'cause it's just part of it and it's not gonna be forever. It's just a moment, but it is more normal now that I have more privacy in that house.

Are you living in California?

We have a place in London, too, 'cause when we met, [Gavin] had that place, and we just go back and forth. But mostly we're in L.A., especially since the baby. But you know, I'm really busy most of the time. When I'm not doing music, I'm designing, and I work a lot out of the house. I don't really go that many places. And I really like it. I really like what I do. Like I said, I usually try to work out every day, and then I have my meetings, and everyone comes to me. So like, you know, they come over, and all the bags that I just designed will be spread all over the house. We fix them, we talk about it, we create

everyone on the team that they're gonna be great, and then they make 'em. And I'm also developing a fragrance. This is it. See if you can smell it. *[holds out wrist]*

Ooh, I can.

It's really amazing to be able to do a fragrance. The creative process has been so fun. Yesterday we had this long meeting with "the nose"—the chemist that develops the fragrance. You smell all these different versions and my friends will come in and I'll be like, "Spray this one, spray that one, which one do you like?" This is all day long. You keep trying to get the right smell—"Add a little more of this, add a little more of that." It's such a weird, creative process.

Cool.

That's just everything outside of music, which to me is the thing that defines who I am, that really makes me most proud. The other stuff is just fun. It's creative, but not emotionally draining and exhausting. It's kind of like making cookies. ■

