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ON THE COVER

Gwen Stefani photographed exclusively for *Complex* by Mark Squires for CLM U.S.; styling by Andrea Lieberman for MargaretMaldonado.com; hair by Danilo for Flawless/The Wall Group; makeup by Kathy Jeung for MargaretMaldonado.com. Cape by Libertine; bustier by Prada; panties by NY Vintage; stirrups by Capezio; lace collar and hair ornaments by Early Halloween; shoes by Christian Dior Haute Couture.

Photo by Mark Squires; styling by Andrea Lieberman. Bra by NY vintage; skirt and neck-lace by Louis Vuitton; pendant by Neil Lane; crown, pearl hairnet, lace collar and bow belt by Early Halloween



Gwen

BORN Again!

She's hot, she's the most beloved pop star in America, and now No Doubt singer Gwen Stefani is about to break out as a solo artist and Hollywood actress. Story by Jessica Hundley

Photography by Mark Squires

Styling by Andrea Lieberman

S

he's not the new Madonna.

Sure, there are similarities—the platinum blond hair, silent screen vamping, the ever-evolving, always iconic style. But Gwen Stefani is defiantly her own woman. Rather than strained self-seriousness and ice-cool divadom, Stefani possesses the air of a girl midway down the first drop of a really badass roller coaster, an air of glee and triumph and just a touch of wonder, as if she still can't quite believe she dared get on the ride in the first place.

After over a decade as the charismatic frontwoman for the biggest ska/rock/pop/punk/dance band in the land, No Doubt, Gwen Stefani is about to have a ball out on her own. She's got her clothing line, L.A.M.B.; she plays Jean Harlow in the new Martin Scorsese film, *The Aviator*. And on her first solo album, *Love, Angel, Music, Baby*, she collaborates with the likes of Eve, Andre 3000 and Dr. Dre. *Complex* caught

up with her—where else?—in Hollywood.

GWEN STEFANI: Oh my God, I'm so glad you didn't talk with me yesterday. Yesterday I was in the worst mood. One thing about my success is that, well, there really isn't room to complain. If you even try to, you look so stupid. But let's face it, sometimes at the end of a day of interviews I'm like, "I can't do the last one; they're going to hate me! I hate *myself!*" I mean, how long can you really talk about yourself? I enjoy it, but come on!

COMPLEX: On that note, let's talk about you. Alright!

Tell us about your new record.

It just kind of snowballed. I heard this track by Club Nouveau and this Lisa Lisa song. I had been listening to them forever, groups that I grew up on—Prince, the Time, Lisa Lisa. I was a ska girl, but secretly we loved all these bands. We'd go to see Lisa Lisa and Cult Jam at the Anaheim Theater. I heard

that Club Nouveau track, and I felt like it would be fun to do a dance record, a fun '80s record, the kind of stuff they played when I used to go to Circle K or Knott's Berry Farm.

Was finding time to do this album your main reason for taking time off from No Doubt?

I wanted to do a film. I had this clock ticking in me. I was going, "Oh my God! You're going to die and you've been doing the same thing for 17 years!" Actually, not the same thing, because we've gotten to be a lot of different types of band. It's an incredible thing to become famous with your best friends. I wouldn't have changed anything about it. But I was pushing myself, getting married, going on that last tour. I knew that I was running out of time and I needed to get going. Because when would I do a movie? When would I have a baby? I knew that I wasn't going to put out



Sweater by
Louis Vuitton;
skirt by Andrea
Lieberman for
L.A.M.B; gloves
by NY Vintage;
pom-pom
headband by
Jo Gordon

"In My Next Life I'm Going To Be a GUY and i'm GOING to be a SLUT"

this album unless it was ridiculously good. Because doing it away from the band—I'm not going to ruin everything we've done. So I never thought it would be this great. And I don't mean that in a braggy way; there was so much collaboration that I can say that and not feel too guilty about it. That was one of the biggest challenges, to put my ego over in the corner and say, "Shut up!" To go ahead and dive in with people like Andre 3000 and be open to their ideas. The lyrical thing is very difficult for me to give up. I'd be saying, "Go ahead, give me your ideas," but in my head I was going, "Fuck off!"

It must have been frightening to work with people other than the band you've been working with your whole career.

I was crying before I went in, I was so scared. But I needed to get my feet wet and I did it. In the first song we did, Linda Perry came in and she had this chorus, "What You Waiting For?" and she was basically saying to me, based on my confessing my fears about the whole project, "Gwen, what the fuck are you waiting for?" For someone to come to me with something like that—it basically triggered something in me. It was magic. I wrote the rest of the song and I was like, "Fuck me! I think I just wrote my first single!"

A lot of people see you as an inspiration.

It's crazy. I guess I'm getting used to the idea of being an inspiration to someone. I never saw myself as that person. I always feel like I can't even spell and I like to watch

Entertainment Tonight. I mean, I wake up and it's all about me: "What can I do for myself today? Work out? Write some songs?" So when I hear that I'm inspiring, I feel guilty. I'm that same person from high school who happened to get lucky.

But being who you are, without apologies, is inspiring in itself, isn't it?

It's funny—I remember thinking, I wish I could be in the '30s, it was so glamorous and I would have fit in better then!" But I know how lucky I am that I got to be with the guys and tour the world and be a fly on the wall in a man's world. I know I'm respected; when I go in with my band, my vote counts. And I know that when I go into the label, everyone is looking to me for the idea. And it's a great feeling as a woman to have that. There's moments of every woman's life when they feel, Oh, I'm less? I didn't realize. When I wrote "Just A Girl," I realized, you just do your own thing and then at one point you realize, "Oh. They look at me like that!?" But it's great to be who I am right now.

Who inspired you?

I always loved the whole starlet thing. Marilyn Monroe and Jean Harlow, anyone who had blond hair! Madonna—she can do anything. Musicals. Julie Andrews was really magic to me. I loved old movies. I loved the clothes and the stupid stories about making it big and how to marry a millionaire.

I loved glamour.

What do you think makes a woman sexy?

I feel like there's kind of room for everyone.

I love Björk. I love Pamela Anderson. We need all the different varieties. I think sexiness comes from talent and creativity. Not just in women, but humans in general. I find myself attracted to anyone who is passionate and talented. I just get crazy over someone like John Galliano or Vivienne Westwood, these talents that you can't touch.

So those are the things you find attractive in men as well?

Well, I'm married and I'm pretty preoccupied with that. I've never really had too many relationships. Just two really, and I married one of them. I never had that whole dating experience. When I hear friends talking about "I'm seeing this younger guy and this older guy who has kids," I'm like, "You're seeing two people at one time!?" Ahh, my God! Tell me more!" I can't imagine going on a date. I'm too insecure. But in my next life, I'm going to be a guy and I'm going to be a slut. I'll try that one on for size. But I do have my fantasy guys.

Andre 3000?

I want to be him! If I was a boy, please let me be him!

You idolized Jean Harlow and now you're playing her in *The Aviator*?

It was such an honor to play someone who was such an inspiration to so many people. I mean, she was the original "original." I've tried out for so many movies and it's such a humiliating and



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bustier by **Prada**; bra and
panties by **NY Vintage**;
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TOP 7 HOLIDAY GIFTS.

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3. Bottle of Jack Daniel's wrapped up.
4. Bottle of Jack Daniel's with some mistletoe.
5. Bottle of Jack Daniel's and one of those shaky snow things.
6. Bottle of Jack Daniel's and a carton of egg nog.
7. And a bottle of Jack Daniel's in a pear tree.



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"Japan is so inspiring, because you feel like you're on a different planet"

challenging and horrible experience. But there's something kind of fun in that challenge. I feel like I have it in me; if someone gave me a chance I feel I could use those muscles. They sent me the script and I found the *one* page that had my *one* line. And even though it was only one line, when I went to the first audition, I kept messing it up. Afterward, they said, "If Marty calls, will you come down?" And I'm like, "Hello? Duh!" And he called and I got the part. Basically, they told me, "Come down and audition for him and don't dress like a rock star." They wanted me to dress the part. **That mustn't have been hard, since you obviously love playing dress up. Was that part of what inspired the L.A.M.B. line?** That'll always be a passion, but I hated talking about it in my youth, because I was like, "Well, fuck, the music is the most important thing." Everyone would want to talk about it and I was like, "I'm not going to talk about my friggin' outfit!" But then I met this stylist, Andrea Lieberman, who is like the cooler, Jewish, New York version of me. We just connected and after that we always worked together. She taught me a lot about fashion. I was so ghetto. I came from Orange County and I didn't know anything. I was a thrift store girl. But Andrea taught me about that world and how artistic and expressive it is. L.A.M.B. is the one thing in my life that is so easy. It fulfills me, but it doesn't have that deep thing that music does, that weight. It's just about me and what I like. It's so greedy that way. You sit at a table and think of what you want to wear. **On the album you talk quite a bit about the fashion in the Harajuku area of Tokyo.** One thing that I'm learning is to have some sort of theme and roll with it. With the line we try to have that and with the album too. On the album there are quite a few themes, but my main inspiration was Harajuku. It was never intentional, but at the same time I knew that that was my muse, if you can call an area a muse. Japan is so inspiring anyway, because you feel like you're on a different planet. One of my favorite parts about my success is being able to travel and I try to keep my eyes open. In Japan, I was just blown away by the fashion, the creativity. This whole thing of taking bits and pieces of our culture—for me it's this whole ping-pong match between East and West and how we really inspire each other. It

keeps evolving. The whole album is about that too, musically, because I was inspired by things I love. I was stealing and stealing and stealing, but trying to make it my own as well, trying to make it become fresh and new. It was yours and now it's mine!

And then it becomes someone else's.

Hopefully it becomes the backdrop for someone's prom when they're making out! I feel like the whole Harajuku theme is part of my impression of that place and the way that these girls have found a way to express themselves. You can see where their inspiration comes from, but they put a twist on it and make it theirs.

Experimenting without inhibition.

And I feel like No Doubt tried to do that, too. We've never stood in one place. It's funny. I was in the garage the other day, and I looked down and there was this box of old clothes. It's always such a bum-out to get older, really. At a certain point you think you're never going to get older because it just doesn't happen to you, and then all of a sudden you realize it's happening to you. That's when the race is on. I've had a great time, but I mean, fuck—I didn't do this! I didn't do that! I looked down at those clothes and I thought, Thank God I'm not that girl anymore. I was really proud that I had been that girl, but I'm not anymore and I'm so grateful. It's weird how you have to evolve and change that way.

Especially in what you're doing. As a pop icon you have to be continually evolving.

That's really weird. Being famous or being a celebrity or whatever, I mean, I can't even say the words without laughing. When it happens to you, let's face it, egos are big and it feels really good to have the attention. But you quickly realize it's all fake. Whatever everybody thinks about me is just a collection of facts they gathered that could be true or not true. And whether what they think about me is good or bad, I can't pay attention or it's going to make me crazy. If they build me up to be more than I really am, I'm going to look in the mirror and say, "You're not fucking that!" And I'm going to be hard on myself. Or the opposite: If they say negative things, it tears away your confidence. So I try really hard to know that my reality is me and my world and the people I see who are actually living in my world. Right now, before the album comes out, is a magic time. Because no one has judged it yet and the fake world hasn't taken over. It's still the real world, thank God. ■