



MAGIC KINGDOM: No Doubt still adheres to the pack mentality of the SoCal scene. "Like, I can't believe we're still doing this," says Gwen Stefani. "It's so rad."



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Gwen's still in love, Adrian's having a baby, and the hip-hop world is on the phone. The long and surprisingly happy life of No Doubt.

BY WILLIAM SHAW
PHOTOGRAPHS BY DONALD MILNE



SELF-DOUBT AND HEARTBREAK USED TO BE Gwen Stefani's twin muses. When her lover dumped her after seven years, she told the world about it. The drama had a neat twist since the jilter happened to be her own bass player, No Doubt's Tony Kanal. Last year, when the band put out *Return of Saturn*, Stefani continued beating up on herself.

Now the 32-year-old singer is suffering a masochist's worst misfortune: requited love. "Real love," she says dreamily. She leans forward in a wicker chair and fingers her gold ankle bracelet: Hanging from it are the five letters that denote her Bushman: G-A-V-I-N.

No Doubt is in Olympic Studios in gray and chilly London, where Mark "Spike" Stent—knob twirler for U2, Madonna, and Björk—is polishing the band's fifth album. No matter where Stefani is, though, a part of her is forever in Orange County. She blurts "Omigod" at the slightest provocation; she says "fuck" a lot, too (which could be attributed to shacking up with an English rock star). And when she talks about her own group, she's pure Cali: "Like, I can't believe we're still doing this. It's so rad."

In London, Stefani stays with Bush's Gavin Rossdale at his house in Primrose Hill. Her colleagues—Kanal, guitarist Tom Dumont,

drummer Adrian Young—rent a flat in Earl's Court. After fifteen years on the same tour bus, No Doubt remains one of the few bands that conform to the romantic ideal. They hang out. They visit London nightclubs together. They actually *like* one another.

That attitude has served the group well. For much of its early career, No Doubt operated in enemy territory, ambling along as Fishbone also-rans. Then, when every other group was churning out post-Nirvana grunge, No Doubt turned in the relentlessly poppy *Tragic Kingdom*. Their label despaired. The album sat on the shelf so long, the band thought it would never come out. Months after its release, the editors of *Rolling Stone* were voting No Doubt the third-worst band of the year. It took just over a year for *Kingdom* to crawl up and conquer the charts.

Which is why last year's *Return of Saturn* was something of a novelty: the first No Doubt album to be released to immediate approbation. Giddy, No Doubt opted to change its own

FIRST SPREAD, FROM LEFT: TONY: SHIRT BY ENERGIE. GWEN: SHIRT BY WILLY MAY, PANTS BY TOM FORD FOR GUCCI. TOM: "PEACE" T-SHIRT BY ENERGIE. ADRIAN: TOP BY FRED PERRY, BOOTS BY DOCTOR MARTINS.

OPPOSITE, FROM LEFT: TOM: SWEATER BY PRADA SPORT. ADRIAN: SHIRT BY BEN SHERMAN, CARDIGAN BY GARY PLAYER SPORTSWEAR. TONY: SHIRT BY ENERGIE, PANTS BY GRIFFIN. GWEN: "SURVIVE OR DIE" T-SHIRT BY MAYA, SKIRT BY EMMA COOK, JEWELRY BY BUTLER & WILSON, BOOTS BY GINA.

STYLING: ANDY BLAKE
MAKEUP: SARAH RHEIGATE FOR STREETERS
HAIR: RAY ALLINGTON FOR MAGNET
ASSISTANT STYLIST: SALLY RANKIN

rules; instead of functioning as a hermetically sealed unit, they decided their fifth album would be a series of collaborations. They'd already experimented with Prince at Paisley Park. They'd go on to spend 2001 working with a dizzying selection of their favorite artists. Kanal—a major fan of Jamaican dancehall musicians—took the band out to work with reggae veterans Sly and Robbie. Stefani lined up a session with Dave Stewart of the Eurythmics; Rik Ocasek of the Cars and Madonna's William Orbit added a few ideas. The band capped the year with hip-hop heavy Timbaland. The fresh blood was reviving, but there was one snag: "This record was too man-heavy," Stefani says. "You work with someone like Timbaland, and you're suddenly being lectured. And you're like, 'Dude, I've been doing this for fifteen years!'"

With this album, No Doubt abandons the ska band pretense. In fact, Stefani has become a major hip-hop fan. Earlier this year, she guested on Eve's "Let Me Blow Ya Mind," the video of which resulted in newfound urban cred and an MTV video award. She also turned up on Moby's "South Side" clip. Don't expect another guest appearance, though. "I don't want to be like I'm the fuckin' side sausage," she says, even if working on the Eve track did earn her the chance to pull Dr. Dre in on a session, too. Now, as the release deadline looms, the group's trying to whip a massive pile of experimentation into pop.

Today, the group is attempting to make sense of a new song, a striking but decidedly eccentric piece of soul called "Waiting Room." They've been wrist-slapped for waywardness ever since 1992, when their first A&R man said they needed "focus." So much for focus. In the studio, Kanal proudly plays me the latest version.

Later, I tell Stefani how much I liked it. "You heard it?" she asks. "I hate that you heard it. It's not done." That night they'll work until four in the morning.

It's late. She's tired. She lowers herself onto a

chair. Suddenly, she realizes something is wrong: The fly on her cargo pants is wide open.

"Sorry," she says, zipping it up. "I'm just a scuzz bag."

A few days later, No Doubt is having its photo taken at a bar called Denim in London's Covent Garden. For a scuzz bag, Gwen is retentive about how she and her band present themselves. This afternoon, she's decided that diamanté and hair spray isn't quite it: "I look like a 35-year-old who works in a bank," she declares, ordering a change. She swaps the rocks for two massive ghetto-fabulous gold rings that were made for her by a friend in L.A. The one on her right hand reads ROCK and on her left, STEADY—the title of the new album and a declaration of where they stand.

"Omigod!" she exults suddenly, apropos of nothing. "Adie's having a baby! Adie's having a baby!"

It's true. Adrian Young's wife is four and a half months pregnant. Gwen is ecstatic, if a touch jealous. She wants babies badly. No Doubt's slow-but-eventually-spectacular rise meant she had to put a lot of things on hold. *Tragic Kingdom* interrupted her education; she was majoring in art at Cal State.

"I'm good at it," she says of that first love. "I feel kind of sad 'cause I left on tour and that was gone. But I always envisage myself six months pregnant and painting."

She pauses for a second, then starts laughing: "I'm going to be a pregnant painter," she declares, as if she's trying to pick a fight. "It's going to happen. You watch." ★