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# GWEN STEFANI

**ON HER STYLE AND  
NO DOUBT'S RETURN**

+ *inside...*  
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# CLOSET REBEL

It was Sigmund Freud who said that artists are the people society needs to express what most of us must learn to inhibit. This is particularly true when it comes to musicians and fashion. In our fourth Women in Music issue, we pay homage to the songbirds breaking the sound *and* sartorial barriers. Gwen Stefani headlines our luminous portfolio of culturescapers, which includes Florence Welch, designer muse of the moment; *Miss* Aretha Franklin; and Jennifer Hudson. This season's key trends find their roots in rhythm makers: the iconic '90s (chiffon meets leather), the menswear-inspired trousers and jacket—loose or lean (thanks, Gwen!)—and accessories that demand you answer: Are you rockabilly or rocker? Techno lass or a hip-hopper? Turn the page for ELLE in stereo—because we know the chicest clothes in the world wouldn't offer half the joy without the music you crank to get dressed.

Black leather jacket, \$770, cotton-blend shirt, \$176, wool-blend trousers, \$298, all, **L.A.M.B.**, call 917-463-3553. *For details, see Shopping Guide.*

Photographed by Susan Reljin; styled by Andrea Lieberman (hair by Danilo at the Wall Group; makeup by Charlotte Willer at Art Department; manicure by Elle at the Wall Group; props styled by Stockton Hall at 1+1 mgmt; fashion assistant: Joan Reidy)



# THE ALL-STAR

FIFTEEN YEARS AFTER FIRST TOPPING THE CHARTS, NO DOUBT HAS A NEW ALBUM COMING, AND **GWEN STEFANI** IS STILL SHOWING US HOW IT'S DONE—WOMAN, WIFE, MOTHER, DESIGNER—ALL 100 PERCENT TABLOID-FREE. A ROCK ICON ON AND OFF STAGE, STEFANI TALKS MUSIC AND FASHION AND MAKING THE SLEEVE TO WEAR YOUR HEART ON. BY CANDICE RAINEY

PHOTOGRAPHED BY *dusan reljin*  
STYLED BY *andrea lieberman*



*BEAUTY SECRET:* For a vintage-inspired cat-eye, pair liquid liner with doll-like lashes. Try *Lineur Intense Liquid Eyeliner* and *Voluminous Mascara*, both in black, by **L'Oréal Paris**.

*Left:* Knitted jet-stone-beaded top over white-pearl-embroidered tank top and black fringe skirt, **Gaultier Paris**. *Right:* Sleeveless silk jumpsuit, **Alessandra Rich**, \$2,200, visit [net-a-porter.com](http://net-a-porter.com). Necklace, **Mawi**, \$645. For details, see *Shopping Guide*.





Above left and right: Stretch crepe cape dress, **L.A.M.B.**, \$425, call 917-463-3553. Brass-plated pendant necklace with cubic zirconia, **Noir Jewelry**, \$230. Leather pumps, **Christian Louboutin**, \$595. Lower left and right: Stretch wool dress with leather trim, **Givenchy by Riccardo Tisci**, \$4,010, at Hirshleifer's, Manhasset, NY. Leather pumps, **Christian Louboutin**, \$595. For details, see Shopping Guide.

HAIR BY **DANILO** AT THE WALL GROUP; MAKEUP BY **CHARLOTTE WILLER** AT ART DEPARTMENT; MANICURE BY **ELLE** AT THE WALL GROUP; PROPS STYLED BY **STOCKTON HALL** AT 1+1 MGMT; FASHION ASSISTANT: **JOAN REIDY**





hen Gwen Stefani first joined No Doubt, she was 17, thrashing around onstage to ska as reinterpreted by a clutch of kids from Orange County, California, singing lyrics her brother Eric wrote, and serving as a bit of eye candy in a male-dominated subculture. It wasn't until Eric left the band—and after her well-documented breakup with bassist Tony Kanal—that she figured out she had a few things to say herself. All doe eyes and razzing charm, Stefani cracked wise about gender

liberation (“Just a Girl”) and railed against bad boyfriends (“Sunday Morning,” “Ex Girlfriend”) without sucking all the fun out of the room. On her solo records, 2004’s *Love.Angel.Music.Baby.* and 2006’s *The Sweet Escape*, she riffed on career advancement, female backbiting, and a ticking biological clock, while whipping up the dance floor to a euphoric frenzy. In her we had a punkette superheroine cribbing pages from her diary for potent pop-rock confessionals that arrive like urgent telegrams. Over her career, Stefani has sold some 50 million records and produced a genre-scrambling catalog, speaking to and for women about what’s *really* on our minds—bad breakups, marriage, babies, sexism—without sacrificing the rampant infectiousness that barrels through the music.

Rather than hanging it all up after a quarter-century to focus on her profitable side projects—her fashion labels L.A.M.B. and the lower-priced Harajuku Lovers, not to mention her recent anointment as the face of L’Oréal Paris—or simply laze about with her two eminently photogenic boys, four-year-old Kingston and two-year-old Zuma, and her husband of eight years, Bush singer Gavin Rossdale, she’s back in the studio with No Doubt, hell-bent on making a record. When the band reunited briefly in 2009, Stefani suffered a serious case of writer’s block and failed to produce any new material before going out on tour. But that’s all behind her—or at least ripe enough for mining.

Chrissie Hynde once said, “If you’re an ugly duckling—and most of us are, in rock bands—you’re not trying to look good. You’re trying to look cool so people won’t notice you’re ugly.” When I meet Stefani in the Taipan suite at the Mandarin Oriental hotel in New York City, it’s clear that the exception to Hynde’s rule is standing in front of me, offering her hand. She is tall and taut, with hollowed-out cheekbones and manicured eyebrows that instantly remind you how long it’s been since you’ve been to an aesthetician. Her makeup is a visual meditation on meticulousness—thick, glossy eyeliner, scarlet-tinted lips, and lashes that could make Liza envious. All this distilled femininity works for Stefani because really, like most female singers who front all-male bands—Hynde, Debbie Harry, Shirley Manson—she’s a tomboy at her core whose lax SoCal accent still bubbles up when she speaks. (“Isn’t her style *rad*?” she asks rhetorically, referring to Lizzie, her hip assistant.)

She’s in town for New York Fashion Week, which she will close in the “big tent” at Lincoln Center, showing her fall 2011 L.A.M.B. collection. Say what you will about celebrity clothing lines, Stefani’s mini retail empire of shoes, bags, clothes, and fragrances has reported annual earnings of more than \$150 million and perfectly reflects Stefani’s take on her eclectic, ever-evolving references—from mall-obsessed Japanese Harajuku girls to the safety-pinned punks and slickly dressed mods of Vivienne Westwood’s heyday to the SoCal cholas donning baggy pants and tank tops. Today, she’s a walking advertisement for her upcoming runway show, wearing a tissue-thin black-and-white-striped turtleneck, charcoal wool shorts, opaque tights, and knee-high leather motorcycle boots, which she tells me she boosted from the showroom. “There’s still a tag here,” she says, reaching into the back of her pants and tearing it off. Stefani slouches into a chair like a teenage boy might and stirs the tea Lizzie brought her.

**ELLE:** You haven’t released a new record with No Doubt since 2001’s *Rock Steady*. Is there a lot of pressure to get this album out?

**GWEN STEFANI:** Everyone’s always like, “When’s the record coming out?” I think after doing the solo records, I just felt out of ideas. We tried writing, and I tried writing, and I *couldn’t write*. So we were like, “You know what? Let’s just go on tour, and that will inspire us.”

**ELLE:** No Doubt’s music has always been connected to California, and Orange County in particular, where ska was so prevalent. Are you recording in Los Angeles?

**GS:** All of it, yeah. Because Tony [Kanal] has a studio in his house. It’s amazing. He has this old house overlooking Hollywood—it’s all windows. I made him put up curtains because I’m like, “I don’t know if I can write with all windows. It needs to be dark in here.” We’ve already recorded 10 songs.

**ELLE:** You’ve been a member of No Doubt since 1987, when your brother Eric started the band.

**GS:** Isn’t that weird?

**ELLE:** After 25 years, what still motivates you?

**GS:** Music has this emotional thing to it, and it touches people in crazy ways. The power of *having* that power is something that, once you have it, you don’t want it to ever end.

**ELLE:** But your passion for it must have waned at some point?

**GS:** I don’t know. Right now, I can’t picture touring. I just think about it and I’m like...[*She sighs and goes limp in her chair*]. It’s so physical, and I’d have to prepare for that mentally. I just don’t know how we’re going to do it, because now Kingston is going to be in kindergarten. Now we all have kids. But it’s so different for me. Those guys have wives, so they can be like, “Oh, we’ll meet you out on the tour at the end of the semester.” But I’m so lucky—I mean, who gets to do all this stuff?

**ELLE:** I’ve read two different stories about how you came to be No

Doubt's lead singer—that your brother pushed you to join the band, and that you were begging your brother to be in the band.

GS: Well, both are true, sort of. When we started the band, there was a talent show at school. It was sort of like, “We’re going to do it, and you’re going to sing.” I don’t even remember thinking about it or wondering if I should do it or being asked, but it was just happening. I was telling my girlfriend Sophie Muller [the British music-video director who has worked with Eurythmics, Blur, and Garbage and directs many of No Doubt’s and Stefani’s videos] last night, “Sophie, I’ve always had success. Everyone thinks it happened in like 1995, ’96, when I was 25, 26. But no—when I was 17, 18, when No Doubt started, the first show we played, people started coming to see us.” I would get recognized. When I went to Tower Records, that was it. People knew who I was.

ELLE: Did you have an inkling you might become a huge pop star?

GS: Doing the music we did wasn’t about making it. That wasn’t commercial music. I didn’t even know what “signed” was. It was so innocent, the whole thing. I would go, “Dad, can I please have five dollars? I got to rent the microphone.” Then we would go to this place called Stomp Box and rehearse every Thursday and Sunday. We did have a mailing list and someone who sold shirts. We had a P.O. box—we’d pick the mail up, we’d read it, we’d write our fans back. We were all going to Cal State–Fullerton. We knew we needed to have a backup plan. And then we did a showcase, and Jimmy Iovine [chairman of Interscope Geffen A&M] said to me that day—which, I didn’t know who he was; I didn’t really care—“You’re going to be a star in five years.” And I was just thinking to myself, like, “In five years, I’m going to have kids, and I’m not going to be doing this,” because five years at that age seems like forever. And then, five years on the dot, we had a number one around the world, “Don’t Speak”—it was the weirdest thing.

ELLE: Your brother left the band just as No Doubt was receiving major recognition. Do you think he made the right decision?

GS: Oh, I don’t think he ever had second thoughts about it.

ELLE: Are you two close now?

GS: We’re not as close as we used to be. He’s an amazing guy, and he has his own life. One of his big instruments now is the accordion, so he’ll come over at any kind of family stuff and play the accordion with the kids—he’s crazy. Our family is all very close.

ELLE: Were your mom and dad supportive of the band early on?

GS: They were. They were just really into music. Bob Dylan ruled their life. The first concert I ever went to, they took me to the Palomino Club to see Emmylou Harris play, and I remember she had just had a baby. She was so beautiful, with long black hair. I couldn’t believe I was seeing her in real life. The place was about as big as this room. And then she’s like, “Excuse me, I need to go nurse my baby, I’ll be back.” As a little girl, you’re like, “Gasp, oh my God!”

ELLE: Writer’s block is a major theme in your songwriting. You seem paralyzed by it at times.

GS: It’s true. And every time it’s the same, and I get so down about it. It’s so frustrating. But then when it happens, it’s so exciting. I think that’s the addiction.

ELLE: Does the song have to be a hit to get that high?

GS: Once you have a hit, there’s not much point in ever writing a song that doesn’t have the intention of being a hit. I’m always a hits girl. A lot of people, like my bass player, Tony, will be really into playing a small club. For me, if I’m going to put that much effort into it, I might as well play for 300,000 people right now. I like the bigger-scale stuff. It’s the same with the fashion show—they’ll be like, “Oh my God, you’re in the big tent,” and I’m like, “It was, like, 500 people. What’s the big deal? This is nothing.”

ELLE: You want the L.A.M.B. show at Madison Square Garden.

GS: I do! Why wouldn’t you want that many people listening to the songs that you wrote? There’s no way to go back after you have had

it. So the intentions of even the solo records were always about trying to write those guilty-pleasure albums that just get in your head and you can’t get out. I’m not cool, I’m not into the B-sides. Prince, who is one of my idols, gave me some advice when I worked with him: “Have you ever just tried writing a hit? Like, don’t just try writing a song, try and write a *hit* song.” I remember him saying that and me thinking, Yeah, you’re right. Why would you write anything else?

ELLE: Do you know when it happens?

GS: I remember writing “Hollaback Girl” with Pharrell, and we had written all these other songs, and we just knew, we just *knew*. We were jumping all over the couch, we were doing the Tom Cruise, we were like, “Ahhhhh!” We got the champagne, brought in Jimmy; we were like, “We got the *song!*” There’s a song on the new record called “One More Summer.” I’ll tell you right now, that song is going to be a *huge* song.

ELLE: You feel it?

GS: There’s no way it’s not. Normally, every time we work I get a CD and I drive with it. Back and forth to the studio is when I do it, and I’m obsessed. It’s embarrassing—it’s like when I got my iPhone, how many pictures I took of myself. It is obsessive. I cannot stop listening to it. I had to break the CD before I came here because if those got out and it’s the wrong version, it would be heartbreaking. You don’t want someone to see you before your makeup is done. You know what I mean?

ELLE: You mean because it could be leaked online?

GS: Yes. It’s different, it’s sad. Normally, I would have the music with me the whole time. Every record that I’ve ever made, I listen to it so much before it comes out. As soon as it comes out, I never listen to it again. It’s, like, over.

ELLE: So you never pop in *Tragic Kingdom* or *Rock Steady*?

GS: Never. I mean, sometimes we listen back, when we’re writing, because it’s inspiring—especially when we were trying to write and we couldn’t. We were like, “Oh my God, these songs are great! We wrote these!” God. And they bring you right back to that moment in time. Because it’s really weird to sing a song to 25,000 people and have your kids on the side of the stage, and you’re singing “Simple Kind of Life.” Whatever the lyrics mean to anyone else is one thing, but no one will ever know what they really mean to me, you know? It’s pretty intense.

ELLE: Is it because so many lines in that song are about wanting to get married and have a family?

GS: Yeah, just about questioning everything, and some of the answers are standing right there, watching, bored a little bit.

ELLE: You’ve always been a confessional songwriter. Do you ever regret writing about your life and relationships so openly?

GS: I wish I could write more make-believe. It’s a lot easier to write about hard times and when things are going wrong. But I’ve never been a private person. I have to tell everyone everything that’s going on. It is different once you’re married, because that’s sacred.

ELLE: Does your husband ever worry about that?

GS: We write about each other, and we’ve always been really supportive of each other. He’s a really good songwriter—it’s really annoying how good he is. He’s so much faster than me—probably when I get home, he’ll have 10 songs done, and I’ll be like, “Really? It took me *four years* to write 10 songs, but—awesome.” He’ll give advice like, “Oh, you should just go straight to the chorus, you don’t need all of that. You can edit that part out.” Or he’ll be like, “Okay, that’s a huge hit.”

ELLE: You met your husband while No Doubt was opening for Bush on tour. Do you remember those early days of your romance?

GS: Yeah, I totally remember it. The first time we ever kissed was right around Valentine’s Day—we were in New Orleans on tour. So, yeah, I always think about that because it’s unbelievable that

(CONTINUED ON page 330)



## THE ALL-STAR

(CONTINUED FROM page 289)

we've been able to stay together. I feel so proud of us—it's one of my biggest achievements.

**ELLE:** Speaking of Emmylou Harris nursing her kid in the middle of the show—

**GS:** Well, not onstage.

**ELLE:** No, but I mean in the middle of it—which I sort of love—it reminds me that you were pregnant on the Harajuku Lovers tour in 2005. Was that mentally and physically difficult?

**GS:** Yeah. I got pregnant during rehearsals. I didn't even try. I wanted to get pregnant—we were talking about it, but all of a sudden it just happened, and I remember being in the rehearsals and feeling grumpy and tired and waiting for my period to come—like, "What is going on?" And then it was, "Oh my God! What am I going to do? I'm going on tour!" You can't cancel it.

**ELLE:** You can't?

**GS:** No. It had already sold out! I mean, it's just too late.

**ELLE:** It sounds so daunting.

**GS:** It was horrible. Certain songs would make me want to puke. On that song "Serious"—I think it had something to do with whatever I was wearing, too, because I was feeling so insecure. I was getting bigger, and I had to keep getting my costumes taken out. You feel pretty gross when you are first pregnant. You don't feel cute, you feel disgusting. You're getting fat. It was hard.

**ELLE:** Is there one live performance that stands out in your head more than others?

**GS:** The Bush tour was amazing for us because we'd never played such big shows, and being an opening act is really fun. Basically, no one really is there to see you. We, at that time, had so much confidence because we had been together so

long, and we knew that live we were good. We just *did*. So we would go out there, and we only had a 30-minute set. It would just be like [*Stefani clasps her hands together in a pistol shape and takes aim around the room, closing one eye as she focuses on a pretend target*], "Pow." The place wouldn't even be half full, but by the end it would be filling up. As soon as we played "Just a Girl"...pow.

**ELLE:** You're the new spokeswoman for L'Oréal Paris, and you're an artist who's particularly associated with makeup, even writing a song about it—"Magic's in the Makeup." How old were you when you started wearing it?

**GS:** I started in seventh grade. I'm an art major too, so I can draw and paint. That's my background. We had home economics, and they'd bring someone in to show you how to put your makeup on. Did you have that at your school?

**ELLE:** No—that sounds amazing, though. Do you do your own makeup now?

**GS:** For stage, I do all my own makeup, and for the last couple of tours I've had hair people, which is the luxury of life. I'm like, "Why did I do it myself this whole time?" I learn from makeup people now, but in the past I had a real problem with makeup artists. I remember my first experience with a makeup artist was doing the first No Doubt album, the one that was shelved. Go back and look at how ugly I look. It is *the worst* makeup. I remember thinking, "This looks really ugly, but maybe in the pictures because of the lighting it will look good." Nope. From that time on, I'm thinking, I'm not going to let someone do my makeup, because they don't know how to do it.

**ELLE:** I read that when you played Jean Harlow in *The Aviator*, you disagreed with the way the makeup artist did your lips.

**GS:** When I look back on that now, I think it

looked good. I have a hard time letting go. But it's frustrating. People are always trying to change what you are. People want to be the first ones to do something different.

**ELLE:** You went sans makeup in the video for "Underneath It All."

**GS:** In that one scene, yeah. The only reason I dared to do that was because Sophie was doing the video, and I knew that she would make me look good no matter what. And it was all backlit.

**ELLE:** What are you most vain about?

**GS:** Everything. I mean, I'm very vain. That would be my middle name. Of course I am, you know what I mean? I love the visual.

**ELLE:** I see Lady Gaga, Rihanna, and Katy Perry and can't help but think they've taken a page right out of the Gwen Stefani playbook.

**GS:** Really? I don't see myself in those girls. I usually put pants on. I see these girls as more going for the sex-symbol thing. I was more, in the band, like a tomboy. Of course, I think every girl is sexy, so there's going to be a little of that. But I see a lot of younger artists going more toward the sexy thing.

**ELLE:** What do you think about that?

**GS:** I feel like there's room for everyone. I took my own road. You know, I probably didn't wear heels until I was in my late twenties. But it's interesting to watch where music is going next. Isn't it always rotating? It is so weird how disposable pop music is, even mine. It just goes by so fast.

**ELLE:** Because there's so much of it?

**GS:** Yeah, when we were growing up, some of the hits were legendary ones that you hear your whole life. But certain songs, I don't know if you'll ever hear them again. Because that's what that music is, like a guilty pleasure, it's right at the moment. It's like fashion—it's now, then it's gone. ●