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Stefani*

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ELLE STYLE AWARDS THE WINNERS THE DRESSES THE PARTY

LOVE

FASHION

She's a one-woman industry: albums, fashion collections, raising a family & making her marriage



BABY

MUSIC

work—how does Gwen Stefani do it? ELLE asked her close friend Shirley Manson to find out



Words by JENNY DICKINSON

Photographs by MATTHIAS VRIENS McGRATH

Fashion by ANDREALIEBERMAN



This page: cotton and wool jumpsuit by Yves Saint Laurent. Gold and diamond earrings (worn throughout) by Andrea Lieberman for Mouawad. Gold-plated necklace (worn as belt) by Noir Jewelry. Previous page: silk-taffeta dress by Lanvin. Canvas shoes by Charlotte Olympia. Cubic-zirconia and rhodium-plated cuff by Noir Jewelry

THERE'S A SLIGHT HITCH with the interview. ELLE is at Gwen Stefani's house, high in the Hollywood Hills, tape recorder at the ready. Gwen, however, is not. Nor is Shirley Manson, recently reunited with her Garbage bandmates and due here as interviewer today because of her long-standing close friendship with LA's most famous advocate of red lipstick. The singers met in the early 1990s when No Doubt and Garbage regularly played gigs together. Two women following similar career paths and surrounded almost entirely by members of the unfairex sex? It's easy to see why that was a bonding experience.

Gwen isn't one of those celebrities who grants interviews at the drop of a new single. She hasn't survived almost two decades in music without learning that less is almost always more. And, in fact, 'survived' doesn't do justice to her career. She has sold more than 40 million albums worldwide, adding solo records *Love Angel Music Baby* and *The Sweet Escape* to her No Doubt catalogue. She has acted with Leonardo DiCaprio – as Jean Harlow in *The Aviator*, for which she received a Screen Actors Guild nomination – launched a clothing line, LAMB, in 2004, which is on the New York Fashion Week schedule, and presides over a successful fragrance

glasses of wine. She's not dressed casually, though. Gwen doesn't do casual. Blonde, blonde hair pulled back with a slight quiff, immaculately made-up skin, slash of scarlet lipstick, of course, loose-fitting black trousers tapering into high-heeled boots and a black silk blouse with thin yellow stripes. She's slim, but she doesn't appear delicately, vulnerably slim as some celebrities can. Rather her body is lithe, toned and, says Gwen unashamedly, the product of hard work.

We go through the pictures from yesterday's shoot – Gavin poking his head through the doorway for an appreciative look – and chat. There's no pressure, no formality, we're just sitting around the family dining table shooting the breeze. Except, well, we do have an interview to do. Anyone know where Shirley is?

Ah, mystery solved. Shirley is down the road at Gwen and Gavin's real house (it's being renovated, so they've been renting this place for six months while work's carried out), trying to find out from bemused builders where the family who live there are. But it's OK, we've got her, she's here. All energy and flaming hair – with a great new chunky fringe since the last time we met – and brilliant Scottish accent carving up the Californian air and asking for a 'proper cup of tea', which Gwen dutifully makes and now, at last, the interview can start...

Shirley Manson: I can remember the first time I saw you on MTV. I was feeling like hot s*** because our record was doing well, and I remember seeing you and thinking, 'I have no other competition – except for her.'

Gwen Stefani: See, I was scared of you, because we're so opposite; in all your interviews you were so crazy, you'd say whatever you wanted. I'm so not confrontational and you're just like ready to go, any moment... That's what's so weird about actually knowing you; we get along, like perfect personalities. We were the only girls [in music] then... I just can't believe how long ago it was!

SM: I know, and you've gone from strength to strength.

GS: What's so weird about it is that there was no plan. It all just happened. I was so naive and always younger than my age, just the way that I grew up [Gwen's family are Catholic] living in Orange County. I was going to school, we were playing the noontime concert in our college, and they wouldn't let us come back because so many people would come. I was signing autographs in class the next day!

SM: Were you ambitious then?

GS: Now I think I am, but I think before I was too naive to be ambitious. I was so passive as a teenager. I was just involved with my boyfriend, in a band, living at home. I look back at that moment and think, 'Who was she?' I think I was more fuelled by passion. Generally, I think of myself as really lazy. My ideal day would

'I wear make-up every day. I don't feel energised till I've put it on, then I'm ready'

line, Harajuku Lovers, inspired by the Japanese characters that accompanied her on the *Love Angel Music Baby* tour. She is, in short, nobody's fool. Celebrities interviewing celebrities can be equal parts silly and dull, but in the hands of these two women, we're betting on something honest, intelligent and more than a little rock'n'roll. Always assuming they turn up.

Kingston Rossdale's just packed away his collection of plastic horses and departed with brother Zuma to 'soccer' practice when Gwen and husband Gavin Rossdale walk in. One down, one to go. Gwen's been at a friend's baby shower for the afternoon and is feeling relaxed after a couple of

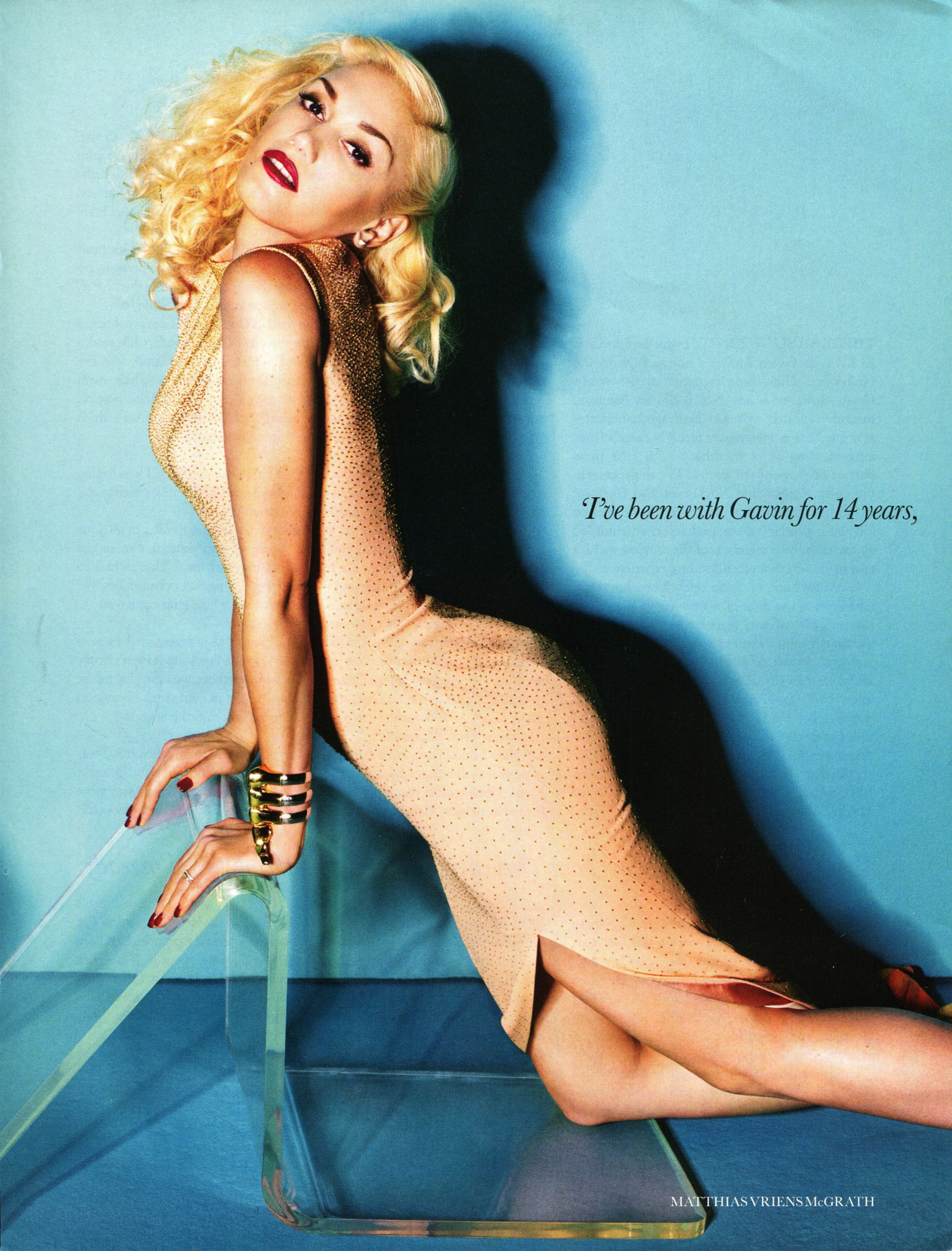
be to never get out of bed. No one can force me to do something unless I'm passionate about it. Like in my designing, there are certain categories that bore me, but in others I'm so into it that I can't stop thinking about it. If it strikes something in me, I get obsessed. The clothes are always fun when I'm in it, but my passion is in the music right now. I can only really care about one thing at a time.

SM: So where did this work ethic come from? You work at everything – your band, your line, your look...

GS: It is really a lot of maintenance to be a girl! Just when you think you're done getting your hair done you're off trying to pluck or do something else. But I'm the type of person – I like getting ready to go out more than I like going out. I wear make-up every single day; I like to wear make-up for Gavin and I don't feel energised till I've put it on, then I'm ready to go.

SM: Nobody gets to look like you without athletic discipline.

GS: It's a daily struggle. I work out five days a week, I can't imagine not doing it. ►



I've been with Gavin for 14 years,

Beaded silk-crepe dress by L'Wren Scott.
Cotton shoes by Charlotte Olympia. Rhodium
and gold-plated cuff by Noir Jewelry

and, let's face it, that is a huge accomplishment — it hasn't been the easiest journey'

I'd like to have no rules and eat what I want, but I've learned over the years that I'm so disappointed when I can't wear the clothes I want to wear. And if I let myself down, appear on stage when I'm not looking my best, it's not fun for me. I just beat myself up about it.

SM: Do you ever get tired of being famous?

GS: I miss going to places like discount stores. I could spend three hours looking in the lingerie department!

SM: What's the biggest sacrifice?

GS: The biggest sacrifice is the kids, their privacy, a responsibility for them and not knowing if this is going to ruin their lives. They're so exposed, they don't have a choice... that scares me a lot. But I think it's going to be fine. My children are very loved. Hopefully, they're going to grow up and not be crazy because of it. I just don't think there are that many sacrifices — I really don't want it all to go away.

SM: What is it that makes you want to keep going?

GS: I'm just greedy! Sometimes I don't want to do anything. I am exhausted all the time, every day. Like yesterday I worked out, had the shoot all day long, didn't get to see Kingston, had Zuma with me

at the shoot, came back, saw Kingston for 10 minutes, had a freak out because I had to visit the new school he's going to, came back, talked to Gavin, fell asleep, got up... Not even five minutes between.

SM: So what's the burning need to do it?

GS: I don't want it to end. Last summer's tour with No Doubt was the best one I'd ever done. I hadn't planned on doing a tour; I'd had Zuma, I felt so gross — I got so big and felt so out of touch and not cool. I was trying to write this cool record and nothing came out. I felt so bad because you've got this whole band waiting, but I couldn't write. So we said 'Let's just go on tour.' We had no new single, we hadn't been on stage together for, like, five years and every night I'd get teary-eyed because of those old songs. I'm up on stage and singing songs about relationships I've had and I'm looking over and my kids are watching me. It's very surreal. I've been with Gavin for 14 years, and, let's face it, that is a huge accomplishment. I feel so proud of that — it hasn't been the easiest journey.

SM: So why design if you feel that way about your music? Is there something designing does that music doesn't?

GS: I've always done clothes. My mom and me did all [my] clothes.

SM: Did your mum teach you to sew?

GS: I learned the basics at school, but Mom made me go to the fabric store every holiday, look at the books, choose what we were going to do. She let me be really involved. In high school, I never wanted to dress just from the mall, I was into thrift stores, vintage... My room at home was full of pins and sewing machines.

SM: I've got an early photo of us with your bright neon trousers and I was, like, 'I like your pants,' and you said, 'Yeah, I made them.'

GS: For our first tour I made a few dresses that looked like something from Disney, like Snow White, and a cheerleader's outfit. It was really ghetto, with Velcro on the back.

SM: Like your look in *Hollaback Girl*, right?

GS: Yeah, we met this manager who had a friend that made clothes. She started making me stuff because I was on tour and couldn't ►

shop. She'd send me swatches and I'd say 'I want this, this and this kind of trend.'

SM: In training for having your own label?

GS: I started LAMB because I thought the music would be over. I thought 'I've got to do something. I know I'm going to have kids; I know [music's] not going to last forever.' I needed to do something that would fulfil my passion because I don't feel self-worth unless I'm doing stuff.

SM: So are you still interested in continuing the label?

GS: It's not even close to being where I want it to be yet. [Fashion] is very, very hard to do well, but I'm learning. I'm really making collections now, I'm playing the game of fashion designer. When I first started I really couldn't say [I was a] fashion designer because it just wasn't right, I wasn't one. But now I'm getting to the point where the last collection we did was a disaster until two weeks before – I had to fly to Montreal and review the whole collection – and it ended up being one of the most cohesive collections we'd ever done.

SM: Is there anyone you admire in fashion?

GS: I'll never be *that* kind of fashion... Those people know how to cut patterns, they're draping; this is a different kind of design. It's not the same thing. I'm not there every day, doing fittings, pinning things. I have three meetings a week. I'll say, 'OK, I'm into this theme right now,' and go through the colour palette and choose tones that I like. And then they come back and we tear it all apart and make it better. It's more being an editor, in a way.

SM: When you design, do you think about how the average woman feels about herself? Or do you create fantasy?

GS: I think it's a bit of both. I don't really think about anything else except designing for myself. I think what would look good on me and what I would wear.

SM: Who do you imagine wears your clothes?

GS: Rihanna was wearing one of my jackets on *Good Morning America* the other day and that was hot.

SM: A lot of girls that come out now; they're wearing Chanel straight away.

this real masculine-feminine thing; I'm not really that sexy – I get all made up and then I like to be a tough girl. I didn't even wear high heels till I was in my thirties! To me, [stripping off] is so boring. Not to say that I don't think a sexy picture can't be beautiful, but for me there's a certain point that I'll go, 'That's just embarrassing.'

SM: Do you hold back because you were brought up in quite a strict Catholic home?

GS: It's just not me. I would look weird.

SM: Are you religious?

GS: At this point in my life, I'm not following a strict church thing, but in my heart definitely I believe in something out there. My parents still go to church every single Sunday.

SM: Are you close to them?

GS: I'm really close to my family. My parents are just ridiculous. Anytime I can bring them, I have them there, and it's great when they can have the kids. Let's face it: it's really hard to do what I do and have the boys. Next week, Gavin's going back to London and it's going to be crazy. Having my parents there, at least they know that's their family.

SM: What do you think of British culture?

GS: It's really weird becoming a part of it, because I was always such a fan! When I discovered music, it was all about the UK... Madness, The Specials, UB40, Depeche Mode, The Cure and all of that 1980s music that I worship. The music that they wrote was so English, it was so about their world, I thought it was the coolest thing ever. When you grow up in Orange County, you never think you'll go there. The fact that I ended up with this English guy is really weird. I don't know how that happened.

SM: Do you miss the UK?

GS: I haven't been back in a year and a half and I'm missing it. Don't tell Gavin but I'm really, really missing it. I miss our house and the fireplaces and

'I have this real masculine-feminine thing; I'm not really that sexy – I get all made up

Everybody is so styled, but they all look the same. Except for Lady Gaga – she's coming from our world.

GS: Yeah, nobody can make you look like that. That comes from within.

SM: Male pop stars are the same, they feel like little robots to me. Do you think that's an *American Idol* thing, where everything is homogenised?

GS: It's a trend. When we were coming out everything was organic, it was all about singer-songwriters, everything was recorded, very real. Before that it was heavy metal. It comes in cycles. Now it's all about the reality world. This generation is growing up knowing what it looks like when someone's brushing their teeth, or having miscarriages on TV; all these crazy things where they're right in their life, and music's like that, too.

SM: You've always been very careful about the way you've used your body, right?

GS: There are certain artists I think I like, but then all of a sudden the clothes come off and I'm like, 'What are you talking about? You've gotta save that!' I have

the way it feels in there. It takes longer to walk to our top floor than it takes to walk down the street and go to the pub; it's like a little storybook. Where I grew up there's a bunch of strip malls and London to me is just so cute and old and everything I love.

SM: Do you ever get depressed?

GS: Yeah, I mean I get overwhelmed; there's just so much going on. How am I supposed to do everything? Especially now I have the kids; that's the hardest part, it's just so much responsibility.

SM: What do you do when you feel blue?

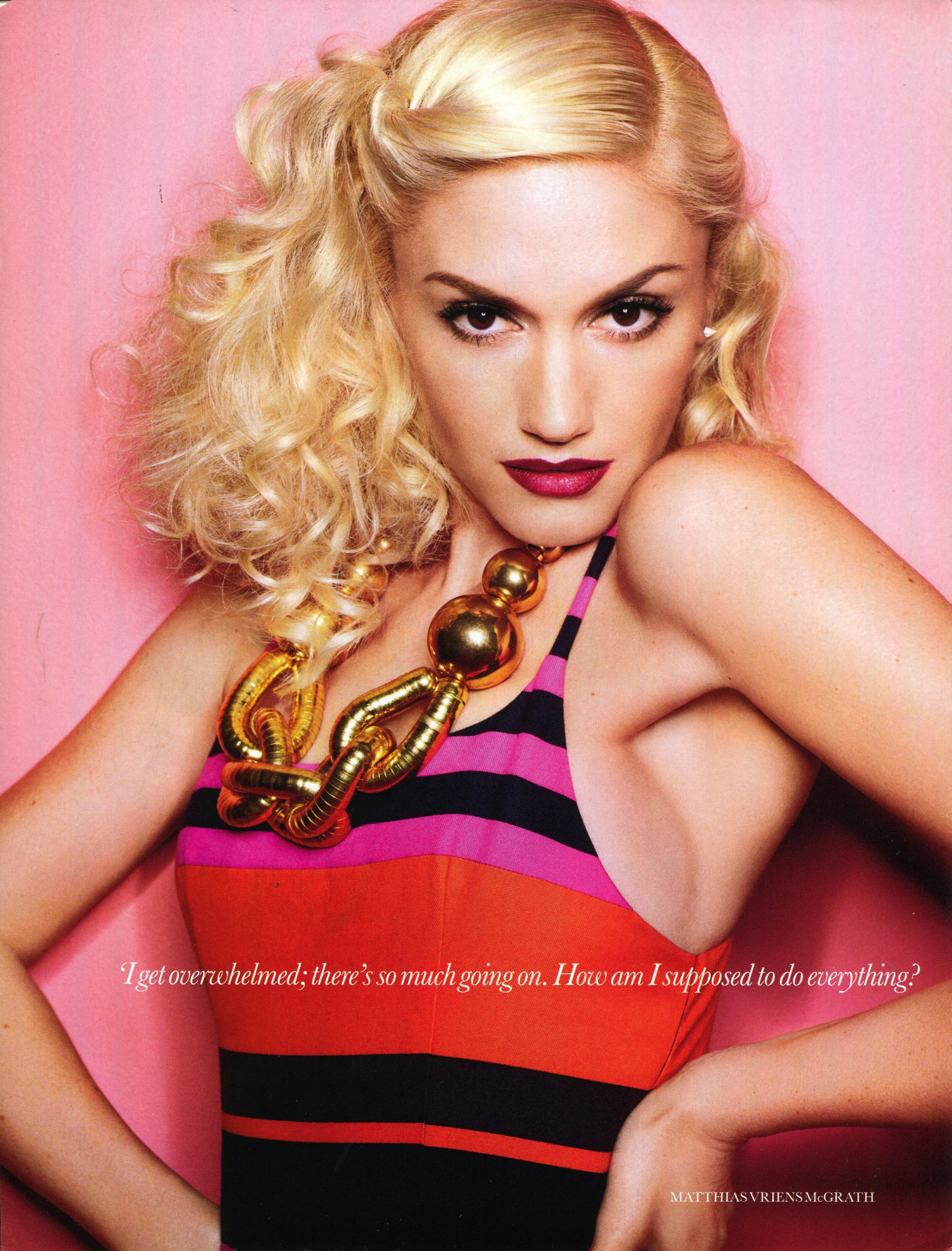
GS: I have a great family, I have a great band. I've had the same people around me forever. I just lean on them. I'm a great talker. I don't hold it all in. ►



and then I like to be a tough girl'

Satin dress by Louis Vuitton. Rhodium
and gold-plated cuff, as before

MATTHIASVRIENSMcGRATH



'I get overwhelmed; there's so much going on. How am I supposed to do everything?'

Sometimes I'm, like, 'People just don't wanna hear – shut up!' My trainer's probably, like, 'Aaaah, every morning I have to hear about your day!'

SM: Can we talk about your wardrobe? When you moved into your house, I remember coming over. You showed me it and we were literally screaming – you were like a little kid.

GS: I need to clean it out more often – I get attached to things. I keep all my costumes. I have all the amazing Harajuku stuff.

SM: What else have you worn over the years that you've thought, 'F***, I looked good!'

GS: My wedding dress.

SM: That wedding dress was insane! [John Galliano] is one of the greatest living designers.

GS: Oh, for sure. When I got engaged and someone told me that John said he would make my dress, I was like *really?* I said I wanted it to be over the top, but not traditional – I wanted it to be *everything*. But how do you tell this genius over the phone? He was, like, OK, and sent me these drawings of this unbelievable, perfect dress. It's going into the V&A now. I didn't wanna send it because I was scared it would get ruined. But it's a work of art, it needed to be seen.

SM: What else? Favourite video outfit?

GS: I love the older stuff – the polka-dot dress in *Don't Speak*. I'd had it for years before I wore it in the video.

I'd bought it on the road and it had this musty smell that you couldn't get rid of. And I love the tennis bra in *Just a Girl* – I get sentimental about those clothes.

SM: What if you had to go to a desert island, what could you not live without?

GS: Lipstick. I can remember the first time I wore the dark lipstick. I always used to wear this L'Oréal Seashell, then I started working as a make-up artist...

SM: What? I didn't know that!

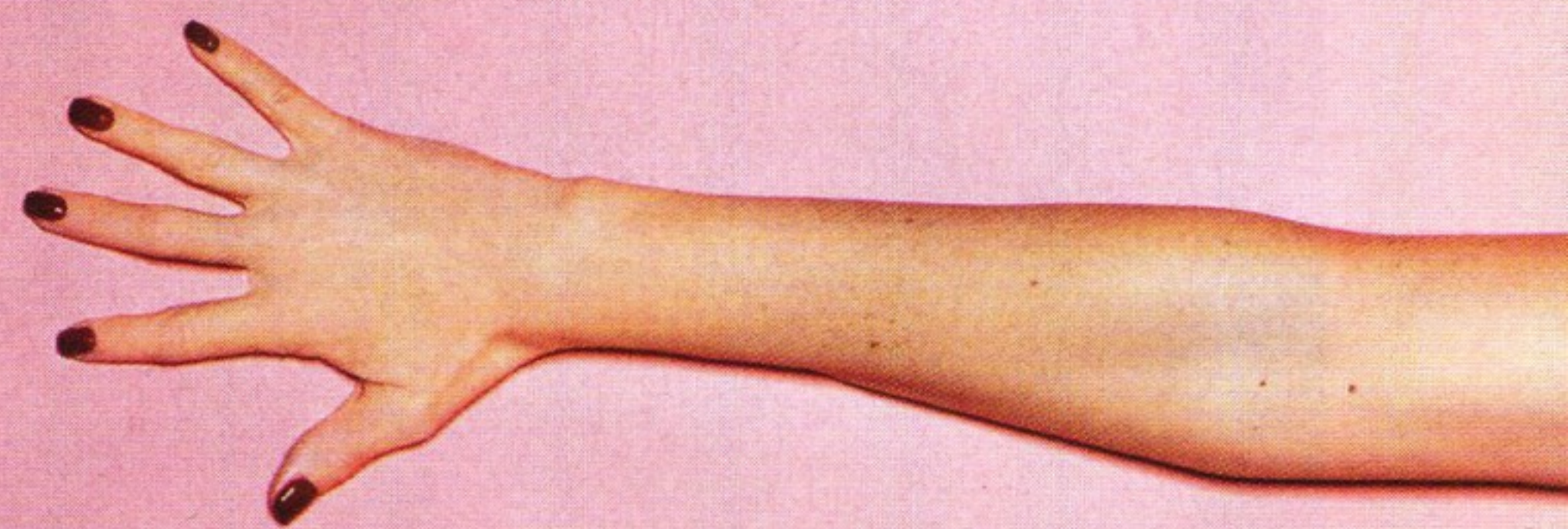
GS: When I graduated, I worked in a department store called the Broadway. It was horrible clothes,



Gwen Stefani's top five albums...

1. *Homogenic* by Björk
2. *The Sound of Music* soundtrack
3. *Rapture* by Anita Baker
4. *Parallel Lines* by Blondie
5. *Celebrate the Bullet* by The Selecter

Cotton dress by Prada. Gold-plated necklace by Noir Jewelry



ghetto mall. They never showed me what to do, but doing makeovers and making people happy, it's very rewarding – I really do get off on that kind of stuff.

SM: So what's your secret, cheap beauty product?

GS: Cheap? My Pantene shampoo, I have tons of that.

SM: And what's your beauty secret?

GS: There's nothing that really works – come on, let's face it. We're all looking for the secret, and if you find it, let me know.

Night has fallen outside Gwen and Gavin's dining-room window – the Californian hills spread out before us littered with twinkling lights. Gwen arches her back, working out the aches of yesterday's shoot. Shirley stretches in a mirror image, drains her by-now cold tea and conversation moves to mutual friends, the records both are in the

Especially now I have the kids; that's the hardest part – it's just so much responsibility'

but the women really needed help, and I used to be able to put really cute outfits together for them – it was really fulfilling. But I secretly wanted to be one of the make-up girls – the cool ones, the stuck-up cool ones!

SM: I was one of them! I worked on the Miss Selfridge make-up counter.

GS: Wow, that's way cooler! Our mall was a dollar

process of working on and when they can next get together for 'a proper catch-up'. It's one of those moments where you forget who you are, where you are, that you're not just one of the girls. And actually, that may be the answer to Shirley's questions about how Gwen's done it, how she's stayed relevant and popular for the best part of two decades – she's one of us. Love, work, looking good: life can be hard work and she's not afraid to get her hands dirty and admit it. She's one of us. And she looks damn good in lipstick. ■

Go behind the scenes on ELLE's cover shoot with Gwen Stefani at ELLE.tv