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The Highs & Lows of Rodney Dangerfield

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Entertainment Weekly

No Doubt:
Adrian Young,
Gwen Stefani,
Tom Dumont
& Tony Kanal



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THE
GREATEST
SHOW ON
EARTH?

BY
CHRIS WILLMAN

060018

Well, No Doubt's
greatest hits,
anyway—which is
what they'll be
playing on their
last tour before
Gwen Stefani drops
a solo CD

PHOTOGRAPHS BY GAVIN BOND

ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY 35

SHOOTING WHAT LITTLE BREEZE THERE IS ON A HOT, insufferably still L.A. day, Gwen Stefani suddenly feels the need to cull a statistic from a bandmate. "How many times do you think you've thrown up in your life, Tony?" she asks.

♦ Tony Kanal looks like he's not certain he wants to play this game. "I'm sure it's a lot," the bass player answers with a nervous chuckle. Better to focus on the immediate future. "This time," he insists, "it's gonna be much more mellow and healthy." ♦ Fifty points if you've already figured out our subject of the day: rock touring. ♦ Their little O.C.-teen-ska-band-that-could, No Doubt, is hitting the amphitheater circuit in June, pairing up with blink-182 for one of the summer's most anticipated tours. (One of the most economical, too: Ticket prices top out in the mid-two-figure range, or about \$250 cheaper than it'd cost you for a similar seat to see Madonna.) It's a nationwide victory lap in honor of their recent blockbuster hits collection, *The Singles 1992-2003*, whose one new song, a cover of Talk Talk's "It's My Life," afforded them yet another top 10 smash (their tenth). This could be the optimal point in their history to catch the band: They've been together long enough to almost count as seasoned elder statesmen—17 years, which is about 170 in rock years—but, being still in their 30s, they're vigorous, scrappy, and in no danger yet of outgrowing their audience.

WHICH IS NOT TO SAY THEY HAVEN'T OUTGROWN A few youthful vices. In "Hey Baby," one of several massive singles from their triple-platinum 2001 album *Rock Steady*, Stefani immortalized her bandmates' old post-show romantic pursuits, as ironically observed by her from across a crowded bacchanal. But any would-be female band-aids hoping to be party to that decadence this summer may walk away disappointed, since, with everyone in the group either married, engaged, or seriously involved, that song is primarily a historical document.

"I'm sad for Tony on this tour a little bit," Stefani says, offering sympathy for her bassist and ex-boyfriend's lost youth. "Because these guys used to party so hard. Basically they would start drinking at around five to get rid of the hangover from the night before. Then they'd have an after-party every night, bring a DJ booth and lights and songs and everything, with whatever backstage passes got out to whatever girls. And it was months of that, every single night. The nights we didn't play, they would go to clubs." Those years may be gone, but, to crudely paraphrase *Casablanca*, they'll always have porcelain.

Speaking of toilets (and we do promise to move along), now is as good a time as any to offer a word of warning for anyone planning to catch No Doubt this summer. If you're buying beer before their set, be sure to ask for a child-size cup, because there will be *no bathroom breaks*. Which is to say, you won't be getting any of those less familiar album tracks that usually signal fair-weather rock fans to make

ADRIAN YOUNG

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KODAK 160NC

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KODAK 160NC

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KODAK 160NC

TOM DUMONT

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KODAK 160NC



GWEN STEFANI

the traditional dash for the loo. The whole set list will come off that best-of. "It's really exciting to be able to go on a tour where every single song we're gonna play will be a single," enthuses Stefani. "It's gonna be like this"—whereupon she strikes a James Bond pose, spraying the room with firepower: "Bang bang bang bang!"

The catch? They'll be out on the amphitheater circuit for a mere month before Stefani heads back indoors to reload, since she's still got a long-aborning solo album to get done and released before year's end.

The tour, in fact, was never supposed to happen. The group had planned to be on hiatus all year, but current events were set in motion in early 2003 when the band initially decided to "put a B-sides record out with a bunch of cool stuff for die-hard fans," Kanal says. Then came the bright idea to—hey!—throw in a disc's worth of A sides, along with a couple of DVDs, and make it a boxed set. The final result of this evolutionary process was two separate projects: *Boom Box*, a limited-edition set, and the single-CD *Singles* collection, which has moved almost 2 million copies.

"We just wanted to celebrate that we've been in a band as long as we have," says Stefani of the hits collection and commemorative tour. "None of us were expecting to go out right now, but it's funner when you don't plan it and it just happens."

TONY, YOUR HAIR IS SO WHITE!" YELLS STEFANI, COMMANDING Kanal's attention from across a bank of lights at an outdoor photo shoot. This would seem to be a textbook case of the pot calling the kettle platinum, but she's right: Kanal is looking fair enough that you wonder if maybe *he's* the member Martin Scorsese should've picked to play Jean Harlow in *The Aviator*, the Howard Hughes biopic starring Leonardo DiCaprio (to be released in December). "It's like a fluorescent bulb," she marvels, moving closer for a blonde-on-blonde comparison. "Is my hair that white?"

Meanwhile, drummer Adrian Young has turned whiter than either dye job, thanks to a six-foot boa constrictor that has just been introduced to this circus-themed set. Young's performed live in nothing but a jockstrap, so it's clear he lacks any phobias about public nakedness, but he's got one about snakes, and his request to move to the farthest edge of the shot is granted. Stefani, for her part, digs the boa (though it proved too uncooperative to make the final photo). For a good half-hour she has it around her neck. Asked what 25 pounds of pure muscle coiling around your shoulders feels like, Stefani—looking altogether too relaxed—says, "It's like...a massage."

Maybe they could take the boa out on tour to help work out those post-thrashing neck cricks—or, in Stefani's case, to relieve her daily noon pre-tour workouts. "It's ruined my day," she complains. But perhaps this buff rock icon doth protest too much, since moments later she's telling her fellow band members, "I want to be working out with you guys on the tour!" The guys smile faintly, as if trying to replace the mental image of a StairMaster with a picture of Jim Beam.

Or it could be just the genuine smile of a recently acquired domesticity. Kanal, 33, will be bringing his girlfriend on tour. Guitarist Tom Dumont, 36, is newly engaged. (He's the one who, with his new bushy 'n' bearded look, might as well be a member of Phish. "I'm the not-rock-star of the group," he says.) Young, 34, is married and has a 2-year-old son; he's also one of the few avid golfers to sport a full Mohawk, which helps ensure he gets accosted every time he leaves the house. ("I wear hats, every day, but it doesn't matter," he grumbles.) And as everyone probably knows,

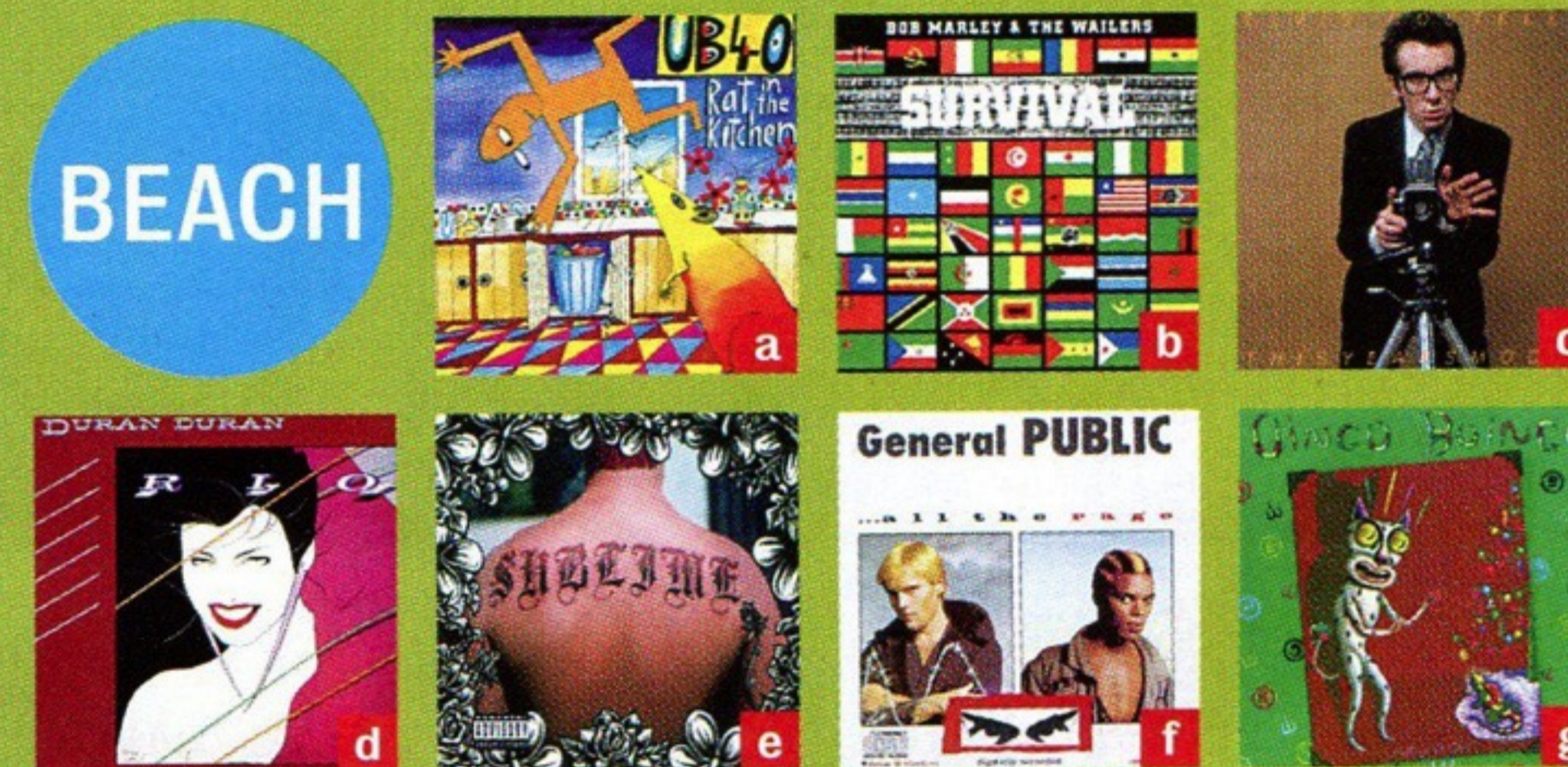
NO DOUBT'S FAVORITE ALBUMS



(a) Fishbone, *In Your Face*; (b) The Selecter, *Selected Selector Selections*; (c) The Specials, *The Specials*; (d) Madness, *One Step Beyond*; (e) The English Beat, *I Just Can't Stop It*; (f) Operation Ivy, *Operation Ivy*; (g) Desmond Dekker, *Israelites: Best of Desmond Dekker*



(a) Beastie Boys, *Paul's Boutique*; (b) Cypress Hill, *Cypress Hill*; (c) Notorious B.I.G., *Ready to Die*; (d) N.W.A., *Straight Outta Compton*; (e) Public Enemy, *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back*; (f) DJ Quik, *Quik Is the Name*; (g) Poor Righteous Teachers, *Pure Poverty*



(a) UB40, *Rat in the Kitchen*; (b) Bob Marley & the Wailers, *Survival*; (c) Elvis Costello & the Attractions, *This Year's Model*; (d) Duran Duran, *Rio*; (e) Sublime, *Sublime*; (f) General Public, *All the Rage*; (g) Oingo Boingo, *Nothing to Fear*



(a) Bad Brains, *Rock for Light*; (b) The Clash, *London Calling*; (c) Descendents, *Milo Goes to College*; (d) Suicidal Tendencies, *Suicidal Tendencies*; (e) Toy Dolls, *A Far Out Disc*; (f) The Slits, *Cut*; (g) Youth of Today, *We're Not in This Alone*

OPENING PAGE: SET DESIGN: MARK HELF/WWW.THEPAGAGENCY.COM; WARDROBE STYLING: STEFANI'S CLOTHES: FRANK B/THE WALL GROUP; MAKEUP: FRANK B/THE WALL GROUP; HAIR: DANIL O FOR FLAWLESS/THE HAIR GROUP; VAN NOTE: SHOES: VANS; KANAL'S JACKET: SCARF: AND ARM CUFF: PALACE COSTUME: T-SHIRT: ANGEL OF DEATH; SHOES: VANS; YOUNG'S SWIMSUIT: BELT: AND TANK: PALACE COSTUME; ARM CUFF: LO-FI L.A.; BOOTS: PUMA; SOCKS: COMME DES GARÇONS

Stefani, 34, married her longtime beau, Bush-man Gavin Rossdale, in 2002.

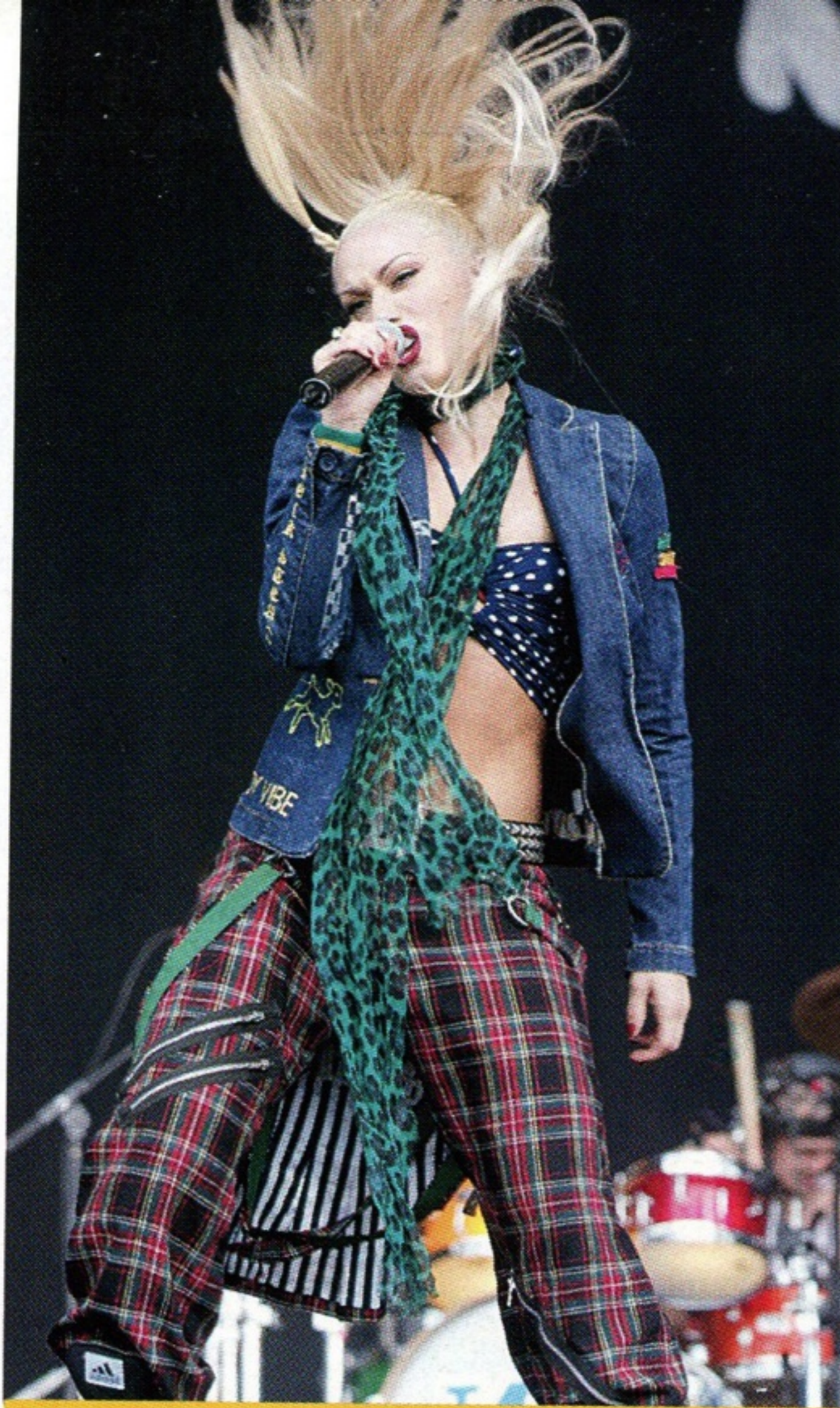
You might think marriage would have taken a bit of the bloom off Stefani's incurable romanticism—that maybe she wouldn't mind getting out of the house and living the single life for a few weeks this summer. You'd think wrong, you heartless cynic. "It's gonna suck" being away from Rossdale, she says, "though it always makes it very exciting when you get back together again. This is the first year in our relationship we've ever really hung out this much—like, every day. I love waking up together. And also making records at the same time [while living] in the same house, so that's a first too." She describes a typical working-couple setup: "We go off to the studio and don't see each other all day long, and then we'll see each other at night and it's 'Oh, how did it go?' It's rad—I love it."

At this point, it may be some of our more love-soured readers doing the throwing up. But Stefani is the rare distaff rocker who can fully indulge a girly-girl side, with all the romance and glam that might entail, *and* still seem like one of the boys. She and her band have always been crafty about striking intriguing balances. Starting out as a bunch of ambitious Anaheim teenagers in an unremarkable late-'80s ska band, No Doubt matured into the goofy but pop-savvy alt-rockers behind 1995's 8-million-seller *Tragic Kingdom*. Five years later, maturity was the unexpected order of the day with a confessional follow-up, *Return of Saturn*. In December 2001, they came back with a well-regarded return to immaturity—and successful step forward into dance music—with the electronics-shaded *Rock Steady*.

Their next album should mark a pendulum swing back toward writing on guitar and piano and away from dance beats. Or so they say now. It'll probably be a long, long time before anyone hears it.

In a makeup chair between shots, Stefani is telling her assistant about the track she's been recording with OutKast's Andre 3000, a number he wrote called "Long Way to Go." They're set to resume work on the song later today. "We sing [in unison], but because his voice is so cool and mine is so geek," she worries that "it sounds like I'm singing backup on his record." Tonight she's going to try to talk him into doing it as a true duet, trading off lines.

Stefani describes her first solo album as a dance project, a CD made up of electronic beats rather than the band tunes she's accustomed to with No Doubt. Dallas Austin is on board, as is Beyoncé producer Rich Harrison. But in some ways it doesn't sound like a huge departure: Nellee Hooper, who coproduced *Rock Steady's* best cuts, including "Hella Good" (their most club-friendly hit), is producing some tracks. And Kanal is cowriting and producing two others. Since No Doubt have been so successful in reinventing themselves, couldn't she have purged some of these creative impulses



"No Doubt is not sleeping together," says Young of Stefani's CD. "We can cheat on each other."

within the context of the band?

Well, no. "The music I wanted to make for the dance record is something I could not do with No Doubt," she maintains. "It would exclude members, because it's programming, it's electronics. But it's cool, because everyone's been supportive, and there's no plan to quit doing what we're doing." The others concur, noting their own sideline activities producing new artists or playing in other bands—including, in Young's case, a recent touring stint with reunited new-wavers Bow Wow Wow. "We're not sleeping together," says the drummer. "We can cheat on each other. It's cool."

Perhaps the most ironic part of Stefani doing a solo album is that the lyrics are much less autobiographical than the material she writes for No Doubt. "There are some weird twists to the themes, but it's not heartfelt, deep, painful subject matter. I sing 'baby' a lot, which I haven't done before," she says with a laugh. So she had to go solo to get impersonal? "That's why I don't call it a solo record," she responds. "I call it a dance record. A solo record to me is like heart-pouring-out, 'Finally, here's me! This is what they've been holding me back from!' That's not what this record is. I want to make a record that's a modern version of the ['80s] stuff I grew up on that made me feel really happy, that you can dance to in the club."

For now, Stefani has set aside her disco ambitions to concentrate on moving the big crowds they'll soon encounter in amphithe-

aters. Which should be a cinch given their arsenal of hits. "There's something really fun about going into the opening chords of 'Don't Speak,' to hear that crowd roar," says Dumont, asked to pick a live favorite. "But from the musical side of things, 'Ex-Girlfriend' and 'New' are songs that are kind of intricate, where there's a lot of detail and subtlety in the way you navigate the songs, but at the same time they're very rocking and aggressive."

"'Sunday Morning' is one I love playing," says Kanal.

"'Just a Girl' is always a winner, even though it's not my favorite song to play, because it's hard and you get tired," Stefani says. "But people get so excited. If you're playing a festival and not doing too good, then all of a sudden you play that song, it's an instant win-over." And her own favorite? "'Rock Steady,' but we're not playing that on this tour. Right?"

"We could throw it in a couple shows," Kanal offers.

"But it wasn't a single," Stefani points out.

"You never know what kind of shows we might do," he says guardedly, a little less prepared than Stefani to have a band meeting in public. So there you have it: They *might* throw in an album track or two and break the all-singles edict. Nonetheless, No Doubt fans, while the band members do their pre-tour workouts, *you* might want to work on steeling your bladders. Because even if "a real love survives a rock-steady vibe," a full tank of Bud might not. ■