

FASHION ROCKS

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FASHION + MUSIC = STYLE

FEATURING

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GWEN AT WORK

With two fashion collections, a solo recording career and a band to front, Ms. Stefani tries to keep her balance

BY MERLE GINSBERG PHOTOGRAPHED BY PATRICK DEMARCHELIER

A platinum blonde sidles into a South Beach café, dressed in sweatpants, a wifebeater shirt and gold sneakers. It's 1:30 in the afternoon, and she orders coffee in a groggy voice that speaks of a mind-blowing workout after a very long night. Nothing unusual about any of this (except the gold sneakers) in Miami Beach, land of hard-bodied, hard-partying blondes whose days start in the afternoon and whose nights are the stuff of envy.

But Gwen Stefani is not one of those Miami girls, not by a long shot. Nor will she fit neatly into any category you can attach to her: SoCal superstar whose band, No Doubt, has sold 26 million records; wife of Brit rocker Gavin Rossdale; songwriter; fashion designer; trendsetter—not even Harajuku or hollaback girl, both locutions she introduced to the international pop vernacular. In sweltering, decadent Miami, Stefani was *not* out on the town last night. She went bowling early in the evening with Pharrell Williams (who produced her single “Hollaback Girl”), then went back to her room to chill. Then Williams, suddenly inspired, called her in the middle of the night and dragged her back to the studio. They worked until three A.M. on the project at hand, a dance-inspired solo album that will be a sort of sequel to and segue from Stefani's multiplatinum *Love, Angel, Music, Baby*.

“Pharrell's so motivated,” Stefani gushes. “He called me and said, ‘Come down to Miami. I have all these tracks.’ I'm really honored because he could work with anybody. But I'm convinced he's down here because of the girls. And they are kind of amazing, the girls down here.”

Stefani, whose multitrack career these days is nothing short of amazing, knows whereof she speaks when it comes to motivation. In the few weeks she had off following the first leg of her Harajuku Lovers solo tour (named for Tokyo's hipster teenagers), she suddenly thought, Why not cut a new solo album? She knew she had to get it done before her tour starts up again in October and before she begins recording with No Doubt in January. “I figured I'd push myself a little,” she says.

In Stefani's “do something creative every minute” world, juggling is for amateurs, multitasking for slackers. This girl has a world-class work ethic. While she plans the graphics and photo strategies for the

new record, she is well into the fourth season of masterminding her L.A.M.B. clothing line. (In 2003, Le Sportsac bags introduced the Love Angel Music Baby iconography to retail.) The L.A.M.B. fall collection, created with Stefani's co-designer, Zaldy, was inspired by pirates and royalty and features military coats, lace jabots, leather breeches, tweed minis and the odd animal print. This fall, she's also bringing out her new line of lower-priced Harajuku Lovers accessories: hats, baby clothes and bags for Urban Outfitters and Hello Kitty outlets. September marked the New York Fashion Week debut of L.A.M.B.'s spring 2006 line. Oh yes, and the fall 2006 collection is already in development. Then there's the L.A.M.B. sneaker line, elaborately detailed kicks produced with K-Swiss's Royal Elastics subsidiary and packaged in Rasta rainbow-colored boxes.

“It's crazy,” Stefani says, laughing. “Every single thing goes through me. I have some great girls on my team, so I just tell 'em, ‘Dude, when I go on tour, you have to keep the motor rolling.’ I can't do a five-hour meeting when I'm on tour.”

With two collections purring creatively and L.A.M.B. selling \$20 million annually at outlets such as Kitson, Nordstrom and Barneys New York, Stefani is now a full-fledged design heavyweight, which is altogether fitting. Growing up in Orange County, California, she and her brother Eric studied visual art. He became a cartoonist for *Ren & Stimpy* and *The Simpsons*, and she was headed

toward a career as an illustrator when music interrupted. “Art was the only thing I was good at,” she says, allowing that she stumbled onto singing by accident. “I knew I would do something with art. I tried to design the cover of the No Doubt *Tragic Kingdom* album, and we went on tour after that—and then I was gone.”

It was 18 years ago that Stefani crafted her first great visual achievement: her rough-glam stage look, a mix of wifebeater shirts, combat pants and monkey boots, along with a Jean Harlow hairdo, deep-red lipstick and heavy eyeliner. Since then, she credits her “team”—famed hairdresser Danilo and stylist Andrea Lieberman (who also works with Jennifer Lopez)—for helping her visually manifest her many moods. “I've been so blessed that I've been able to create for 18 years. I don't want to be over it, but you never know how long it will last. Just being creative makes me feel so good.”

“L.A.M.B. started as a line where you could find everyday clothes—cool jeans but ones that would make people say, ‘Where did you get that? That's sick!’ It was about my being greedy about what I wanted to wear.”

Marc Jacobs
dress.





he L.A.M.B. spring runway presentation in New York will be attended by the same gimlet-eyed fashion editors and retailers who routinely view collections by the likes of Marc Jacobs, Donna Karan and Ralph Lauren. But Stefani's show is more likely to include the kind of flamboyant theatricality associated with one of her style gurus, John

Galliano, whose dress she wore when she famously married Gavin Rossdale. "I've been thinking about the girls walking down the runway," she says, "the palette, maybe three of them coming out at once. Everything's 3-D for me now. In my planning the show, designing the collection became a whole different game. I wanted to feel really confident. L.A.M.B. started as a line where you could find everyday clothes—cool jeans but ones that would make people say, 'Where did you get that? That's sick!' It was about my being greedy about what I wanted to wear. Well, for spring there are actually gowns in the collection. Every collection has to balance the soft with the hard. I sort of wish I'd done a big show sooner, but at the same time, it's exactly the right time. I'm bummed I'm not gonna be walking in the show! I want to do a little dance on the runway. Who knows? Maybe I will."

For her Harajuku Lovers collection, Stefani explains, "it's more about graphics. It's based on the characters on the album. All the inspiration comes straight from the words. Plus, I wanted my fans to be able to afford it; those kids get pissed about the L.A.M.B. prices. But L.A.M.B.'s my baby. It's drawing from a higher place. When you get in that creative mode, it always costs more. And for adults the L.A.M.B. prices are good compared with other high-end designer stuff. It's a finely balanced thing, what I'm attempting."

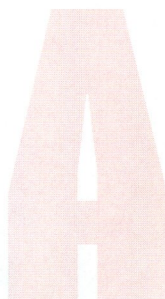
Now that she's got a handle on clothing, Stefani has another visual obsession: jewelry. "I started making jewelry with Andrea Lieberman," she explains. "It's L.A.M.B. costume jewelry but

not in plastic; it's done in enamel and metals. It's gonna be ridiculous. I'm not sure when this is coming out."

None of this means our girl Gwen can finally stop shopping. In her L.A. home, a large spare bedroom has been converted to a mammoth walk-in closet ("I know I'm a very lucky girl!") lined with bags, leather jackets, hoodies, sneakers, leopard Louboutin high heels (her favorites, she even dances in them) and lots of designer duds by John Galliano, Vivienne Westwood and Christian Dior (designed by Galliano).

As we walk through, it's clear that at least three quarters of the space has been set aside for her own designs. "I get to keep all the samples," she says with a laugh, "particularly the ones that don't work. At one point I saw this fall's samples and I thought, We have a disaster on our hands. There was one pirate sweatshirt I liked, so I told them to make everything look like that, and then it suddenly worked."

Two designers retain her loyalty and continue to provide inspiration: Galliano and Westwood. "I still have to go to her stores and give her all my money," Stefani says of Westwood. "Every time I'm in London I go there. It's such a great combo of modern and old. As far as Galliano goes, I just saw his couture show online. It's a girl's dream come true—it's *soooooo* funny! Some of the dresses look like they're from the Ice Capades. I will find an occasion to wear those, I can assure you."



As for the modern marriage of fashion and rock, it's pretty much old hat to her by now. "The visuals for me are the reward," she says. "The music is the hard part—the fire, the fuel. I know a lot of music people are doing clothes now, and it makes sense. Designing is an extension of your personality. It comes from inside you. Visuals are just an extension of writing music and singing and dancing onstage. It doesn't bother me that a lot of other people are attempting this. It's one thing to do a T-shirt line; for me, it's about doing it for real. I'm really serious about it. I want to be doing this for a long time." ■

A FEW OF HER FAVORITE THINGS

SCENTS I'm obsessed with scented candles and fragrances—all the Victoria's Secret fragrances. I've concocted my own lotion, and maybe I'll create a perfume like it for L.A.M.B. Let's just say I'm sniffing around.

MAN OR WOMAN? I don't have to give Gavin any advice on style. He's a cool Brit boy. I like to wear very masculine looks sometimes too. I travel with guys all the time,

and my older brother is my best friend. Just now, after my workout, I was feelin' all tough and found myself thinking, Am I a man or a woman? I think that's a very creative way to feel.

STYLE MENTOR I have always loved old movies, and one day I realized who Marilyn Monroe was. I can't explain why I related to her. It's like how I can't explain why I like pizza—I just do. I always wanted

to bleach my hair out, but I could never afford it. One day I just had the drummer's girlfriend bleach my hair.

INSPIRATIONS I'm inspired by the late 1920s and early 1930s: drop waists, 1920s underwear. I love a 1930s platinum blonde do with diamond bracelets and long nails. And then I'm totally in love with everything about *The Sound of Music*: Julie Andrews, tutus, ballerinas. I'm in love with looks from the past.



Juicy Couture pink sweater. Jill Stuart shorts. Van Cleef & Arpels watch. Cartier charm bracelet. Christian Louboutin shoes.