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Buzz





# she's just a girl

Gwen Stefani's rock 'n' roll-meets-red carpet style takes over the world  
*By Michele Sponagle*  
*Photography by Max Abadian*

**From where she sits**, on top of the world, Gwen Stefani might now believe that lightning can strike in the same place more than once. In the past six months, she's accomplished more than many artists do in a lifetime.

While she experienced much success with her band No Doubt (more than 30 million records sold), it seems that the turbo boosters of fame have pushed her to even greater heights, beginning with *Love.Angel.Music.Baby*. Her first solo CD has already sold more than three million copies, racking up three successful singles so far (including the current radio fave, "Hollaback Girl").

Along with her tremendous success as a solo musical artist, she recently dipped a toe into acting with a brief but memorable role as Jean Harlow in the Howard Hughes bio flick, *The Aviator*. Then the news came that her clothing line, L.A.M.B., was reportedly headed to the fashion big leagues to showcase the Spring '06 collection with a New York show in September.

Add to her ice cream sundae of a life a handful of awards (a Brit Award for Best International Female Solo Artist,

an MTV Australia Music Award for Best Dressed Video for "What You Waiting For?" and three Grammy wins, to boot), such high-profile magazine covers as *Rolling Stone*, *Vibe* and *Harper's Bazaar* and, for the cherry on top, her marriage to gorgeous rock star/actor Gavin Rossdale, and you have a 35-year-old woman who's closer to having it all than most.

Despite this, Stefani would like you to believe she's just an average gal. "There is nothing different [about me] except that I've written a few songs and made a few clothes," she tells *FLARE* from her L.A. home. "That's it."

That sentiment makes her all the more endearing, but it's mostly untrue. With a not-so-average music career securely in check, she's steering her much-lauded sense of fashion cool toward her L.A.M.B. designs. And Stefani's fashion empire is growing as fiercely as her own evolving image. Her designs encompass a beautiful contradiction of girly and feminine ideals alongside edgy and streetsmart looks. The results have moved the finicky fashion world to applause and many

L.A.M.B. fans to sign up on waiting lists at such luxury stores as Holt Renfrew.

Stefani's next fabulous endeavour, in addition to putting the finishing touches on L.A.M.B.'s fall collection (which *Women's Wear Daily* describes as "pirate-inspired"), is the introduction of Harajuku Lovers, a line of accessories that includes dolls, shirts, stationery and housewares.

"[Harajuku Lovers] is more for the fans," she says. "I love designing. It's something I've done my whole life. My mom made all my clothes and her mom made [hers, too]. It's definitely in my blood. To [design] at this level is way beyond a dream come true."

L.A.M.B. (Stefani's clothing label—an acronym for Love, Angel, Music, Baby and named after her dog) debuted in a crowded arena of celebrity-spawned fashion in September 2003 with a line of bags created for LeSportsac. The line made its mark among the star set and with people who wanted to claim some of Stefani's edgy, quirky style for themselves. Come this fall, she is out to seize a larger chunk of the lucrative fashion pie for L.A.M.B. by adding jewelry ▶▶



and shoes to the line, which will be inspired by her love of all things Asian.

According to Holt Renfrew's fashion director, Barbara Atkin, Stefani's designs are successful because "she's not taking street fashion and making it elitist. She's cleaning it up and giving it quality." The results have been pretty and impressive. L.A.M.B. has become one of Holt Renfrew's bestsellers for 2005, with items selling as fast as they come in, which is unusual for a newly launched line. "We're into the age of celebrity designers," says Atkin, "but not all of them have the integrity of quality. Gwen fits that calibre. She is someone who will go down as one of those great iconic women who represent a decade of style."

For Stefani, however, inspiration for her personal style came from some obscure places. "When I was trying to create L.A.M.B., I was thinking about all the brands I love," explains the California native, "and there were a lot of Japanese lines, like Super Lovers and Hysterical Glamour, that had this cute, casual thing I wanted L.A.M.B. to have. I liked the idea that someone might go, 'Where the f\*\*\* did you get those jeans?' And you can't stop wearing them and they're not like anyone else's."

Jeans and jewelry aside, Stefani's current fashion fascinations are her beloved Harajuku Girls. They are as much a part of her look as her designer duds by Vivienne Westwood and John Galiano. Her attraction to this four-pack of stylin' babes, and for Japanese culture in general, has deep roots.

"When I went to Japan for the first time in 1996 with No Doubt," she explains, "[I was already] a fan of Japan. My dad was working for Yamaha Motorcycles and would travel to Japan. He'd bring stuff back [for me]. I loved Hello Kitty and all these different Japanese things. When I went there for the first time, I went to this area of Tokyo called Harajuku, where, for the past 20 years, kids would dress up and hang out on the weekends. It was about personal style and expression through fashion. I really connected to that."



Love. Angel. Music. Lady:  
Gwen in Atelier Versace at  
the Vanity Fair Oscar party

## **"What you wear is an extension of who you are. It's the skin above the skin"**

Stefani's Harajuku Girls, whom she hired to become her silent glamour posse during her solo album's promotional tour, became a kind of security blanket for her—one Stefani needed as she battled the insecurities that came with working with music legend Linda Perry (who has written and produced songs for Pink and Christina Aguilera) on her solo debut. While Stefani struggled to put lyrics to paper, Perry created songs almost effortlessly. It was an ego-shredding experience that left Stefani in tears on occasion. "[The Harajuku Girls] became my muses, my inspiration and my confidence," she admits. "Every time I drew a blank, I dreamed about [my posse]."

In the end, *L.A.M.B.*—the album—has turned out to be the singer's most personal work to date, from the first single, "What You Waiting For?," about her writer's block, to "Cool," about staying friends with an ex, inspired by Stefani's relationship with No Doubt bassist Tony Kanal. Her current single, the catchy "Hollaback Girl," is Stefani's

parting shot to the detractors who didn't think she could pull off this record. The music video for this "attitude song," as Stefani describes it, was shot at a high school with video director Paul Hunter. And, once again, there are her Harajuku Girls—cruising in a yellow sports car, with their biggest fan.

Ironically, this rock-star existence wasn't what Stefani dreamed about as a high-school student in California. She now describes the Gwen of those days as "passive." Much has changed since then, even though she still has her off days. As the reigning queen of cool, Stefani's crown sparkles, but it isn't always a comfortable fit.

"There are days when I have problems leaving the house because I can't figure out what to wear," she confesses. "One of my worst fears is to go out and not feel good in what I'm wearing. What you wear is an extension of your personality and who you are. It's the skin above the skin."

That's proof, according to Stefani, that she's an ordinary gal who just happens to have done well in her accidental career. "I'm definitely fooling people every single day. I'm like everybody else. The only difference is that I've got an [18-year] history of being creative. I make music and, if people like it, they let me do it again. I work with really talented people who make my dreams come true—[it's] nothing more than that. I don't have the answers."

Perhaps. But Stefani certainly has her share of them. As she looks to the future, she does know that motherhood will likely be part of the picture, that a new No Doubt record may happen ("We're flirting with the idea"), that she has no immediate plans to tour ("It takes you from the people you love") and that she'll pursue more film roles. But she is reluctant to talk about these things ("It's really boring to talk about things when they're not going to happen for sure"). Even overexposure is something Stefani is ready to conquer head on. "If people make me overexposed [and] shoot me down, I'll be dead for a while, but I'll be back." ■ ▶▶



# Buzz

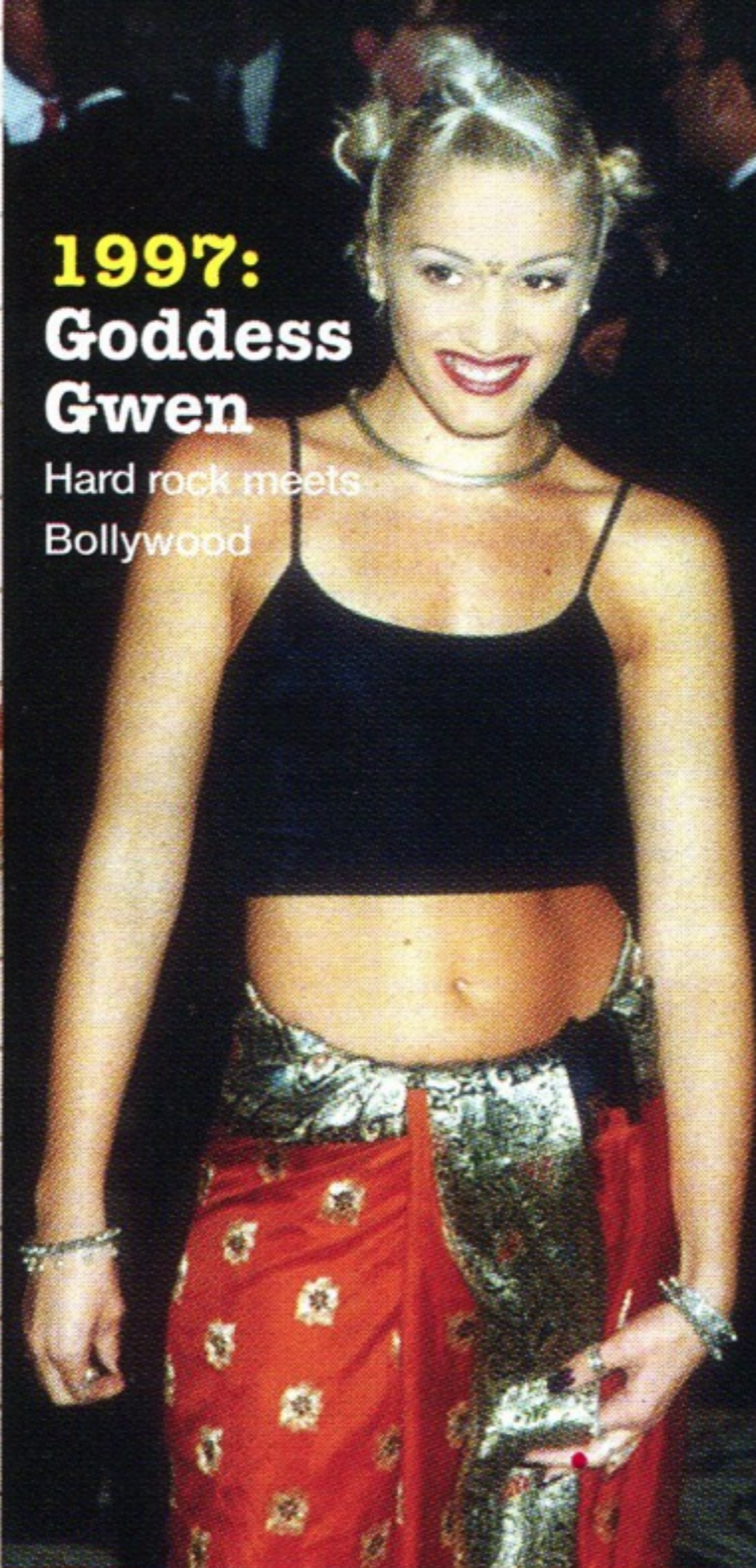


## 1996: Faux Doubt

A punkier Madonna wannabe arrives on the scene in multi-zipped pants and a studded crop top

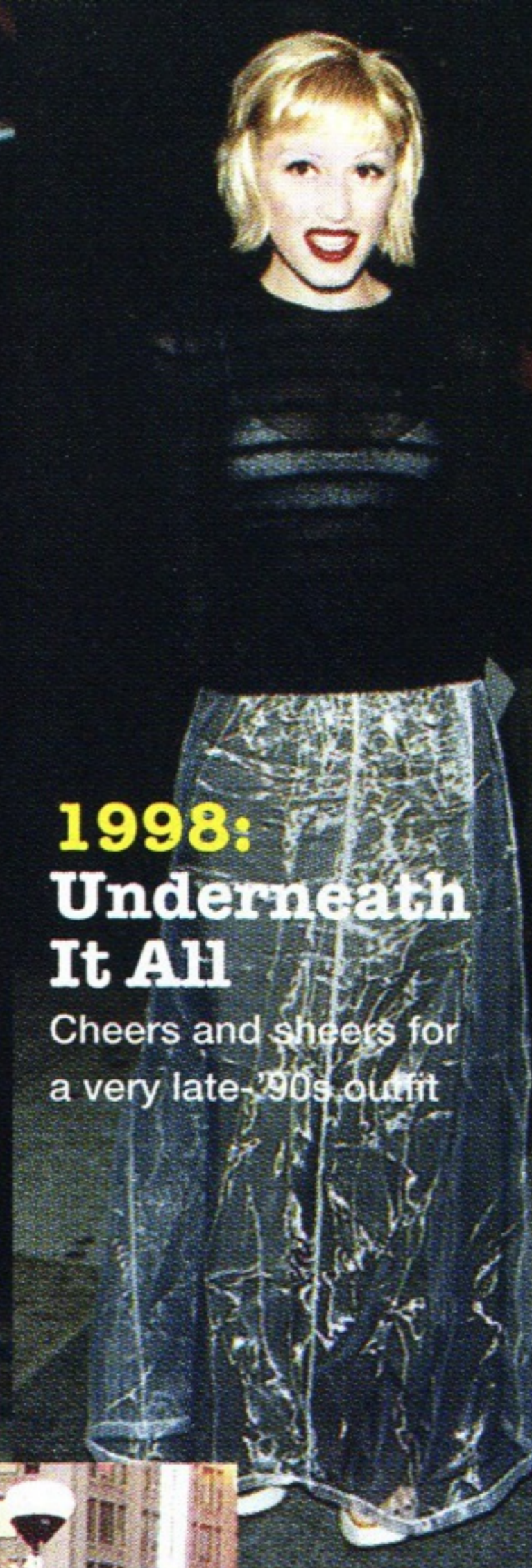
## 1997: Goddess Gwen

Hard rock meets Bollywood



## 1998: Underneath It All

Cheers and sheers for a very late-'90s outfit



## 1999: Pink Lady

Gwen braces herself with a street-inspired coloured-bang/knit-hoodie combo



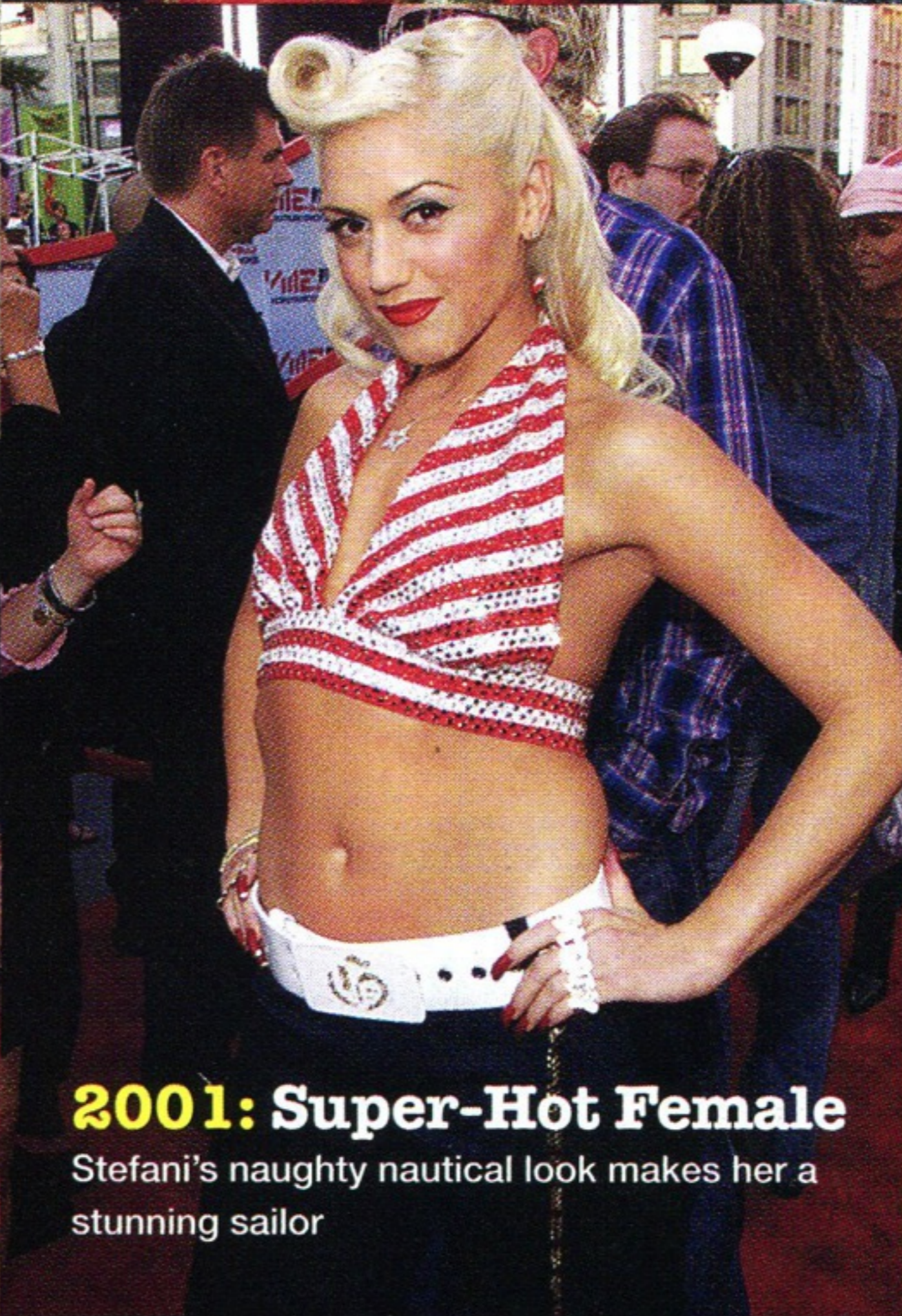
## 2000: Frock Steady

Hoops + prints + braids = true original



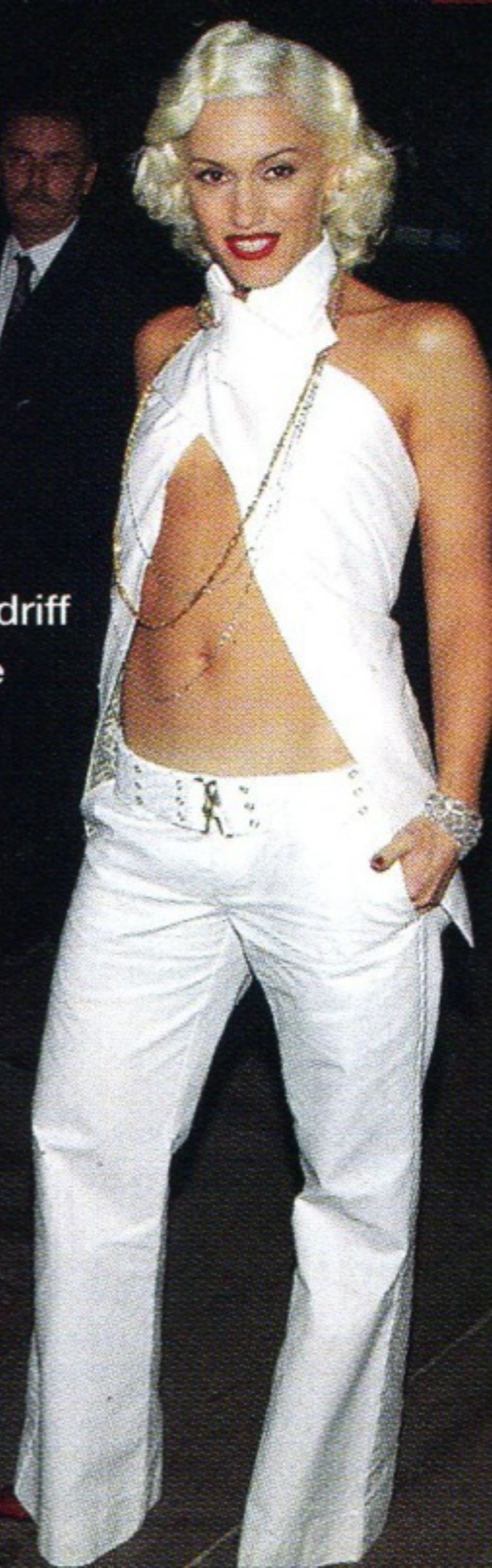
## 2001: Super-Hot Female

Stefani's naughty nautical look makes her a stunning sailor



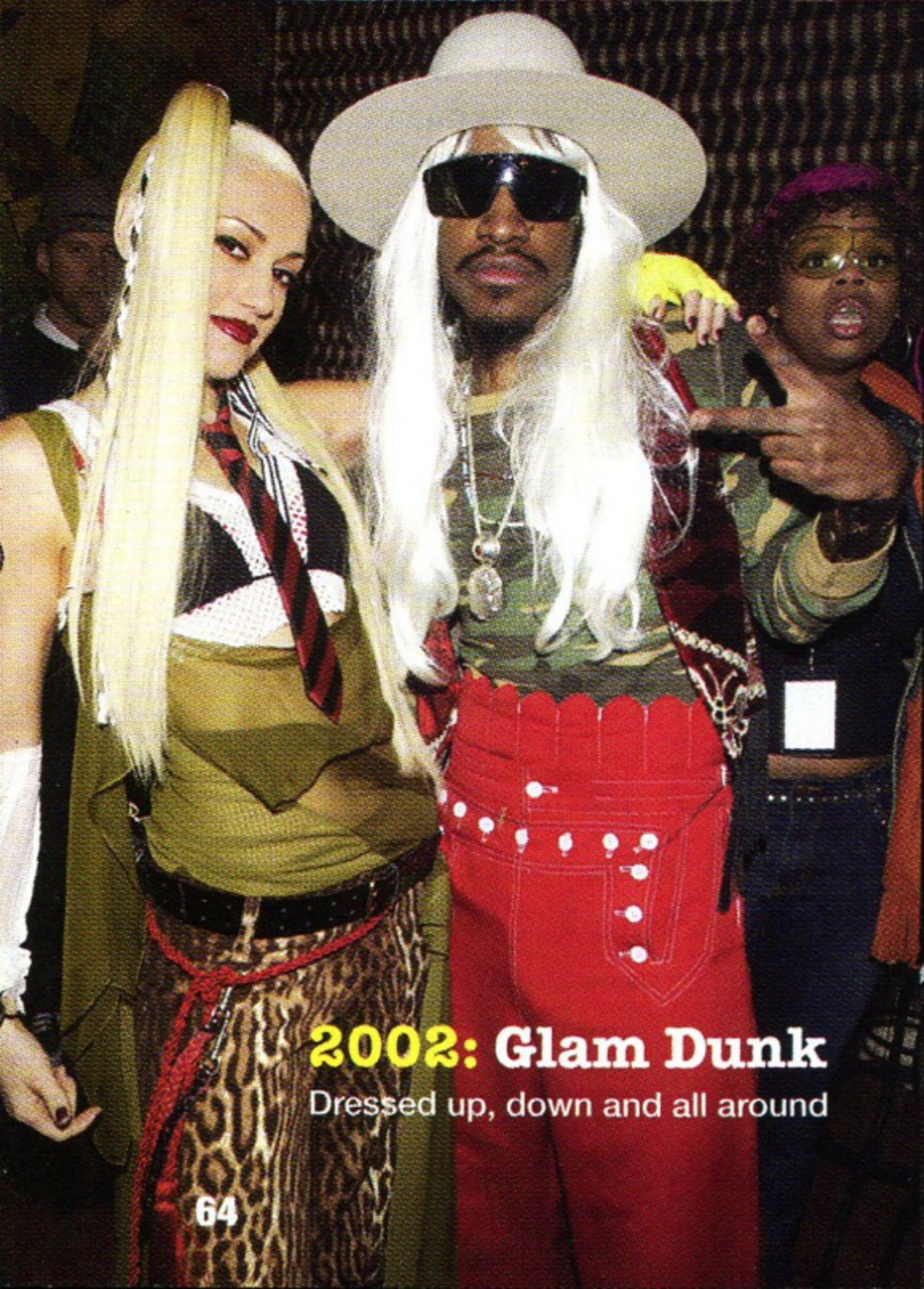
## 2003: Hella Good

White-hot midriff magnificence



## 2002: Glam Dunk

Dressed up, down and all around



## 2004: Haute Hollaback

Venus in vintage Valentino at the Golden Globes



# Gwen's style through the years

PHOTOGRAPHY: JOE GIRON/CORBIS/MAGMA (1996); PAUL SMITH/ALL ACTION/KEYSTONE PRESS (1997); HENRY LAMB/BIG PICTURES USA/KEYSTONE PRESS (1998); PACE GREGORY/CORBIS SYGMA/MAGMA (1999); NANCY KASZERMAN/ZUMA PRESS/KEYSTONE CANADA (2000); PPCM/KEYSTONE CANADA (2001); KEVIN MAZUR/WIREIMAGE.COM (2002); DAN HERRON/KEYSTONE PRESS (2003); LISA O'CONNOR/ZUMA PRESS/KEYSTONE PRESS (2004)