





After a divorce, a hit album, and a new romance with Blake Shelton, the pop star is once again making beautiful music. By Laura Brown

 $Photographs\ by Alexi\ Lubomirski$

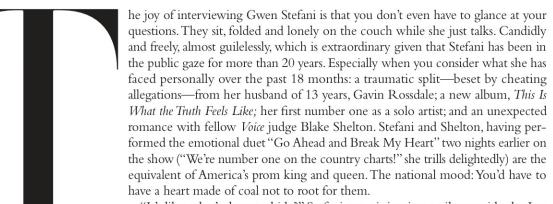












"It's like, what's there to hide?" Stefani says, sitting in a trailer outside the Los Angeles County Museum of Art after her *Bazaar* cover shoot. She has changed back into combat-style trousers and a T-shirt, filled with fashion-y holes, that reads, EVERYONE LOVES AN ITALIAN GIRL. Fearsome red studded Christian Louboutin stiletto boots—her casual arrival footwear—lie kicked over in a corner of the makeup room.

While Stefani, 46, is an open book, she will at times cut out some pages. "It's because I have children," she says, referring to her three boys with Rossdale: Kingston, 10, Zuma, seven, and Apollo, two. "As a famous person, you start to think, 'I can't say all that because I'll embarrass them or hurt them in some way.' And especially now because they can see everything and hear everything." She adds with some pride, "But I've done nothing I'm ashamed of..." before breaking into laughter. "Well, we all have a few things we're ashamed of."

Celebrity profilers, and pundits, often employ the phrase "X has never been/looked/seemed better." But in Stefani's case, the odds are stacked in her favor. There is a palpable ease to her as she neatly launches into her life story as a prologue for her current chapter. "I've had such a weird extreme life line," she starts off, poking at a cookie. "Amazing parents, they're having their 50th wedding anniversary. I'm the second kid. My older brother, Eric, was

the creative one; he was my best friend. We started a band together [No Doubt, which he and Stefani formed in 1986, when she was still in high school]. We never meant to make it. Like, we just wanted to play shows, you know? And then I fall in love with this 16-year-old guy, Tony [Kanal], who ends up being our bass player, and we do everything together—and then he breaks up with me." Their split fueled the band's breakthrough album, 1995's *Tragic Kingdom*

"My dreams were shattered.

All I wanted my whole life was
to have babies, be married, like

what my parents have."

(Eric Stefani left the group before its release). By this time she was on her way to stardom. But, she says, taking a breath, "I was like, 'What am I doing? This is, like, seven years of my life." Soon after, though, the band went on tour, and Stefani met Rossdale, the handsome British lead singer of the band Bush. "Then the next chapter: I meet Gavin, right? And that was it." The two were married in London in 2002. (Stefani wore a dip-dyed white-and-pink wedding gown by John Galliano for Dior, which now sits in the Victoria and Albert Museum's permanent collection.) "[My personal life] was my boyfriend and then my husband."

Stefani, for all her years of cool, her Comme des Garçons, her Harajuku Lovers, and her L.A.M.B., is a traditional, uncomplicated girl. "I've never been the type of person who thought I would have any impact on anyone. I just didn't even have those kind of dreams, you know?" But the dreams happened—No Doubt was huge, selling more than 13 million albums—and its sassy blonde frontwoman was fast becoming a pop and fashion icon. Also one who started to write music, beginning with 1995's "Just a Girl," which, many years later, would turn out to be her prescription for emotional wellness after the destruction of her marriage.

Stefani's next big evolution—following the hiatus of No Doubt and the launch of her lauded B-A-N-A-N-A-S solo career—was the birth of Apollo in 2014, when she was 44, 11 years into her marriage. "Yep, it was a surprise," she says, "but it was also the beginning of a waking up, like, 'Oh, my God, that's beyond this world.' He was kind of another beginning. And literally as soon as he was born, they called me about *The Voice*."

Apollo, now barely two, was "only 11 months old when everything happened," Stefani explains. "Everything" has now been well told: Stefani's discovery in February 2015 of Rossdale's alleged infidelity with the children's nanny. "Everybody knows what happened next," she says. Stefani performed at the Grammys, and her world came crashing down the next day. "February 9," she adds wryly. "I obviously know the date."

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PIERPAOLO PICCIOLI

ON HIMSELF

What is your spirit animal?

A monkey.

What's your zodiac sign? Virgo.
What is your biggest strength?

Going everywhere, both mentally and physically, and having a "place" to come back to.

I try not to forget who I am.

What is your favorite quality about
Maria Grazia? Intuition and passion.
What's the most embarrassing thing
you've done in front of her? Nothing.
What did you think of her after your first
meeting? I felt a connection. We had a lot
of interests and passions in common.
What is something you don't know about
her? Many things. It's good to maintain

ON MARIA GRAZIA

What is her spirit animal? A lion. What's her zodiac sign? Aquarius. What is her biggest strength?

Determination.

two lives with their own differences.

What is her favorite quality about you?

Rationality.

Which trait of hers annoys you?
She doesn't smoke anymore, but I still do.
What did she think of you after your first meeting? I think she just felt okay with me.
What is something she doesn't know about you? There are a lot of things she does not know.

PIERPAOLO ON BOTH

Who takes longer to get dressed? I do.
Who spends more time on their
phone? Both of us.
Who's the better cook?
Maria Grazia. I don't cook.
What is your favorite shared memory?

The years we've spent together in Florence.

What do you disagree on most often?

To disagree is part of our creative process. What is the biggest disagreement you've had?

High heels or flats.

What's the best part about working together? You learn that difference is

together? You learn that difference is a value if you're able to respect other perspectives.

And this is a life manifesto.

MARIA GRAZIA CHIURI

ON HERSELF

What is your spirit animal? An eagle.

What's your zodiac sign? Aquarius. What is your biggest strength? I am quite resistant.

What is your favorite quality about Pierpaolo? Reflective.

What's the most embarrassing thing you've done in front of him? When I don't recognize people or remember their names. I don't wear glasses, but I should.

What did you think of him after your first meeting? Too much time has gone by to remember that.

What is something you don't know about him? Surely there are many things. You cannot know everything of anyone.

ON PIERPAOLO

What is his spirit animal? A cat. What's his zodiac sign? Virgo. What is his biggest strength? Self-control.

What is his favorite quality about you? Intuition.

Which trait of his annoys you? Slowness. What did he think of you after your first meeting? I have no idea. We have never asked each other this.

What is something he doesn't know about you? I don't even know everything about myself.

MARIA GRAZIA ON BOTH

Who takes longer to get dressed? Pierpaolo. Who spends more time on their phone? It is the same amount. We both spend too much time on it.

Who's the better cook? I've never eaten anything he cooked.

What is your favorite shared memory? The many work trips we've done together. What do you disagree on most often?

Delays on schedules.

What is the biggest disagreement you've had? Nothing so major to recall. What's the best part about working

together? The results we've accomplished together at Valentino.

GWEN STEFANI

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She continues in the matter-of-fact way someone might when her private life has been digested publicly. "It was the beginning of hell. Like six, seven, eight months of torture, trying to figure out this big secret." Stefani, in her open-book manner, wanted to "tell everybody," but kept mostly quiet for the sake of her children. She went back to work on *The Voice;* holed up with her friend of 20 years, the video director Sophie Muller ("She helped me through the whole thing"); and then, around June, started writing songs again.

When one has been so knocked down, not just in the most visceral, personal way but also in public, what do you do? In Stefani's case, "what happened was praying," she says. "That's my childhood, that's how I was raised. And I think I strayed from that. But you know when it gets that bad, you just get desperate? You're on your knees. You're like, 'What do I do?' You can't even go to your parents and ask them what to do."

She focused on her boys, who she now, painfully, sees only part-time due to her custody arrangement with Rossdale. "It was so insane because not only did my family break up, but then my kids are taken away like half the time, so that was really like, "What?! What did *I* do?"

y dreams were shattered," Stefani continues. "All I wanted my whole life was to have babies, be married, like what my parents have.

Then I remember thinking, 'There's gotta be a reason for this.' Of course you go through the 'Why me?' and feel sorry for yourself. But then I was like, 'No, this happened to me already and I made something good out of it,' and that was *Tragic Kingdom*."

So Stefani went back into the studio—with new collaborators—and slowly recorded *This Is What the Truth Feels Like*, wearing the same black holey T-shirt every day. "I had spent a lot of years not being confident about my songwriting. But I know that's all I had left, and that was my gift. I had read

somewhere if you don't have gratitude and confidence in what you've been given, you're nowhere." She wrote the confessional "Used to Love You" only a few weeks before the single came out last October. Ironically, the album inspired by the end of her marriage became Stefani's first number-one solo hit.

Meanwhile, back on set of *The Voice* with fellow judges Shelton, Adam Levine, and Pharrell Williams ("July 7," says Stefani, who clearly has a great memory for seminal dates), "There I was with my big secret, right? And that's when Blake was like, 'Everybody, before we go out there, I want to let everyone know that by the time this airs, I will be divorced." Not only was Stefani shocked, she also felt "exposed somehow, you know? But it was like being handed this gift of a friend who was going through the exact same thing at the exact same time."

As we know, the rest is history. "And then it was just like everything flipped," she says. "It went from horrible to, like, hopeful and, like, 'Wow, God, you just don't know what's gonna happen next." She stops herself, pivoting back to beautiful music. "I'm not here to talk about my personal life, but my record is my personal life, so!"

So the bulletproof blonde is going to skate onward. "I'm at a certain time in my life where I feel like I'm doing what I'm supposed to do. Every day is art, you know? Some days are really bad, and some days are so good."

And as for Stefani and Shelton, the king and queen of the prom, "it's crazy the support and love I've felt. Life is such a weird..." She lets out a little laugh. "I mean, I can't believe I'm number one on a country chart."

EMILY RATAJKOWSKI

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ER: True, but the world should not be exclusive of the ideal body. It has to include all ideals, all bodies. The whole idea is that when Kim takes a nude selfie, she's just seeking attention. That's not the issue. A woman can be seeking attention and also make a statement. They don't need to be mutually exclusive.

NW: It's true. What's more, I notice again

and again, is that there's a deeply antifeminist origin of mocking women for seeking attention.

ER: And I don't like that.

NW: No, because you can't engage in history, or be a leader, without some drive for recognition. What I really like is that you are adding your words to the pictures and the images—and doing what you can to control the message—even though you can't control everything in the industry. But I also would like a world in which the girls looking at images of you, of Lena Dunham, and all the other women out there can still feel good about themselves.

ER: Right. And I mean, this is the body, this is the person that I am, so I'm limited to that body.

NW: Again, you don't have to apologize for being beautiful.

ER: That's something we really forget in this world, especially in my industry and being in the public eye as a female. There's this idea that if a man enjoys a photograph of a nude woman or if he likes your short skirt, he's taking something away from you. **NW:** Yeah, that's unfortunate.

ER: It's not right. Sex is normal. Desire is normal. Attention is normal, and that's okay. That's really what slut shaming is, right? You talk about this in your book *Promiscuities.* A woman talks about having sex, and it's like, well, a guy got to have sex with you, so you're stupid. You've given something up.

NW: These attitudes come directly from the Victorian period. They're ridiculous, of course. The caveat is when you're in the performance profession; you're giving pleasure with the performance. But if someone else uses your short skirt to undermine you or belittle you, that's not cool. That's also not your fault.

ER: It's also not my problem. It's irrelevant. When I post a selfie and someone comments, "Oh, sure, go ahead and reclaim your sexuality, I got my rocks off," that's not my problem.

NW: Do people really write that?

ER: Absolutely. On anything.

NW: That's disgusting. How do you choose what you post on social media from day to day?

ER: Some posts are more intentioned than others. That selfie with Kim was very inten-

tioned, very direct. I had the tweets lined up for when it launched because I wanted those things to be what came with the image when the media started covering it. But then other times it's just a tool, you know? I'm a young woman who lives in a world of social media; I'll post boring things too! [Laughs.]

NW: When you have something to say, you have to make sure you keep some sort of naturalness, but it does get more challenging the more prominent you get.

ER: It's cool to have a format where you can be so direct with an audience. Social media is something women didn't have 10 years ago, and that's a big aspect in feminism today. I don't have to be filtered by anyone. I choose.

SIGOURNEY WEAVER

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specific reason: "It was really the chance to be possessed by a dog. I thought that would be fun," says the Yale School of Drama graduate. "I love the idea that a cellist would turn into this crazy ghoul."

The spook factor has been present throughout Weaver's epic career. In addition to the Ghostbusters films, there was the bloodcurdling Alien franchise, the wondrous Avatar series (which is now in preproduction for four more films), and her upcoming vehicle, the fantasy film A Monster Calls, costarring Felicity Jones and Liam Neeson. Yet even with all her experience, the actress hasn't developed a belief in the paranormal. "I haven't," she says, "but I do have a friend who tries to get in touch with the other world, and she does things like go on ghost tours of Grand Central station and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. So there's a lot of ghost presence, perhaps, in New York."

That presence is certainly being felt this summer as McCarthy and the three Saturday Night Live all-stars suit up. "I think the fans are going to be pleased by how we pop up," Weaver says of her role in the film. "It's just a very sweet movie but also very funny and kind of crazy. I think that's a big part of what films can do—take us to another world."





1 "My style is pretty consistent. I love anything that is feminine and masculine at the same time." Dsquared2 sweater. 212–966–3487.

2"One of my fantasies is to have flowers delivered to my house once a week. I do have a garden that I just planted full of zinnias."

3"My favorite designers are Rei Kawakubo of Comme des Garçons, Junya Watanabe, Vivienne Westwood, and John Galliano."

4"I love Harajuku Lovers fragrances and Urban Decay eye primer." Harajuku Lovers Pop Electric Music, \$40. harajukulovers.com. Urban Decay Eyeshadow Primer Potion, \$20. urbandecay.com.

5"I go to Comme des Garçons once or twice a year and buy things that I'll wear forever."

Comme des Garçons Play top, \$155.212-604-0013.

6"Some of my all-time-favorite movies are
The Sound of Music, the original Annie, Wuthering
Heights, and every Alfred Hitchcock film."

T''I designed my home with Kelly Wearstler, so there isn't one piece that I don't love." Kelly Wearstler Lineage chair, \$5,900. kellywearstler.com.

8 "I am a huge fan of Dsquared2. I wear a lot of their pieces." Dsquared2 pants, \$2,065

O"My favorite glasses are the ones from my own lines—L.A.M.B. and gx!" gx by Gwen Stefani eyeglass frames, \$149. simplyeyeglasses.com.

10"I actually prefer to design handbags myself.
That way I get exactly what I want." L.A.M.B.
bag. Similar styles available at amazon.com.

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