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Cover Gwen Stefani photographed by Warwick Saint/ContourPhotos. Tweed jacket by Andrea Lieberman for L.A.M.B.. Pompoms by Jo Gordon. Gloves by Shaneen Huxham.


This page Knitted all-in-one by Vivienne Westwood. Bra by Prada. Lace neckpiece by Gibo. Accessories by Angels & Berman. Gloves by Shaneen Huxham.



GWEN SOMEBODY LOVES YOU

"Acting on film will never touch the thrill of performing live," says Gwen Stefani, reviving old-Hollywood glamour in a Libertine cape over a satin corset and skirt by Vivienne Westwood.





Doubtless and dramatically inclined, Gwen Stefani gears up for a turn centre stage—as solo artist, screen siren, fashion icon and maybe foxy mother-to-be

“I’m just a girl,” Gwen Stefani wailed in her trademark falsetto, storming the nineties’ charts with the band No Doubt, and perhaps not yet aware that she was just the girl we’d been waiting for. Not since Madonna asked us to take a “Holiday” in the eighties had one woman so perfectly captured the Zeitgeist by combining vocal acrobatics with a signature style of dressing and generous helpings of charisma.

Today in a London studio, with a team of stylists attending to her platinum tresses, few people would dismiss Stefani as “just a girl”, yet there’s no sense in denying the ultra-feminine side of the 35-year-old woman. “Oooh, I love the whole hair and make-up side of things,” Stefani coos playfully. “It’s the fun part of



the job, but there are other parts as well.” (As the first few minutes of chat with the blonde dynamo attest, self-deprecation is as much a part of her image as the bright red lips and perfect, pale skin.)

Those other aspects of Stefani’s job include promoting her infectiously upbeat solo debut *Love. Angel. Music. Baby.* (more on the resulting acronym later) and making tentative steps into the world of film in Martin Scorsese’s *The Aviator*, which also stars Leonardo DiCaprio and Cate Blanchett. “I’d just like to stress that I only have a small role,” Stefani says. “Oh, who am I kidding—there are no small roles in a Scorsese film.” *The Aviator* follows the life of millionaire movie producer, businessman and recluse Howard Hughes, who was drawn to beautiful women, including Katharine Hepburn and Ava Gardner. Stefani, with her fashion-friendly figure and light locks, was tailor-made to play the bombshell who cast the original dye (so to speak), Jean Harlow.

“For me, acting comes from the same place as performing music,” Stefani says. “I just have to perform.” It’s a calling that shines through in No Doubt video clips, but to nail the part of Harlow, the budding actress spent hours researching the screen siren’s troubled life. “I wanted to get it right and I did. Sometimes you just have to go for it.”

With the acting box ticked, Gwendolyn Renee Stefani’s next task was to pursue her solo ambitions, but before hitting the studio she had to break the news to her bandmates. “I guess it has been quite a year,” she says reflectively. “I felt that all of us in No Doubt had earned a break.” The band was formed in the late eighties by Stefani’s older brother, Eric, in Anaheim, California, where they grew up, two of four children of high-school sweethearts Denis, who is Italian and worked in research for Yamaha motorcycles, and Patti, a homemaker of Irish and Scottish descent. Gwen’s unique voice, which careens with the intoxicating unpredictability of the roller-coasters in nearby Disneyland, was originally relegated to back-up vocals, but she was



"I used to do my best to have fun with getting dressed and not be one of the crowd," says Stefani, in a L.A.M.B. tweed jacket.

propelled into the spotlight following the tragic suicide of No Doubt's original lead singer John Spence.

"Back then, the band was a way for me to express myself," Stefani says. "It was a great excuse to dress up. I would be hanging out at the thrift store while I was in high school, busily trying to find ways to not look like everyone else." The creative confines of No Doubt were also where Stefani first fell in love, with bassist Tony Kanal. Their relationship, and its eventual demise, provided the raw material for some of No Doubt's biggest hits, such as "Don't Speak", penned by Stefani. In many ways the band became a second family for the performer, even when brother Eric left to pursue a career in animation on *The Simpsons*. "They are my best friends, so when I told them that I wanted to try something solo they responded in the way that best friends do," Stefani says. "It was a matter of timing. We've all been growing up and our priorities have changed. Then I went and got married and my priorities certainly changed."

Her marriage to 37-year-old London rocker, Bush frontman Gavin Rossdale hit the headlines in September 2002, with the bride appearing on the steps of Covent Garden's St Paul's church resplendent in a white-and-pink silk faille Christian Dior gown. The wedding, followed by another ceremony in Los Angeles, took place after a transatlantic courtship of almost seven years (and after some gentle prodding by Stefani in the No Doubt song "Marry Me").

"The wedding was fabulous," she says wistfully. "But I only had two days off with my husband after we got married and then I was back on tour with the band for another six weeks." Stefani obviously takes pride in her paired status, with the word "husband" winding its way in and out of her conversation. "It's hard to believe that we've already celebrated our second wedding anniversary," she says, looking at a bouquet of flowers from Rossdale. "Soon we're going to be spending seven weeks together and I can't wait." The couple divide their time between their London and Los Angeles homes.

In the meantime, there's that cryptically titled album *Love. Angel. Music. Baby.* to talk about and Stefani is enjoying being in control. "This album is just about me," she says, immediately expressing the contradictory thought, "although at times I think there's less of me on this than anything I've done because of all of the people involved."

Her album rollcall includes Outkast's Andre 3000, Dr Dre and New Order's Bernard Sumner. But it was the opportunity to work with songwriter Linda Perry, who has penned hits for Christina Aguilera, that opened a new world for Stefani. "I guess so much of my past has been with the boys in the band that it was great to finally write with a woman," she says. "Basically I was drowning in her creativity." Together they hatched the first single "What You Waiting For", which explores Stefani's struggle with writer's block.

Preparing for the "What You Waiting For" video clip, which features Stefani in an array of Galliano ensembles, was more of a solo effort. "Man, I worked out hard to get into shape for that one," she confesses, stopping mid-sentence to sip her tea ("Oh, I can't survive without a cuppa"). "Listen, I'm like anyone else. I wanted to make sure I looked good, but once the four-day shoot was over I crashed big time. I was like 'Where's the pizza?' It was a fun little binge."

Stefani's lean frame demonstrates that fun little binges are kept to a minimum even though she has plenty of reasons to celebrate.

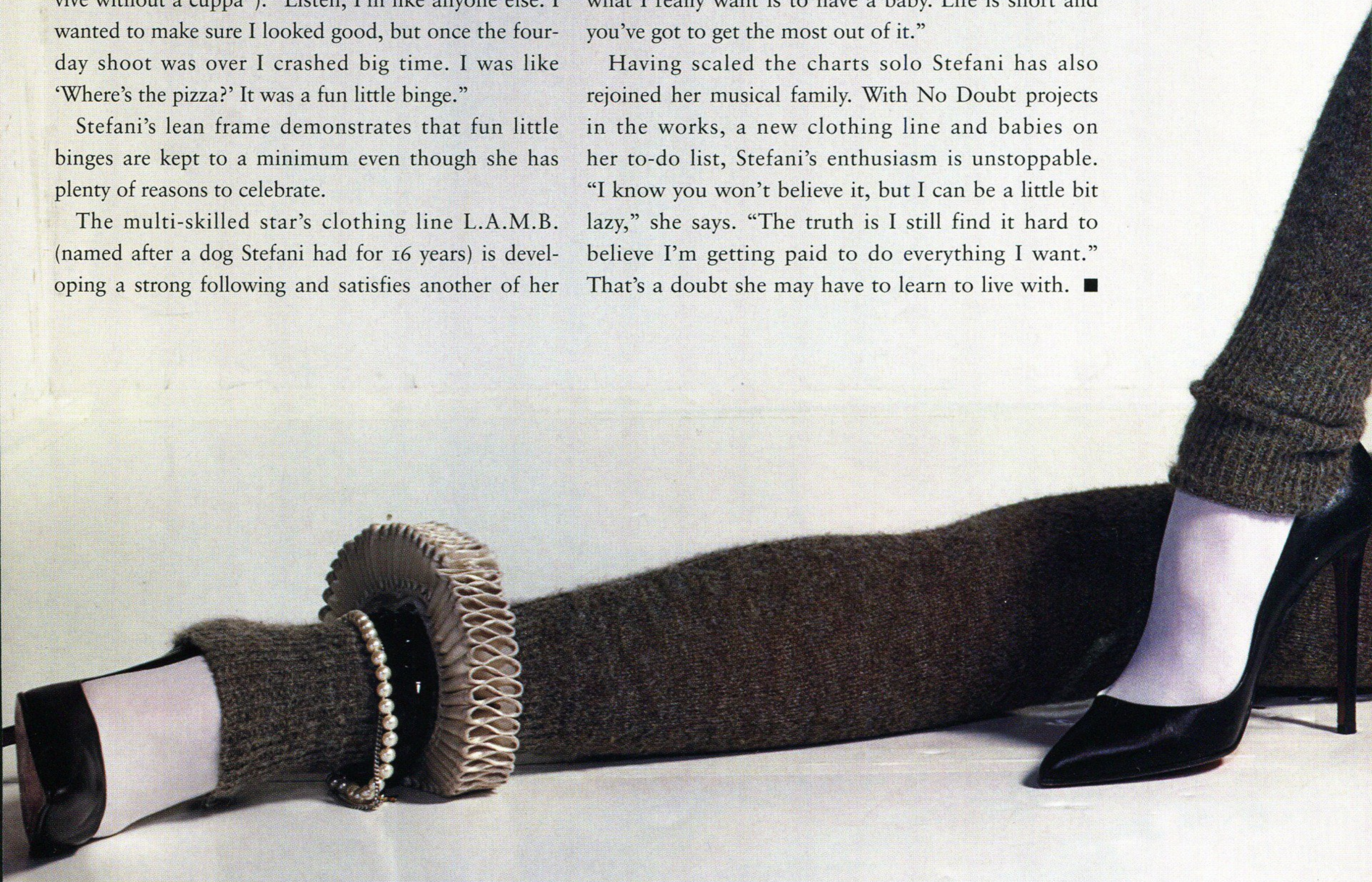
The multi-skilled star's clothing line L.A.M.B. (named after a dog Stefani had for 16 years) is developing a strong following and satisfies another of her

creative thirsts. The work of iconic British designer Vivienne Westwood is among Stefani's influences for the L.A.M.B line, which successfully mixes old-fashioned fabrics and contemporary cuts. "I think designing clothes is in my blood," Stefani says. "My great-grandmother was always sewing and used to give us these pyjamas for Christmas. For me, clothes are such an important extension of your personality."

The design process for L.A.M.B. is overseen by Stefani and business partner Andrea Lieberman, who is also her stylist and close friend. "I met Andrea while we were doing a video clip and it was like meeting a cooler, hipper, Jewish version of me," Stefani says. "Before then I was solely responsible for the way I looked, which I guess was pretty tacky and vulgar." She's referring to her days of baggy pants, bindis and abdomen-baring tops that despite her self-criticism spawned a generation of "Gwenabes". "I guess what Andrea did was streamline me," she says.

The streamlined Stefani figure is destined for future metamorphoses. "I really want to take some more time out and be with my husband," she explains. "I guess what I really want is to have a baby. Life is short and you've got to get the most out of it."

Having scaled the charts solo Stefani has also rejoined her musical family. With No Doubt projects in the works, a new clothing line and babies on her to-do list, Stefani's enthusiasm is unstoppable. "I know you won't believe it, but I can be a little bit lazy," she says. "The truth is I still find it hard to believe I'm getting paid to do everything I want." That's a doubt she may have to learn to live with. ■



"You've got to enjoy every moment of this experience," Stefani says of stardom, snug in a knitted all-in-one by Vivienne Westwood, Prada bra and shoes by Christian Louboutin.

