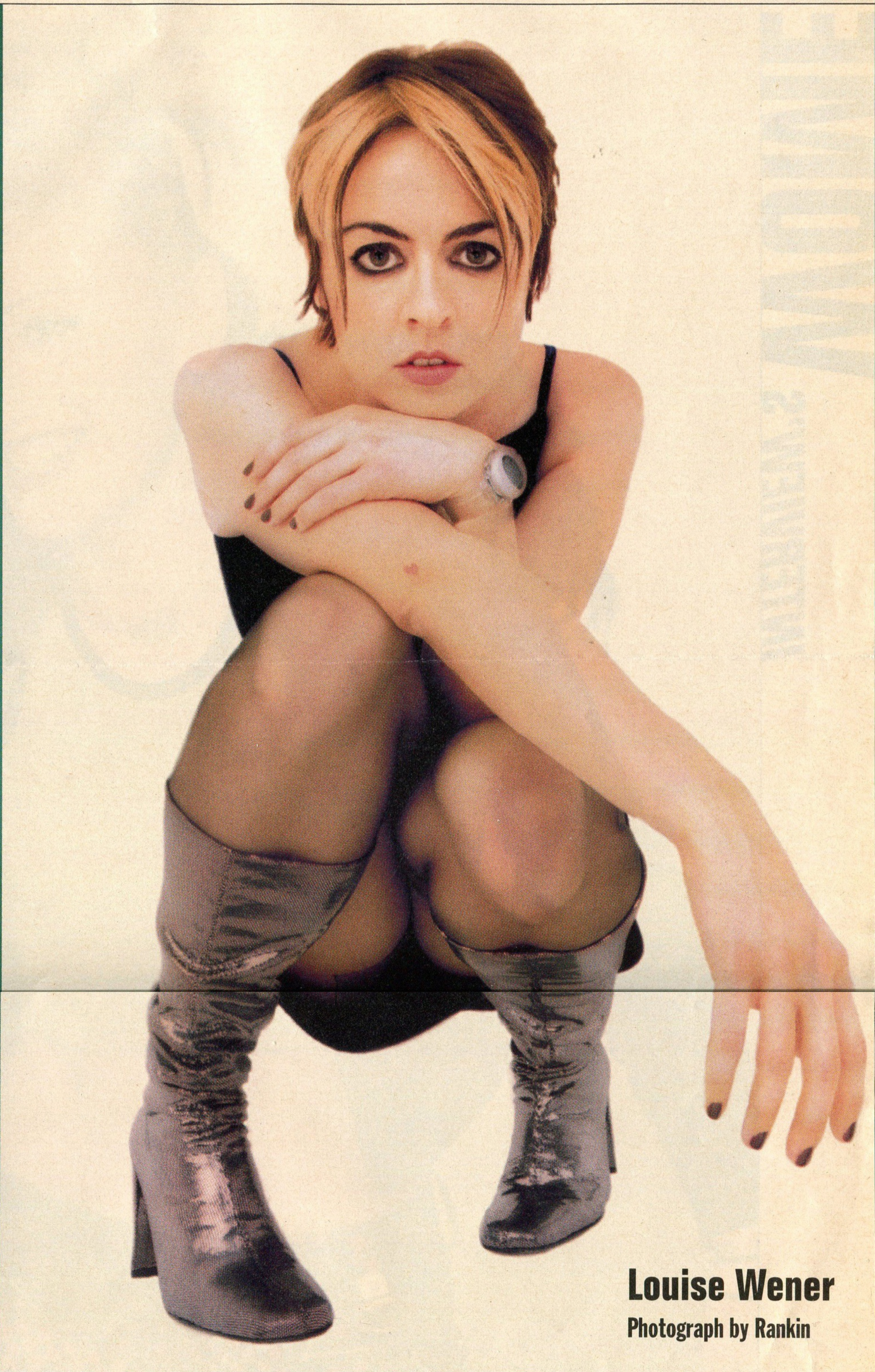


amped, or fused. She need only flout convention and go her own self-determining way. And though not all the “rockers” per se, each *is* electric and evinces rock ‘n’ roll’s distinct passion for action. Teamed here with the gear, the of designer Giorgio Armani, they erode tired assumptions about women in music (including the one that makes showing how rich and textured and powerful and alive the music is—and that is a feat that really rocks



Louise Wener
Photograph by Rankin

black leather like I was going to eat their children for to say to others, ‘Yes, you can do it.’” —Joan Jett

WHO
ROCK!

"I'm just a girl, all pretty and petite

WOMEN
INTERVIEW'S



...oh, I've had it up to here!" —from "Just a Girl," by No Doubt

Gwen Stefani

No Doubt

Photograph by Joshua Jordan

There's a lot more to Gwen Stefani, the brassy twenty-six-year-old lead singer of this year's *über* band, No Doubt, than platinum locks and a washboard stomach. An expressive lyricist, she has splashed her frustrations, heartbreaks, and ironically, even her doubts across the group's phenomenal breakthrough album, *Tragic Kingdom* (Trauma/Interscope), which spawned the smash single "Just a Girl." A self-proclaimed "Goody Two-shoes" Stefani has emerged as one of the year's most colorful pop personalities, singing in an unabashedly girlie voice that is now instantly recognizable everywhere.

JILL KOPELMAN: So you're from California?

GWEN STEFANI: Yeah, Anaheim.

JK: And you grew up there with your brother, Eric, who's in the band.

gs: He used to be in it. Eric was the really talented and overly hyper older brother who was always pounding on the piano, and I was the lazy girl watching *The Brady Bunch*. I wasn't doing anything, and he would say, "Come in here and sing with me!" I owe everything to him, and I learned how to write songs and how to be in a band because of him.

JK: And then he let you go on your own.

gs: Yeah. As soon as he left, a kind of creativity opened up for me. I think that's why a lot of the songs on *Tragic Kingdom* are much more personal than on our previous record, because I wrote almost all the lyrics on this one.

JK: The band's already been going for nine years, right?

gs: Yup. We started in '87. I was seventeen years old.

JK: What did your parents think about that?

gs: They were always saying, "You're going to college, blah, blah, blah." And we did. We all went to college up until about the last semester. We were almost going to graduate, but since we've been touring this record, I don't know [if we will].

JK: Do you think the victory of having a hit is sweeter since you succeeded in a marathon and not a sprint?

gs: We almost gave up about a year and half ago. We were sitting there saying to ourselves, "O.K., we are twenty-six. We've been doing this for eight years. Maybe we should finish up and

get adult lives now." Then the record came out and people thought it was good, which was really weird because we were always the dork band from Anaheim. We never really were cool enough or tough enough because we grew up in Orange County with all those punk bands. We played with them, but I always felt like Shirley Temple—just this little lollipop up there—and I could never have a really raspy or loud, screaming voice. We just never fit in. Plus, all the L.A. people looked down on us because we were from Orange County. We weren't "cool."

JK: Why? Is there some sort of hierarchy of counties in California?

gs: We could never write a song about anything "serious" because we were not from L.A. with its whole "Under the Bridge" [a song by the Red Hot Chili Peppers] thing. It's really fun now, though. People think we're cool and want to be our friends. I'll take it while I can.

JK: When you were in school, you weren't part of a cool crowd?

gs: We had the jocks and the cheerleaders, and then the rockabillies, and the punkers, and the skankers, and the death rockers. I definitely was not in the cheerleader/jock crowd.

JK: Did you fit into a category?

gs: Yeah, I was a ska chick. We started out as a really hardcore ska band only because we were trying to imitate the music that we loved. And we could barely play our instruments.

JK: It must have been hard forming No Doubt out of high school.

gs: The first thing Eric and I did was perform a song called "On My Radio" by Selector at a talent show. I held papers with the lyrics on

them in my hand. At the start, we had another singer, John. In fact, he's the one who got the band going, because he said, "I want to be in a band," and he forced my brother to go get a keyboard. John's the one who came up with our name.

JK: Why did John leave?

gs: John committed suicide a year into the band. We've been through so many amazing times and so many tragedies. . . . We'd only been together for a year, but at the same time, when you are seventeen and you work really hard on something, one year can seem like five.

JK: How did you keep going after that?

gs: We didn't know what we wanted to do, but I guess everybody just loved making music so much that we decided that John would have wanted us to keep going.

JK: Do you think anything is lacking in music today?

gs: Well, I'm on such a high right now, it's hard to be negative and say what's missing. I think that right now is a really good period. For the longest time music was just so narrow. For instance, when I started in No Doubt there weren't any garage-rock chicks, not in my area. If there was one, she would be the backup singer and I would be mesmerized by her.

JK: Is it true that you make your own clothes?

gs: I've always made stuff and there are so many disaster stories about my staying up all night trying to make something for a show the next day. I started doing it mostly because I move around so much onstage, so I have to find things that work with that. For example, I have a way better show if I wear pants.

JK: Really?

gs: Yeah. You discover all these things after several years. I just said, "Forget it, I'm not wearing a dress anymore." Fashion is an extension of your personality, and I've always been obsessed. I always want to have something different than everybody else. ■