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Gwen loves Gavin

Gwen Stefani rides in a carriage around Central Park, but Esther Haynes gets the feeling she'd rather be pushing one.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROBERT ERDMANN

"Drinking isn't my thing," Gwen says groggily. I'm taking Gwen Stefani, lead singer of pop-ska band No Doubt, on a ride through Central Park in a white carriage with a matching horse. It's not exactly an activity either of us would choose to do on an average day, but it's weirdly warm outside and *Jane* is paying, so why not? Today happens to be the birthday of her boyfriend, Gavin Rossdale, the pretty singer of Brit band Bush. "We were out celebrating last night, and I threw up," Gwen groans. "My eyes this morning were swollen red splotches. I tried to cancel this interview—you should've seen how grumpy I was. I said, 'Gav's birthday is today, and dude, I'm panicking.' But once I got my makeup on, I felt better."

"You don't feel sick anymore?" I ask, suddenly noticing how close we're sitting under a blue blanket as the carriage lurches along. I'm a puke target.

"Well, a little woozy, but I feel fine."

Fine except for the fact that starting the next day, she and Gavin are going to be apart for two months, both touring, and she's bummed. Unlike the first few years they dated, this past year they haven't spent more than about nine days apart—even though they live on different continents. "We're going on six years now," she comments. "We need to get some kind of an award or something."

"How old are you?" I inquire.

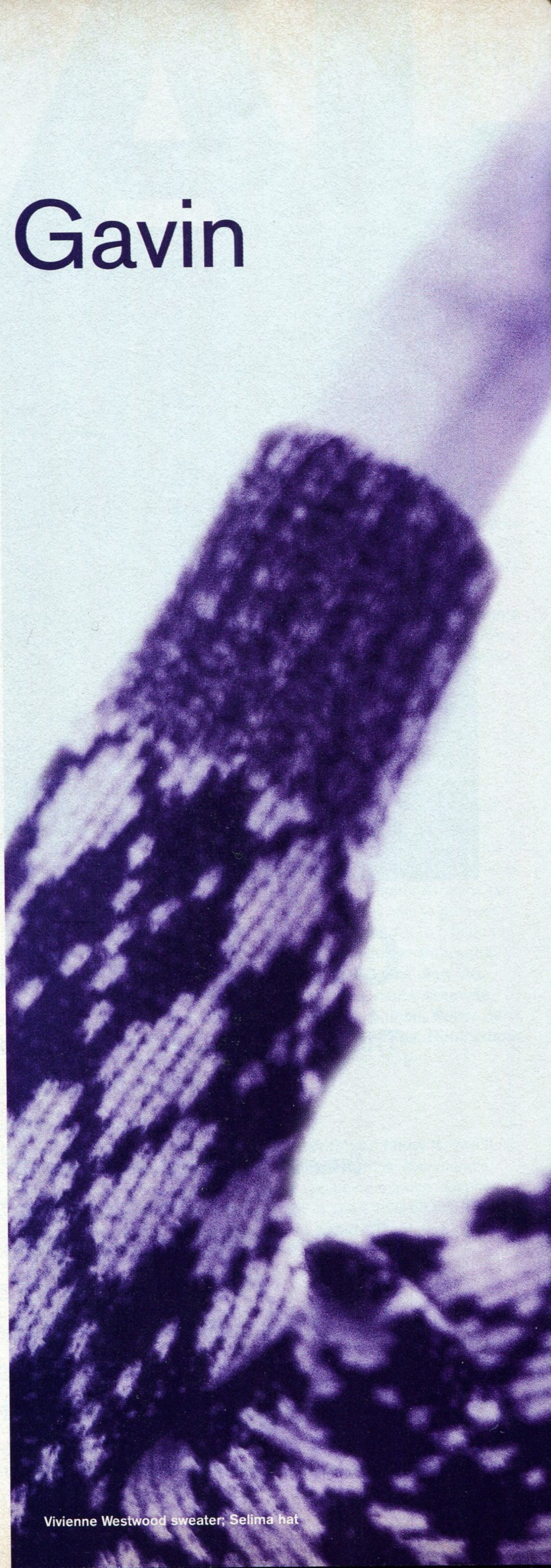
"I'm 32."

"How old is Gavin?"

"Hmm, let me think," she says, then tells me his age. But when I scribble down the number in my notebook, she lightly adds, "Um, you probably might not want to write about Gavin's age and stuff, because it's not really—people start getting older and—I mean, I don't care if anyone knows how old I am, but..."

"It's okay," I say and cross out his age.

I've always wondered if the old rumors about Gavin being a playboy were true. But to start out easy, I ask if she gets tons of guys after her when Gavin isn't around. "Never," she answers. "The last guy that picked up on me ►





is when I went to the MTV awards. After the awards, my band and I went out to a party. Snoop Dogg and his posse were sitting next to us, so I introduced myself. Then I met his cousin, who was there fashionably shirtless—

"Did he look good without a shirt?" I interrupt.

"His confidence made him look good, you know what I mean?" she responds. I nod. "But yeah. He was like, 'So where do you want to go on our honeymoon?' That kind of thing. I was like, 'Dude, you're the first guy to pick up on me in five years. Calm down.' It was hilarious. But I guess people usually just know that I'm taken."

Here's a brief history of No Doubt's dramatic early years. In 1986, Gwen's older brother, Eric, starts No Doubt with his singer friend John Spence and forces 17-year-old Gwen to sing backup. Bass player Tony Kanal joins and starts making out with Gwen. John Spence commits suicide by shooting himself in a park. Guitarist Tom Dumont and drummer Adrian Young sign on. In 1993, No Doubt records *Tragic Kingdom*. Brother Eric drops out. Tony dumps Gwen. The album tops the charts. In 1999, they record *Return of Saturn*, which includes the excruciatingly honest song "Simple Kind of Life," about how Gwen just wants to find a husband and sometimes hopes she'll accidentally get pregnant.

"So, do you think you'll ever get married?" I ask as we float past some Rollerbladers.

"You can only pray," she responds. "Everybody wants a husband.* Well, obviously, I don't know if everybody wants it, but I'd love it. I'd love to have a family."

"Do you and Gavin discuss that much?"

"We always have. It's just been hard with all the flying back and forth.... But he's going to be a great dad. Having a family is going to be the biggest challenge of all. Hopefully, it will save me from my vanity.... I want to have one kid, at least. I've always wanted to have four, but I don't think that's realistic. If I had one healthy one, I would feel extremely blessed. If I had two, one of each, that would be the dream, unreal."

"I've been really lucky so far," Gwen continues. "But I don't want to miss out on stuff, like the mom thing. It's a fine balance. I don't want to be like, 'Oh, I gotta wait,' and then all of a sudden it's not there. 'Cause I would die."

"Do you have a time line yet?" I pry.

She describes a conversation she had with Adrian's wife, Nina, last summer when the band was recording in Jamaica: "We were like, 'Okay, we're going to make the record, then we're going to go on tour. Then next year we're going to get pregnant at the same time'—like, we plan it. Next thing I know, the girl's already got a belly going on. I'm like, 'Dude. What's this belly going on for, dude? You totally skipped out on our plan.'"

"I think having a family is going to be the biggest challenge of all. Hopefully, it will save me from my vanity."

So, is Gavin a womanizer? Some news reports say he is—or at least that he used to be, a few years ago. A couple *Jane* staffers have even been hit on by him before. And although she describes her album *Rock Steady* as really "up" and "fun," Gwen's lyrics seem to tell a different story: "I can't believe that you're still around. Almost forgot how you let me down. So don't blow it...don't let me down." Then there's "Don't talk about ex-girlfriends, don't talk about the past, don't talk about you without me.... It's only in my head. Why do I get suspicious? Do you want anybody else?"

Sounds to me like she's paranoid Gavin might be screwing around. "I don't want everyone to know my relationship with Gavin right now, but I'll just say that we have a normal relationship. We fight, and we get along. We have our ups and our droughts," Gwen tells me. "The good news is that I know he's really into me and he loves me a lot, and that makes me have confidence. He's very consistent, and he's been around for a while, you know? Our love keeps growing, and I think that's key. But yeah, of course, I can get super-weird about—" She stops mid-sentence and changes her tone. "But also, I'm in a band, and I know who those girls are. I know exactly what goes on backstage."

Gwen actually wrote a new song about that backstage groupie action, called "Hey Baby." She explains, "It's all about my point of view being backstage with my band. All the flirting that goes on.... I guess the music or the talent brings out something in girls, and they just feel like they're in love, and they want to get backstage so they can tell their friends that they made out with a guy from whoever."

"Do the boys in your band go for it?" I ask.

"Well, Adrian's married. But Tom and Tony are single. When I get on the bus, sometimes things get a little quiet: 'Shhh, Gwen's on the bus.' It's cool, I don't want to know all of it. They're good boys, though, they're not scum."

As we clop along, Gwen describes her bandmates. "Adrian and I are so opposite," she says. "I think I can go too far, too cheesy, too Broadway, too extreme. He pulls me back." On guitarist Tom Dumont: "Tom is very even tempered, except when he drinks. Then he becomes a whole 'nother being. He becomes 'the Douche,' we call him."

And let's not forget ex-love hot-boy Tony. "Are you and Tony best friends now?" I ask after she mentions that she accidentally dialed her mother's phone number twice the previous day because she was trying to call Tony and they share the same area code.

"Yeah, Tony is my favorite person outside Gavin," she responds. "Tony's my creative partner and my friend. He's someone I always can depend on and I know cares about me and wouldn't try to do anything to hurt me."

I think it would be...complicated? distracting? a drag? to be in a band and touring with the First Love of Your Life

while trying to have a very serious relationship with the Second Love of Your Life. "Is there any weird jealousy between Tony and Gavin?" I ask.

She adjusts the blanket, then answers carefully,

"There's always—there have been in the past some weirdnesses, of course. But they really are friends now. So, it's fun because you've got Adrian and Nina, me and Gav, Tony usually doesn't really have a date...." She trails off for a second. "But there's Tony and his brother, and we all hang together. It's not awkward."

"But you definitely don't want to be with Tony anymore?" Nudge, nudge.

"I don't want to *make out* with Tony, no. He is a special person in my life, but I don't see us ever getting back together. I mean, even though our fans really want us to and it would be cute, you know? But no. I feel like I'm on my journey with Gavin, and we've really come far. Especially in the last year."

As we roll past two old guys walking through the park, Gwen sits up and says, "Did you hear what that guy just said?" I shake my head no. Laughing, she repeats for me: "'Good morning! I like the smell of horse shit in the morning!'"

There *is* sort of an odor.

"Did you get Gavin anything cool for his birthday?" I ask Gwen.

"I got him one of his favorite designers, Comme des Garçons. I got him a little top and a little jacket. But I kind of got the wrong color, because he pretty much always wears black, he doesn't wear any colors. So I was like, 'Well, I'll get him navy blue.'"

"He's not into it?"

"This morning he was acting funny. I gave it to him last night. Today he's like, 'The blue, I saw it in the daylight....'"

"Oh, no. Can you exchange it?"

"Yeah, I'll get him another black. I mean, in New York and London, everything is always black anyway. When we'd go out, Gavin would just not let me leave. I'd always have colorful everything, and he's like, 'You can't wear that, it's night-time.' I'm like, 'What do you mean?' 'Wear black.' I don't understand. I just hate all those rules anyway. It's stupid."

We segue into a convo about the terrorist attacks. "You know, I came out here for the *VH1 Fashion Awards* recently," Gwen comments. "And this might sound silly, but Gavin was like, 'Do you really have to go for *that*?' And I was like, 'You know what? If I don't show up, then all those people sitting at home watching the news won't be able to click over and see me in my stupid outfit.' People like to watch that stuff. It's a break. You know what I mean? I don't know all the answers, but it seems like if we don't move on, everything's just gonna crumble to the ground. Everyone's gonna have nothing, right? It's like dominoes."

"Yeah, you gotta enjoy life."

"That's what Gavin was saying last night because I was getting a little tipsy and, like, 'I'm scared.' But he was like, 'It's not affecting you directly right now, nobody really knows what's happening, so let's watch *Saturday Night Live*.'"



Top: Gwen fondles the horse. Above: Gwen fondles Gavin.

The thing about Gwen Stefani is that she does the girly-girl fun-with-haircolor-fashion-and-makeup thing, but at the same time she's a tough-ass. Onstage, she sweats, she swears, she doesn't care if her platinum hair gets mussed or her bright makeup smears. She's all over the place, violent almost. It doesn't matter that what she's singing about is wanting babies, a husband, a picket fence. She's not at all apologetic about it. Like, screw you if you have a problem with that.

"Do you get off on dating musicians?" I randomly ask near the end of our ride.

"Gavin's being a rock star is my least favorite quality of him.... It's him cooking for me in the kitchen and showing up for family events that are the things that really excite me," she says.

She continues dreamily, "You know, Gavin used to be a painter, like painting houses. And I kind of think that would be really sexy if that's what he did and he just hung out with me, and I had a little leash to walk him around. That would be really cool."

"And in that scenario would *you* still be a rock star?" I ask as we get ready to step off the carriage.

"Oh, yes." ■

Styling: Eric Nicholson Hair: Danilo for the Wall Group Makeup: Mathu Anderson for the Wall Group Manicure: Claudine Duchamp for Artists