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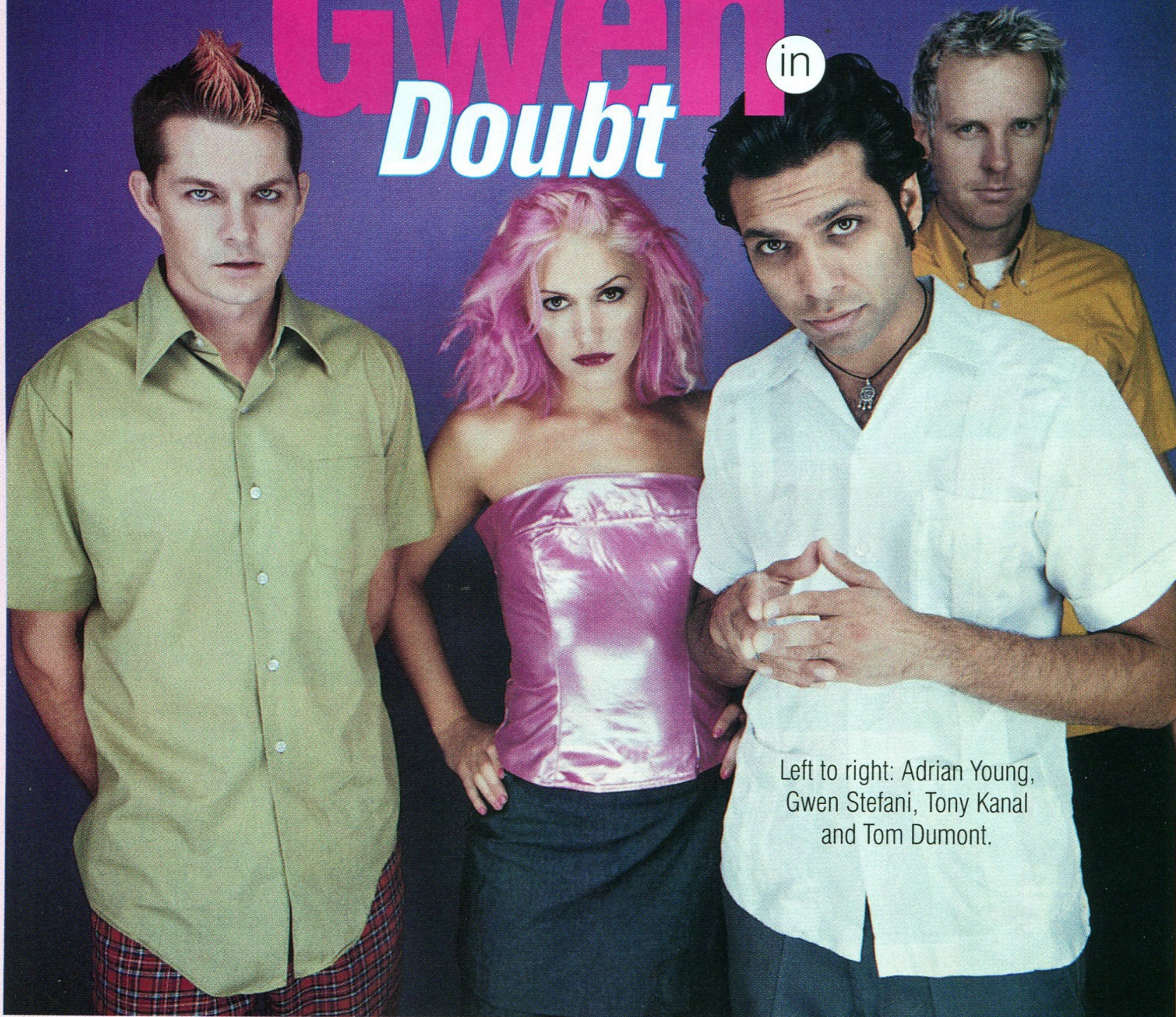


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THE RAVE REPORT:
What you need to know before you dance 'til dawn

Gwen in Doubt



Left to right: Adrian Young, Gwen Stefani, Tony Kanal and Tom Dumont.

What is it about **No Doubt** diva **Gwen Stefani** that makes her one of those “I wish she were my best friend” kind of girls? How about her amazing sense of style, killer voice and real-girl hang-ups? Yeah, she may be “just a girl,” but she’s rock’s reigning queen of real. And with her band’s new album, *Return of Saturn*, you’re guaranteed to get up and groove once again as Gwen goes off on everything from breakups to makeup. ➤

By Alexa Joy Sherman

➤ As No Doubt's **Gwen Stefani** sits in her record label's offices in L.A., finishing off a plate of Chinese food, she dispels a major myth (and, no, it's not that all girls are on a diet): You can't take those fortune cookies too seriously. "All your financial goals will be reached in 10 years," she says, smiling as she reads from the little slip of paper. The message is a little late, considering No Doubt's last CD, *Tragic Kingdom*, sold, oh, about 15 million copies. And as Gwen sits there looking like a thrift-shop princess in a big, corduroy overcoat that's almost the same color as her slightly faded pink-and-platinum ponytail, she tells us that, although she always wanted to be in a band, she hardly expected to be in one this huge. "I never had any goals that big!" she says. "I just wanted to be able to move out of my parents' house."

Mission accomplished. Gwen and the guys have certainly come a long way from their Orange County, CA, home, where a teenage Gwen spent a lot of time on the fringes trying to figure herself out. "I didn't have a lot of friends in high school; it was mainly just me and my best girlfriend," she admits. "I had no clue what I wanted to do with my life." When she wasn't doing laps for the swim team or struggling through math class, Gwen was at home, making her own clothes and developing an over-the-top fashion style that her teenage fans, "Gwennabes," later adopted. "When I hit puberty, I decided I didn't want to look like anyone else in school," she explains.

Even though Gwen was happy to be doing her own thing, it was her big brother, Eric, who helped her find her calling. "He was the cool older brother. He was really artistic, and I just lived through him," she recalls. When he brought home a record by British ska band Madness, Gwen was hooked. "After I discovered music, I basically hung out with the rockabilly, ska and punk people," she says. "We thought we were pretty cool, especially compared with the cheerleaders and jocks." When Eric joined a band called No Doubt in 1987, Gwen

tagged along to rehearsal and eventually found herself taking center stage as the lead singer. Even though Eric later left the band, Gwen and the guys—Tom, Adrian and Tony—have been a solid chart-topping unit for years now. "We've all become really good friends. We'd spend time together even if we didn't work together," says Gwen.

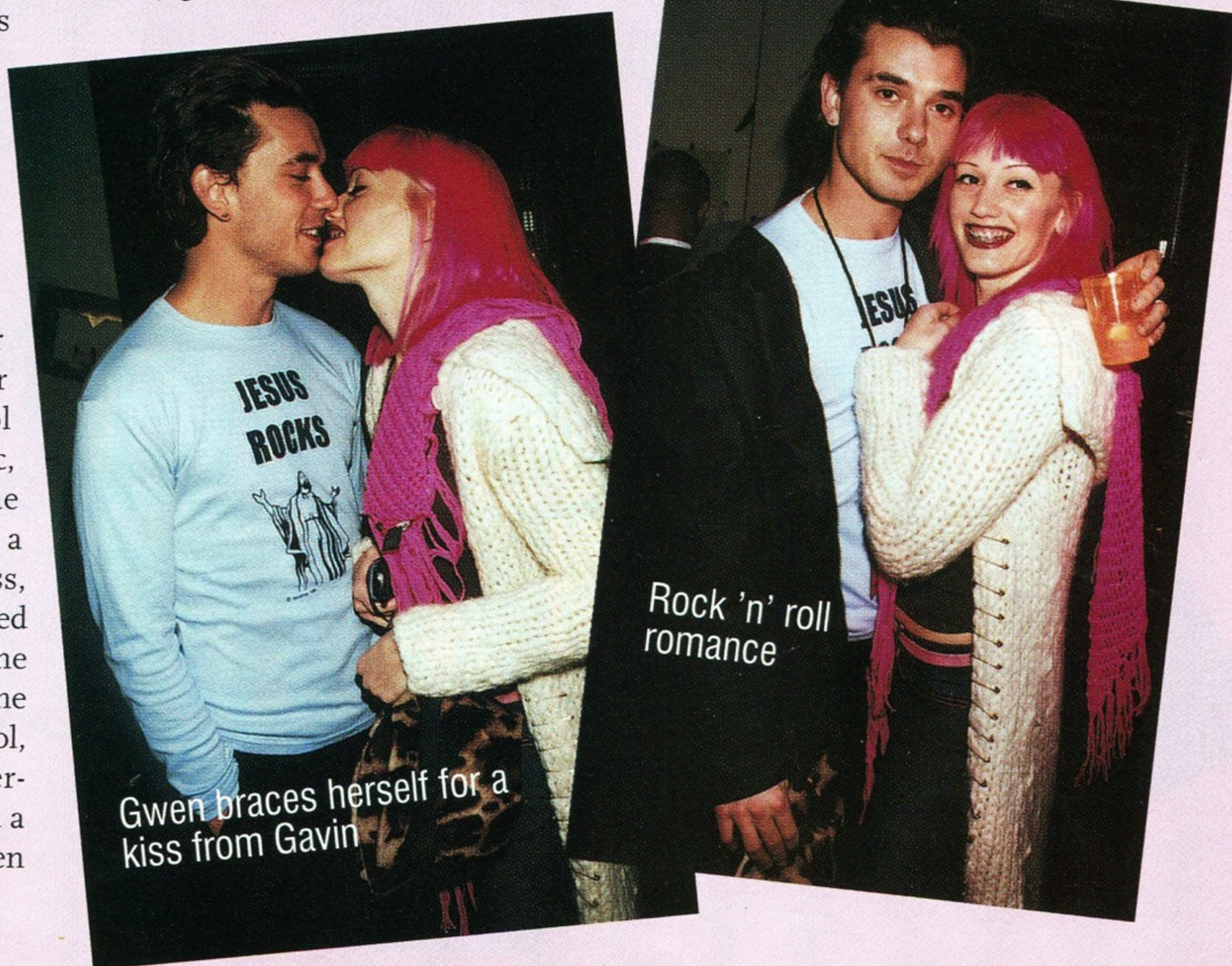
But that doesn't mean it's always been smooth sailing with the boys. Bassist Tony Kanal broke up with Gwen after they'd been together for seven years, which has fueled some songs penned by Gwen in the past. "In high school, I was so in love with Tony," she gushes. "I used to drive across town to his school just to look at him. What an idiot! I was so weird!" But, she quickly points out, "I wasn't a high-maintenance girlfriend. I was just intense and in love and I didn't have any outside passions. I've since learned that you can't find your happiness through someone else." She's also quick to add that the single "Ex-Girlfriend" is not about Tony—nor is it about her current boyfriend, Gavin Rossdale.

Gwen and Bush heartthrob Gavin have been going strong for more than four years now. Considering the spotlight they live under, they've kept their relationship pretty low profile. "It's hard to be in a band and have a relationship," she says. "I'm going to be so busy for the next few months that I'll hardly get to see him."

One thing that hasn't been low profile, though, is Gwen's status as a strong role model for girls and a trendsetting fashion icon. "It's so funny that my clothes and my look have become a part of how people see the band. My clothes in the 'Just a Girl' video were what I wore to college that week, and I did my hair like that every day," Gwen laughs. In fact, she even admits, "A lot of my clothes are just what I wear to hide things I don't like about my body. I wake up and think, Okay, what's gonna make my butt look smaller today? I have the same issues as any girl."

What about the metal mouth she sported at the VH1 Fashion Awards? "I've always wanted straight teeth and I finally had the money to do it," she says. And the pink hair? "I did that when I was feeling frustrated while we were recording the album. I think I make big changes in my appearance when I'm depressed or going through something emotional."

It's that "I'm just like any other girl" attitude that makes Gwen seem so genuine. "Everything I do is just a personal choice," she says. "I've learned that the more you are yourself and the more unique you are—to the extent that no one else is anything like you—the more powerful you are." Spoken like the real-girl goddess we've always known her to be.



Gwen braces herself for a kiss from Gavin

Rock 'n' roll romance