

New Doubt

Once platinum, now pink, Gwen Stefani & Co. are rocking again

BY JENNIE PUNTER

Gwen Stefani has gone pink. The No Doubt singer's previously platinum-blond locks have been dyed and braided, turning her head into a field of bubble-gum-colored cornrows. They match the pastel shade of the puffy ski jacket she's wearing, if not the topic of her conversation, which is rust. As in band rust, the kind of awkwardness a group will experience when it releases a multiplatinum album (1995's *Tragic Kingdom*), tours for two years to promote it, and then crashes in exhaustion.

"*Tragic Kingdom* was made so long ago that our creative muscle hadn't been flexed in a while," she says. "We were trying to find the new No Doubt sound—what we felt reflected us after two years of touring the world and all the experiences. We had to find ourselves again."

What they found is on display in a new album, *Return to Saturn*, which was released this month, and a concert tour, which is already in full



PRETTY IN PINK: Stefani and company shoot for a more sophisticated sound.

swing. This burst of activity should chill those fans who have been whining about the band's long hiatus. "If they only knew how hard we were working to make this record really good," says guitarist Tom Dumont.

TWO YEARS IN THE MAKING

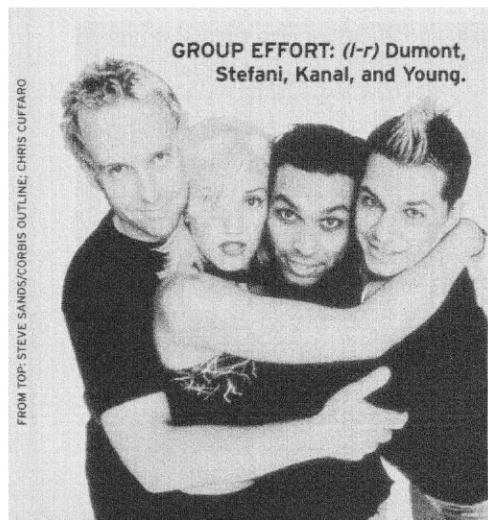
Stefani, Dumont, bassist Tony Kanal, and drummer Adrian Young spent most of 1998 writing songs, before going into the studio in February of 1999. Musically, the soul-searching took them from *Saturn*'s sly, ska-rocking single, "Ex-Girlfriend," to the strumming guitar and Beatlesque melody of the album's second single, "Simple Kind of Life."

"In the past, we tended to

overheat on our songs, load them up, turn the volume to 10," Stefani says. "I think we've matured enough to realize it's good to leave space for the songs to breathe."

"When we were working on the last album, Tony and I broke up, so I had all this subject matter to write about," she continues. "This time I fed myself more information and was aware of expressing myself more openly, inspired by people like Joni Mitchell and Sylvia Plath."

She may also have been inspired by her current boyfriend, Bush frontman Gavin Rossdale, but she responds to a question about him with a dismissive wave of her hand. "Next!" she commands. But she says it with a pink-lipsticked smile. ■



GROUP EFFORT: (l-r) Dumont, Stefani, Kanal, and Young.

FROM TOP: STEVE SANDS/CORBIS OUTLINE; CHRIS CUFFARO