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“WE KNEW WE HAD SOMETHING SPECIAL.”

NO DOUBT 92



How did this garish gang of Madness-loving Californians end up selling 10 million albums? Welcome to **No Doubt's** turbulent tale of teenage suicide, broken love affairs and butt-naked drummers. "Four people staying together for 15 years is cool," they tell Paul Elliott.

G

wen Stefani is feeling broody. One moment she's cradling the five-month-old son of No Doubt drummer Adrian Young, the next she's cleaning up after puffy-cheeked little Mason is sick in the lobby of the band's hotel in the quiet north German town of Bremen. The boy's mother looks on approvingly.

"I'm not ready for kids yet," Stefani insists, but at 32, and with the first No Doubt baby on board

for the band's European tour, she admits that her thoughts have turned to having a child of her own.

In September, she marries Bush singer Gavin Rossdale, her boyfriend of the past seven years. The service will be "intimate", she says, and near Rossdale's home in Primrose Hill, North London. Declining to reveal the exact date of the wedding, Stefani is anxious to protect what little privacy she has after photographs from a family "wedding shower" party in her sister's back garden were posted on the internet.

"I was pissed off," she says. Though Stefani is partly consoled by the fact that photos from the previous night's hen party have yet to surface. "It was me and 13 of my girls," she cackles. "We had this huge limo and we were out all night. We rolled in at noon wearing sunglasses."

She also remains cheery when a waiter in a coffee shop in Bremen comes over to request an autograph for his son. But later, in a more thoughtful mood, Stefani admits that her fame is more of a burden now than in 1996, when No Doubt had a worldwide hit with *Don't Speak*.

"I feel more exposed than ever," she sighs. "Even though we sold way more records before."

Of course, this sounds rich coming from a glamorous pop star sporting an extravagant platinum-blonde coiffure and a racy push-up bra beneath a string vest. But when, in 1984, the 14-year-old Gwen Renee Stefani agreed to sing in her elder brother Eric's high school band in Anaheim, California, she had no idea what she was letting herself in for.

"I was so passive as a kid," Gwen recalls. "I wasn't very ambitious." Eric Stefani was quite the opposite, "the maniac of the family, the artist". It was not until she reached puberty that Gwen decided "I had to be different." This she achieved by developing a thrift-store retro chic.

In the early '80s, Eric Stefani discovered the British ska music that would shape No Doubt's sound. Eric bought a Madness record with which he converted Gwen and his school friends. "Ska was an underground thing, a small scene," says Adrian Young, who grew up in nearby Long Beach.

Eric and Gwen's first band debuted at a school talent show. But it was not until 1987 that No Doubt were formed – when Eric encountered John Spence, a local black kid who wore suits despite only being 16. ▶



West

Photographs by Jason Bell

No Doubt: (from left) Tony Kanal,
Adrian Young, Gwen Stefani,
Tom Dumont, Bremen, Germany,
23 June 2002.

Side Story

◀ “No Doubt” was Spence’s catchphrase. Eric played keyboards; Gwen sang alongside Spence. The band played frantic ska-punk.

Amid numerous line-up changes, Tony Kanal joined as bassist in 1987. Born to Indian parents in Kingsbury, North London, Kanal was 11 when his family relocated to California.

It was in the summer of 1987 that Gwen kissed Kanal at a party, beginning an eight-year romance that remained hidden from their bandmates for several months. On 21 December that year, John Spence committed suicide in a park in Anaheim.

“It was a huge shock,” says Gwen. “We were going to stop the band, but we thought that John would want us to keep going.”

And so they did, with Gwen as the band’s focal point. In 1988, guitarist Tom Dumont arrived. One year later, Adrian Young, then 19, bullshit-ed his way in. “I told them I’d been playing drums for eight years when it was only one.” Inspired by the Red Hot Chili Peppers, Young soon acquired a reputation for playing gigs in the buff. “People were entertained by it and parents were offended, so I was pretty much accomplishing everything.”

With a solid line-up of Eric and Gwen Stefani, Kanal, Dumont and Young, No Doubt signed to Interscope Records in 1991. Success did not come quickly. Released in 1992 when America was still in the grip of Nirvana, Pearl Jam etc, their self-titled first album sold just 30,000 copies. A programmer for the influential West Coast rock radio station KROQ sneered, “It would take an act of God to get this band on the radio”.

No Doubt would prove him wrong, but only after four turbulent years.

“**W**e knew we had something special,” notes Adrian Young, “but we always had college as a back-up plan.” Young and Kanal majored in psychology, Dumont in music and Gwen Stefani in art. Just as they were finishing college, Interscope demanded a hit record.

“It took three years, working in my brother’s garage,” Gwen recalls. “The record company kept making us write more songs.” The pressure eventually told on Gwen and Tony’s relationship, and on Eric Stefani, who quit the band in 1994 to work as an animator on *The Simpsons*.

“That whole period was a blur to me,” Stefani says. “My brother quit, then Tony and I broke up. That’s when I discovered I could write songs. That whole record is about the break-up.”

Don’t Speak, a rock ballad in the classic style, would expose that break-up to a global audience.

Tony Kanal remains philosophical about it.

“Don’t Speak is one of the lesser songs on the harshness meter,” he laughs.

Another song from this period was Just A Girl, a female-empowerment anthem which would become Gwen Stefani’s signature tune and No Doubt’s first hit single following a second stop-gap album, *Beacon Street Collection*, in 1995.

By August 1996, the third album, *Tragic Kingdom*, featuring Don’t Speak and Just A Girl, had sold two million copies in the US and a small army of pubescent “Gwennabes” were wearing cropped T-shirts and bindis.

It was when No Doubt supported Bush on an arena tour that Stefani met her future husband. “Gavin is my second ever boyfriend. So this was a big deal. Everyone hated it – he was a rock star.”

If Tony Kanal hated it more than most, he was gratified to receive a call from Mick Fleetwood, who heard in Don’t Speak echoes of his own private life as documented on Fleetwood Mac’s *Rumours*. “He introduced himself as ‘The Fleetwood,’” Kanal smirks, “but he was very nice.” Nicer, certainly, than the relative anonymity that he, Young and Dumont experienced as Stefani was crowned the new queen of pop.

She reveals, “Everybody on the outside was coming to me and saying, Gwen you gotta stand up front! There was a division between the band and me. That was hard.”

No Doubt survived the test but returned to Anaheim after two years on the road, exhausted, but minted.

Stefani recalls thinking, “Oh, I still live with my parents. I gotta go buy myself a place, I’m rich!”

Tragic Kingdom went on to sell 10 million copies and proved a tough act to follow. On 11 April 2000, No Doubt released a fourth album, *Return Of Saturn*, which sold just 1.3 million copies. A rethink was required.

Inspired in part by Gwen’s collaborations on Moby’s *Play* and Eve’s *Let Me Blow Ya Mind*, which, in Kanal’s words “opened us up to a new audience”, No Doubt set out to make what they describe as “a party record”.

To this end, they adopted the formula of numerous R&B records by enlisting a variety of producers, including Prince, Nellee Hooper, Ex-Cars man Ric Ocasek and William Orbit. Last year’s *Rock Steady* album has since revitalised No Doubt with hit tracks such as *Hella Good*, an old-school new wave/disco hybrid which

Adrian Young likens to *Beat It* and *Another One Bites The Dust*. “I would be lying if I said that it didn’t matter if *Rock Steady* was a hit record,” he confesses.

To plug the record, No Doubt headed out as U2’s guests on part of the *Elevation* tour.

“We played a half-hour set every night, which left a lot of time to drink,” recalls Dumont ruefully. “That was the peak of my drinking. After we played Madison Square Garden I got really trashed and belligerent, and was rushed into our dressing



“Oh, I gotta go buy myself a place, I’m rich!”

Gwen Stefani on first discovering she’s loaded

room when U2 finished their set, so I wouldn’t start bullshitting them as they walked past.”

“**Four people staying together** for 15 years,” Gwen Stefani ponders. “That’s cool.”

Over dinner in one of Bremen’s traditional restaurants, Adrian Young speaks of his love for golf (he launched the now-defunct punk rock/golf lifestyle magazine *Schwing*) and sings a bizarre lullaby to his son – Black Sabbath’s *The Sign Of The Southern Cross*. Later, he mistakenly orders the German delicacy *sülzer*, comprising cubed pork and gherkins set in a daunting jelly mould.

When the wobbling dish arrives Stefani is in hysterics, a tiny roll of skin over her belt buckle the only evidence to support her claim that “I get fat really easily”.

Challenged by Q to an arm wrestle, the toned pop icon defers, “Oh, you could beat me. I feel pretty weak.”

Seated opposite her is Tony Kanal, the only member of No Doubt who is not currently in a long-term relationship.

“I’m happily single,” he says, “although seeing that baby... I’m gonna be 32 in a couple of months and the rest of my band is settling down. I’d like a real girlfriend. But don’t feel sorry for me,” he laughs. “Life’s not so bad.”

• No Doubt play *Old Trafford Cricket Ground, Manchester*, on 11 July and *Kinross Balado* on 12 July

SHE’S GOT THE LOOK

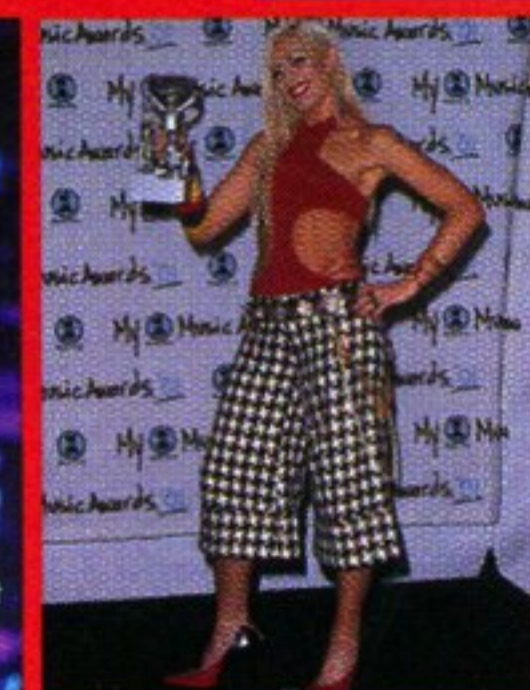
Inside Gwen Stefani’s preposterous wardrobe.



“Your lunch money or your life!”



“Christina Aguilera? I shit ‘er.”



“Fore!” Winning the 2001 US Masters.



Ship ahoy! It’s able sea(wo)man Stefani.



Brace yourself: here comes Zandra Rhodes.