

MUSIC

NO DOUBT

FROM BIG PINK

AFTER THIRTEEN YEARS OF STRUGGLE, HEART-BREAK AND MULTIPLATINUM RESURRECTION, NO DOUBT FACE THEIR BIGGEST CHALLENGE: MAKING MUSIC AS GROWN-UP AS THEY ARE.

IT'S MONDAY IN LOS ANGELES, the day before the release of No Doubt's fourth album, *Return of Saturn*, and all the gang is here at S.I.R. Studios in a little back office, doing a live Web chat with a few thousand fans. There's drummer Adrian Young, 30, cracking open a stapler and firing staples at people. He has spiky brown hair with patches dyed blond, a love for golf (he's an eight handicap and an aggressive long hitter) and liquor (he'll drink almost anything, but right now Jack and Coke is his, and the band's favourite), and an energetic punk soul. "Adrian's the adrenalin for the whole project," someone says. Guitarist Tom Dumont, 32, is sitting quietly in the corner. He's a shy, intellectual sort, easygoing in the way that only sun-baked Californian boys can be, a surfer at heart, a guy who proves that still waters run deep. He's the one with the strongest musical education. "Tom is the musician of the band," they say.

Bassist Tony Kanal, 29, is plugging in

his Macintosh G3. He's an intensely cool cat with a deep, breathy voice that is the sound of sincerity. He's the kid in your high school who was somehow down with everyone. He's the one who tells the band before a concert for 50 fans, "This is the biggest show of our lives." He's the one who spends all day on the phone keeping management in check, making sure No Doubt don't shit on their fans, the band's conscience. "All I do is No Doubt," he says. "It's really important to us to be fair about everything we do, because I know that feeling of going to see Prince at the Forum, and my dad buying me a ticket and it being a struggle for him to afford that ticket." Tony is also the ex-boyfriend of singer Gwen Stefani (though *Return's* lead single, "Ex-Girlfriend", isn't about him). The two are best friends and share personal space the way lovers do - leaning over each other, being a little touchier than friends. During the Web chat, Tony says, "I am single. I have yet to meet

the girl of my dreams, but I'm out there exploring." Gwen barks, "That's not true!" then drops the issue with a laugh.

And then there's Gwen, 30, sipping hot tea because she's a little sick. The tall diva dynamo has her neon-pink hair pulled back and is wearing a black T-shirt with a pink cartoon cat, a white calf-length wool sweater-jacket held together by 40 or 50 safety pins, and cranberry-coloured toenails. She's the one who fills the room with her presence, playing coy, cartoonish sexy as well as badass hot mama - a little bit Betty Boop, a little bit Buffy. (Boop is on her key chain.) She's also the creative leader. Adrian pushes for the sound to rock, Tom brings his knowledge of music theory, and Tony adds his propulsive bass and often serves as Gwen's muse, either as songwriting partner or subject, but Gwen, the other members say, was the major force behind the direction of *Return of Saturn*. "When we went into making this record, Gwen wanted to do music that

wasn't as quirky," Tom says. "When a band like us pushes to be serious, there's this lame side to that idea. But that's the direction she was pulling us, and we all wanted to follow."

"She has ideas all the time, and we don't," Adrian says. "Even drum parts, though she sometimes doesn't know what she's talking about, but she sometimes does."

Gwen herself deflects the title. "Am I the creative leader?" she says. "I don't know. But my opinion sure counts for a lot in my group of friends, and that feels good. I think I've earned that."

The gang is arranged around a little desk, Tony's G3 logged on to the site so they can watch the chat unfold. The Webmistress relates the questions coming in from the fans, and they tell her what to type. The gang is polite and

By **TOURÉ**



mindful of one another in the way that people who've been married - which they essentially are - for a long time are. But this is No Doubt, and no matter what, they're gonna have a good time. Tony logs on to the chat as Boogeface Guys.

"If you could take one album to the moon, what would it be?" the Webmistress says.

"I would say Pink Floyd, *Dark Side of the Moon*," Tom says.

"That's good, Tom," Tony says.

"I would say Beatles, White Album, 'cause it's actually two albums," Adrian says with a smart-aleck grin.

"That's a good idea, Adrian," Gwen says, sounding like a mother.

On the screen, Boogeface Guys asks, "Who has the biggest penis? Who has the worst farts?" Everyone giggles.

"I'm not gonna participate in such a silly question," Gwen says. "Of course, I'm never gonna get to the moon."

Tony and Tom: "Good answer!"

Boogeface Guys: "Adrian, I saw your penis at Roseland! Wow!"

"If you guys were trapped on a deserted island," the Webmistress asks, "who would you eat first?"

They pause a moment, looking for a diplomatic way out.

"That's a great question," Tony says with amazing sincerity.

Boogeface Guys: "Tom, is it true you put peanut butter on your genitals and let your dog lick it off?" Everyone laughs.

"I'd eat Tom last," Tony says in all seriousness. "'Cause he has the smelliest farts, and I do not know what's goin' on inside his body."

"That is fucked up, dude," Tom says, deadpan. "I feel really bad." Staples from Adrian's staple gun are flying. Gwen is cracking up. Things are out of control.

The Webmistress, unaware of the brewing chaos, says, "What's the craziest thing you've ever done onstage?"

Adrian leans into the speakerphone: "Stage-dive naked into the audience and tattoo my ball sack on a teenager's forehead. Yeah!"

Boogeface Guys: "I was that teenager!!! I love your balls!!!"

Do No Doubt fans have more fun than the gang? Doubtful.

RETURN OF SATURN" IS A VERY No Doubt record, which is a very difficult thing to define. "You can't really pinpoint what kinda music it is," Gwen says. "I think this album doesn't have a style to it. But it sounds so much like us." They are a group of friends who have been together for 13 years, and as they've grown, their sound has grown. They started as a little ska band from Southern California. Now they're an international rock

Contributing editor TOURÉ went on the road with D'Angelo in RS 577.

band influenced by ska, punk, hip-hop, reggae and Broadway.

They have done a lot of growing up since December 1986, when No Doubt began. It was Gwen's older brother, Eric, who put the band together with a singer named John Spence. Gwen and Eric's dad, Dennis, works for a market-research company; their mom, Patti, is a

they made an album, they toured. And then in 1994, as they were still working on their second album, *Tragic Kingdom*, Eric left the band for a job as an animator on *The Simpsons*. Tony broke up with Gwen. The album that came out of these hardships sold 10 million copies.

Thirteen years together, and five since the release of *Tragic Kingdom*,



FROM LEFT: GWEN, TONY, ADRIAN, ERIC AND TOM, 1989.

housewife. They lived in Anaheim, 30 miles south of downtown LA, in conservative Orange County. There, punk rock flourished and teens worshipped California bands that mixed raw guitar, sardonic humour and outrageous theatrics, bands like TSOL, the Descendents, the Dickies, Fishbone and the Untouchables. Opening for the Un-

have seen the maturation of every member. "Working on *Tragic Kingdom*," Tony says, "I was 23, 24, and it was all about showing off. Now we're working as a band." Tom adds, "I put my guitar parts together in such a way that I'm not hogging all the space. Our roles are not to be flashy. My role is to make the song sound better and try to

GWEN: "I'M SO CONFUSED ABOUT HOW I GOT FROM A LITTLE LAMB TO A STRONG PERSON."

touchables in 1987, No Doubt met Tony. He joined the band as a high school junior. No Doubt weathered their first tragedy that same year when Spence committed suicide. Devastated, they considered calling it quits, broke up for a few days and came back together.

Tom came on board a few months later, ditching life as a heavy-metal long-hair. In the summer of '89, Adrian, a huge fan of No Doubt's shows, lied about his experience to get a spot behind the drums. They gigged, they recorded,

deepen the emotional content of the lyrics. There's a pleasure in having that supporting role."

But the greatest maturation has been Gwen's. *Tragic Kingdom* was her collection of freedom songs. Eric had left the band, and she and her boyfriend split up. She started writing songs. "The whole thing was very exciting," she says now. "I was just blossoming. I remember thinking, 'I might be good at this.'" She was.

In the time since, she has gotten bet-

ter. On *Return of Saturn*, she's an outstanding vocalist who seems to create a new style for each song - a memoirist and a neo-feminist (though she hesitates to use the word for herself) who has opened her journal to us for a talk about the politics of modern femininity, the pain of rejection, her penchant for difficult men and her struggle to balance a passion for the band and a desire to be a wife. "The main word to describe this record would be *confusion*," she says. "I'm so focused on my band and my art that I can't even have a boyfriend right, and I have all these problems, and I'm so confused about how did I get from a little lamb that was really dependent to feeling like I'm a strong person? It's hard for women. We wanna do it all these days, and we're expected to do it all, but how do you do everything good?"

Gwen lives in a big two-storey, three-bedroom house in East Hollywood, around the corner from Flea of the Red Hot Chili Peppers. She lives here with her younger sister Jill, Jill's four-year-old daughter, Madeline, and Magan, a 15-year-old Lhasa apso. A little old lady disguised as a furry white dog, Magan walks slowly, her claws clicking on the floor as if she's wearing heels. The house, built in 1928, has an old feel and lots of religious pieces, making it seem like a small church. There are plants and flowers around the front door, a giant statue of the Virgin Mary in the front hall ("It's all girls living there, so I figured it would be a good reminder to be a good girl"), elaborately melted candles, stained glass and the smell of incense everywhere. Out back there's a tiled deck, a pool being put in, and a garden with a stairway of stones serpentine through. Upstairs there's her bedroom, dominated by a king-size four-poster bed with a supersoft mattress and fluffy pillows, a big unframed mirror for a headboard, and a picture of Gwen and her boyfriend of the past four years, Gavin Rossdale of Bush.

Gavin is a figure rarely seen - the two have never lived on the same continent - but he's everywhere in her existence. On her left hand is a pair of simple silver bands: On one, in Old English script, it says GWEN, on the other GAVIN. On the floor of her lime-green Jaguar ("I wanted an old-lady car," she explains), there are empty water bottles and a backstage laminate for the current Bush world tour. Much of *Return* is about him, including "Ex-Girlfriend", "Bathwater" and the so-subtle "Marry Me". "He's a big inspiration on the record," Gwen says. "It's really good right now, except that we don't get to see each other. We go in and out of being really in love and 'Oh, my God, I've gotta get out of this thing.' It's the hardest, hardest relationship to be in. But we can't help

ourselves, so four years later we're still trying to do it."

Every relationship needs a flower and a gardener, but Gavin and Gwen seem to be two flowers trying to make a go of it. A while back, she and Gavin were on tour in Europe, close enough that they could be together at night. "One night I got home and my trainer is like, 'You're gonna work out right now.' I ended up getting to [Gavin's] house at three in the morning, and he was upset. We were both so needing to come home to someone who was like, 'Oh, honey, let me take care of you,' but we had no energy to give to each other." She sighs. "Sometimes I think there's not enough space in the room - we both take up a lot - but sometimes it's just perfect balance."

In half an hour, No Doubt have a performance for winners of a Web-site contest. Gwen changes into a long, loose pink dress and slips on a pair of pink sandals. Neon pink has, by accident, become the official colour of *Return*, a visual mantra for Gwen, who sports neon-pink hair and, onstage, pink jackets, wristbands and feather boas. "I think the best thing our success affords us," she says, "is the lifestyle we lead is never-never land. I never have to wear a suit, I never have to wear nylons, I



GAVIN PLUS GWEN, 1998. (LEFT) NO DOUBT, 2000. (ABOVE).

can do my hair pink, I can do whatever I want. I'm growing up, but I don't really have to, so it's kinda cool. I love that about my life." So the record is about the struggle of growing up, but the hair is a visual manifes-

tation of not having to. This is a typically No Doubt happy collision.

Gwen brushes into the living room to find her mother, Jill and Madeline on the couch. Madeline is wearing a Powerpuff Girls T-shirt and a long, frilly white skirt. The three are watching the new video for *Saturn*'s current single, "Simple Kind of Life", a fantastical clip in which Gwen runs from

the tuxedoed guys in a wedding dress, sings in front of a giant birth-control-pill dispenser, and stands in a room of 30,000 wedding cakes as Tony, Tom and Adrian smash the cakes with demented faces. Madeline leaps up, wailing, "Sissy! Why are they being mean to you?!"

The women explain that it's a dream sequence. Madeline says forcefully, "I don't like that they're wrecking your dream!" [Cont. on 144]

models look glum. Occasionally, she turns her eyes in Gisele's direction. But she can't tell what they're thinking - if they're jealous of Gisele, or what. Photographers gather around Gisele, snapping away. Security shoos them off. Guys come out of nowhere and hover close to her, smiling at her, showing points of view that glitter and clatter like diamonds and forks.

Gisele finally makes it back to her little dressing room. "I don't think I have many years left," she says, "people always sucking every-thing out of you, your energy, your everything." On a stool, she lights a Parliament and lets its ashes into a plastic water cup. "I wish all the girls here were much happier than I am, because they can fucking fuck and be free, and I have to stay inside this room, with black curtains, because I know I am attacked."

"Leo's business hasn't helped any," she says on. "Some people are saying we're a great couple in terms of market-ability, but that's stupid. He doesn't need me. I don't need him. Because I got used to him, and he got used to me. I am without him, and he got used to me being without me." Vida hops up on the bed. "I mean, what the fuck. You know what I mean? It just doesn't fuck-er!"

"I don't like this stuff!" she says, looking very distraught. "I'm not just a model. What's the fuck-deal? I'm just a person, and like everybody else, I want to have my secrets!"

"I'm sorry," she says, "please help me. Vida, I want my life back."

"Look at Vida," she says. "Vida's a model, Tommy, why are you always so jealous? Why are you always so crazy?"

"I'm sorry," Gisele says sharply. "Where are you going?"

HOW ENDS LATE, AND GISELE takes her flight, even though the plane is waiting at the gate for her for an extra eight hours. Then she learns that the first flight of the new day will be leaving in 12 hours. So this is what happened in Milan. Nothing so terrible. She will see the fireworks. "My life is coming back tomorrow," she says, taking a breath. "As soon as I get to LA, it's over."

A few days later, however, there's yet another report in the newspapers: Tom DiCaprio is crushed after his girlfriend, Gisele Bundchen, ran back into the arms of her former beau, Brazilian supermodel Joao-Paulo Diniz. A month later, she was caught sneaking out of her apartment building. A friend of Tom's says, 'Leo's heartbroken.' Diniz is worth an estimated \$1.5 billion, and, says Tom, 'Leo's going to have to cough up a major dough and do something really major if he wants to impress Gisele and get her back.'

It never ends? ○

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[Cont. from 117] They try again, Mom Stefani ("Me-Mom" to Madeline) pointing out that the video is about Gwen's grappling with wanting to be a wife and mother and being a musician.

The young Stefani interrupts her. "Me-Mom, can you snap your toes?"

The three older Stefanis melt.

AT THE WEB-SITE CONCERT, Tom plays acoustic guitar, and Adrian jumps between bongos and drums. It's like *Unplugged* minus the cameras. Without the crunch of an electric guitar, the meat of the songs is laid bare, and you can hear just how well-structured they are.

Afterward, the band goes to dinner at a Japanese restaurant called Yamakasa. Besides the gang, there's Hope, Tom's sweet long-time girlfriend, and Nina, Adrian's new wife, a short, freckled firecracker with black hair and vixen-red tips and a blinding five-carat wedding rock. "I found a girl who lets me be me," he says. "It's like having a supercool girlfriend, but we're married."

They're clearly a family comfortable with one another onstage and off. "Playing together every night," Tony says, "it got to the point where Adrian and I could look in each other's eyes and know what was gonna happen next. You can't get that from rehearsing. It's gotta come from playing together onstage."

The gang laughs at the few bad reviews they've gotten, trades stories about illicit sex and looks forward to this summer's tour. "How many records do you think we're selling right now?" Tony wonders aloud. "This second?"

"This is a magical night," Gwen says as green tea, beef teriyaki, eel sauce, miso soup, shrimp tempura and all sorts of sushi hit the table. "I can't believe it! Our record is out! When I woke up this morning, it was like Christmas!"

A few years back, the departure of Eric Stefani and the break-up of Gwen and Tony were pulling at the group's seams, and it seemed they might not last much longer. But the story of No Doubt is the story of people who let nothing - school, work, break-ups, early departures, psychic pain - get in the way of the band. Now, they're that rare thing - financially secure musicians - and everything seems to be going their way. "We tell ourselves every day, 'If this is it, we did it,'" Tony says. "We can go on with our lives knowing we spent these years together and made this amazing thing happen. It doesn't even matter what happens at this point. We wanna sell records, of course, but we're already so fulfilled. We succeeded." ○