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and his
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Gwen

STEFANI Pop's hottest fashion icon



PHOTOGRAPHED
BY ROBERT ERDMANN

It's not that Gwen Stefani's single has sold more than 100,000 copies or that with her band, No Doubt, she was in the UK charts for months last year, or that she is married to a successful and handsome British rock star, or that she has a cult following on a par with Madonna in the Eighties. What makes Gwen more exciting than she probably realises is that she is almost certainly responsible for much of what was sent down the catwalks this year. Who would have thought calf-length satin hipster combat trousers tied with ribbons, neon-pink mesh vests and white patent-leather stilettos could inspire Louis Vuitton, Christian Dior and Alexander McQueen? Last year she seemed an unlikely winner of the Rock Style gong at the VH1/Vogue Fashion Awards. Now she is a style icon. Girlie glossies rave about 'Gwen's world', 'Gwenabees' and the 'queen of geek chic'. John Galliano describes her as 'pop princess, rock vixen and Hollywood diva all at the same time'. Even Topshop is a tribute to her trash-gets-flash style. I can't wait to see what she wears at home.

'Gwen's running a bit late,' gushes a wide-eyed assistant. 'Gavin has taken her to Locatelli's for a romantic lunch.' As I wait in the first-floor drawing room of a big white house overlooking Primrose Hill, I sip Gwen's favourite herbal tea, sweet and spicy Celestial Seasonings Bengal Spice. I'm sitting on one of two deep-red velvet sofas. There is a black sheepskin rug on the glossy black floorboards. Ten minutes later Winston, a black heavily dreadlocked puli dog lollops up the stairs and disappears into the sheepskin. He is followed by Gavin Rosedale, the lead singer of mega-selling (in the US) rock band Bush. Behind Gavin is his new wife. Gwen is slight and very pretty, with irregular platinum-blonde hair and translucent skin. They fizz with happiness. 'Winston's got an overdose of oestrogen and is smelly,' says Gavin, picking up and putting what looks like Bob Marley's head on his shoulder.

'I'm in my under-construction phase right now,' says Gwen in a girlie Californian voice. She is exhausted ('I feel out of balance'), not because she has just flown in from LA, but because she has been on tour for years and her show is very physical. ('Last year was wild, non-stop.') But she still managed to win a Grammy for her album *Rock Steady*, work on her soon-to-be-launched line of clothes (LAMB), and get married. 'I was so busy, Gavin had to organise the whole thing. It was really romantic.' After the unstarry ceremony at St Paul's in Covent Garden (the actors' church), Giorgio Locatelli cooked dinner at Home House. Gwen's 'good friend' John Galliano flew over to tweak her specially dyed pale-pink and ivory corseted dress. After a short honeymoon, another ceremony followed in LA. 'We've hardly seen

POP SMART

She's the new Madonna – the sassy singer whose style is a No.1 hit. Nicola Formby meets Gwen Stefani







each other since, but we promised we would be there for each other. Everything we do is for us. We're a team. Standing up in front of all those people and saying, "This is what we are doing, respect us," was amazing, so romantic.' Gwen's espresso-coloured eyes go watery as she reminisces. We examine her dazzling wide platinum band of diamonds with a heart-shaped rose diamond set inside interlocking Gs – 'I've never had real jewellery.' Gwen is passionate, unspoilt and excited. 'I love being married and we are going to be together for ever.' But for now Gwen wants to hang about in one place long enough to get 'really bored' and 'lie around with my husband, watch movies in the afternoon and eat ice-cream out of the tub'.

Born and raised 'an ordinary, suburban girl' in Anaheim, California, opposite the gates of Disneyland, Gwen sang along to *Annie* and adored Julie Andrews in *The Sound of Music*. In her teens she discovered Madness ('There was a ska scene in Orange County'), the Specials and Bob Marley. Last year she was on the front cover of *Vanity Fair*'s music issue alongside Missy Elliott and Destiny's Child and supported U2 and the Rolling Stones on their US tours. Last year's hit 'Hey Baby' was a mishmash of electro hip-hop funk with Jamaican dancehall rhythm.

'My brother was the talented one. I was passive, always just the sister, so when I was 16 and he started a band and told me I was going to sing in it... I did,' shrugs Gwen. 'The band made me feel alive, relevant, real. I started writing songs, dated the bass player and loved it.' Gwen and the band were always well known in their neighbourhood, but she never expected to go global. 'Success is great. To be able to perform, love what you do and touch people is amazing. Fame can be fun, but it would be nice to turn it off sometimes.' She points out of the window and has a gentle moan about the paparazzi. 'I was sitting in the park reading poetry, getting deep and there they were with their long lenses. I called them over and said, "Take my picture quickly. How can I be all arty if you're there waiting for me to pick my nose?"'

Gwen will not define her style. She is wearing dusty-pink tweed own-design

'balloon pants' that are tight down the calves, slouchy pale suede boots, a Juicy Couture charcoal-grey corduroy belted jacket and a black and pink knitted top by Vivienne Westwood. 'As a teenager, I was anti-fashion. It was so expensive and repetitive. Only now that I have met designers do I realise what an art form it can be.' Her mum would make her clothes and Gwen would add bits: braid, buttons and chains. 'Style is an extension of your personality. It's a visual. You shouldn't talk about it too much.' Expressing herself through music has always been her main focus. 'It was weird when suddenly people started paying attention to my look. It was like, shit, I've got to get clothes.' The dressing up comes last and 'hey, I don't have a job so I don't have to follow any rules'. On tour, Gwen has five outfits that she rotates because she doesn't want to think about what she looks like. She used to be a thrift-store junkie and is still obsessed with

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Thirties and Forties clothes, which she mixes with punk. Her small landing dressing room looks more like a teenage bedroom than a rock star's changing room – two rails of trousers indistinguishable from each other, piles of folded sleeveless vest-style T-shirts and a small table covered in make-up. 'I'm into mixing pink and red at the moment.'

Gwen wears bikini tops on top of string vests, coloured fishnets under knee-length trousers, stilettos and schoolgirl blazers. Her midriff-revealing cropped tops, denim painted with words, stripy socks cut off to make gloves, ribbons, polkadots, bindis, braces and lots of jangly jewellery, topped up with her platinum hair and trademark full red lips ('I like the starlet look'), has been more inspirational to teenagers than anything Britney or Kylie have ever worn. Gwen is not naturally lean – 'I'm a chubby teenager really and I love eating' – so she has to go to the gym often. 'I also fast – goat's milk and herbal pills to keep centred and energetic, and to cleanse my body of parasites.' Gwen needs to sleep more but ends up fighting in bed. 'I don't mind Winston sleeping with us but he is grumpy. We both have so much in common – sleeping, eating, laying around in the park and we both love Gavin.'

On cue, Gavin comes back into the room, trailed by Winston. Gwen runs her fingers through her chopped hair. 'Look, my hair just broke off. I am in such bad condition. I have to go and work on getting bored.' □