

TOWN & COUNTRY

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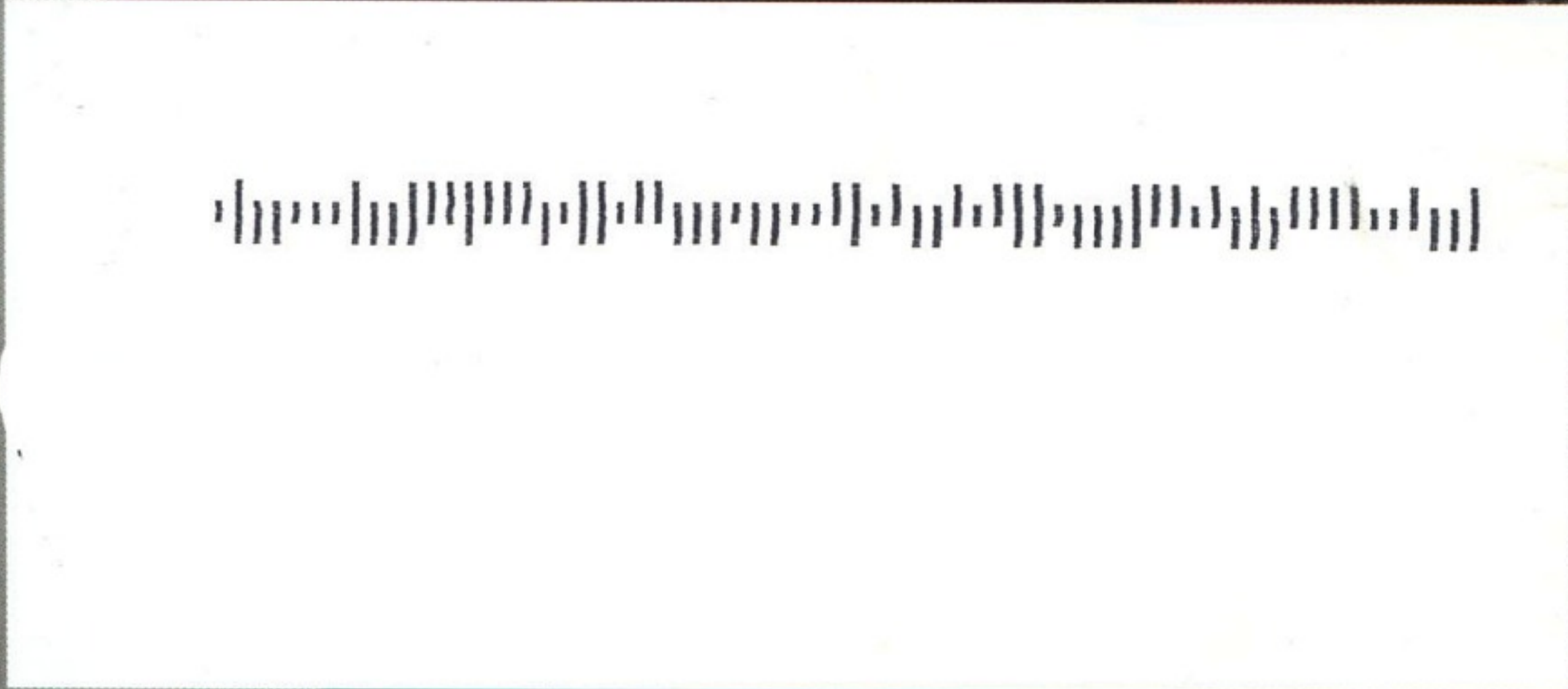
THE
Rock
Aristos,
Movie Stars,
and Mavericks
Who Make
L.A. Glitter

Starring:

GAVIN & GWEN
ROSSDALE STEFANI

Born to Ride

A LIFE IN THE SADDLE by Anjelica Huston



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I'M WITH HER

Gavin Rossdale and Gwen Stefani, both in Ferragamo. According to designer Massimiliano Giornetti, Stefani "owned the night."

*Sittings editor:
David Scoroposki*

LA *Nights*

The Ferragamo-sponsored opening of the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, in Beverly Hills, was the backdrop for the West Coast's own brand of high society: glittering, unfussy, and pure fun. Meet the stars who made the evening shine. *By DANIELLE NUSSBAUM*

Photographs by ROXANNE LOWIT

I

F YOU FOUND YOURSELF IN BEVERLY Hills on Thursday, October 17, and wanted to turn onto Crescent Drive, you were out of luck. In a town where people are used to street closures for movie premieres and awards shows, the fact that the inconvenience was caused by the opening of a fine arts complex raised eyebrows—and hopes. “I have been here for 28 years, and it’s changed a lot,” artist Lisa Eisner said at the event. “Michael Govan at LACMA, Jeffrey Deitch, when he was at MOCA, and Annie Philbin at the Hammer made the whole art world look at L.A. more—and of course the Getty was important. And Disney Hall. But it’s still hard.”

Enter Wallis Annenberg, the philanthropic powerhouse and chairwoman of the Annenberg Foundation, which gives millions annually to support everything from hospitals to schools to, of course, the arts. The “Wallis,” as the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts has already come to be known, is a full-scale performing arts and culture center that will feature productions running the gamut from music to dance to film to theater. The complex, formerly the Beverly Hills post office, has been reimagined to include the 150-seat Lovelace Studio Theater, a café, a gift shop, and the Postmaster’s Office, a preserved, walnut-paneled space that can be rented out for private events. A new adjacent building houses the 500-seat Bram Goldsmith Theater, a wardrobe shop, a prop room, and the Founders Room, for VIPs. A school offering classes in the performing arts is set to open later this year for students under 18. The center’s first public performance, in November, featured the Martha Graham Dance Company.

“For many years L.A. had been seen as a second-class citizen in the fine art world. There’s a huge commercial entertainment industry here, and it tends to overshadow everything else,” Annenberg said. “Some people have a hard time believing you can find a Lichtenstein or a Frank Stella in the same zip code that produced *90210*.” In the City of Angels, Annenberg is a cultural guardian of sorts. The daughter of billionaire media mogul and philanthropist Walter Annenberg, she became chairwoman and president of the family’s namesake foundation in 2009. The foundation, which funds the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania, the Wallis Annenberg Department of Photography at LACMA (of which she is a trustee), the Annenberg Community Beach House in Santa Monica, and the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism at the University of Southern California, among many others, has a distinguished presence all over the country but especially in Philadelphia, where Wallis was raised, and in California, where she now

resides. It’s de rigueur to fill an inaugural gala with celebrities, and some of the dinner guests—Rachel Zoe, Nicole Richie, Courteney Cox, Joe Jonas, Camilla Belle—were those you’d expect. But not since the opening of the Disney Concert Hall, almost exactly 10 years ago, has L.A. brought together such a diverse guest list to celebrate something distinctly cultural. And while the event marked something of a milestone for the city, it also underlined the existence of society players who don’t frequently appear on E! Entertainment Television or in the pages of *Us Weekly*. Power patrons and philanthropists such as Edythe and Eli Broad, Eva and Michael Chow, Michael Milken, and Sherry Lansing were there, along with European imports Caroline Sieber, Olympia Scarry, and Miroslava Duma. The president also attended. Except this is L.A., so that meant actor Tony Goldwyn, who plays the president on TV. He was accompanied by his sister; documentary filmmaker and artist Liz Goldwyn. And, of course, there were Jodie Foster, Sidney Poitier, Kevin Spacey, and Tim Robbins.

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ALVATORE FERRAGAMO FIRST came to Hollywood in the 1920s, and he later made custom shoes for Marilyn Monroe. So when Gwen Stefani, the peroxide-blond rock star who can channel a latter-day Norma Jean, shook the fringe of her floor-length Ferragamo flapper dress—the brand sponsored the opening—it was a camera-ready full-circle moment. “It’s one of my favorite looks, and she wore it perfectly,” Ferragamo designer Massimiliano Giornetti said. “She owned the night.” But Stefani attended less as a pop culture goddess than as an L.A. lady—the guest of popular florist Eric Buterbaugh. And on this red carpet, in light of the recent behavior of her female comrades in music, Stefani—gracious and gleefully pregnant, husband Gavin Rossdale standing respectfully beside her—more strongly recalled another Ferragamo client: Grace Kelly. Or maybe Daisy Buchanan. It was that kind of night: full of surprises.

“An eclectic, multicultural, and multigenerational audience of patrons from around the world made for a fun mix of everyone from society billionaires to supermodels—and that was just at my table!” said Cameron Silver, who grew up in Beverly Hills and remembered when the building occupied by the Wallis was his local post office. “I love to see stalwarts of society mixing with Oscar winners. The movie stars looked great,