

AMONG STEFANI'S MANY FASHION STATEMENTS, PINK HAIR AND BRACES HAVE BEEN HER MOST ORIGINAL. PHOTOGRAPHED BY: DAVID BAILEY. SITTINGS EDITOR: ALLANA LE SAUX.

rock style

gwen stefani



This marks the third year running that Gwen Stefani has snagged a VH1/Vogue Fashion Award. Not bad, particularly considering that this is only the third year the awards have been given out. In both 1999 and 2000, she won Most Stylish Video for "New" and "Ex-Girlfriend," two cuts off *Return of Saturn* that she wrote with her band, No Doubt. But this year it's her sartorial solo work that has won her 2001's Most Fashionable Female Artist.

Of course, the singer's style supremacy is less surprising if you take into account the fact that she has at her disposal a sort of secret weapon. What sets Stefani apart from would-

be divas, those who rely on hired help when deciding what to wear (and those who would be better off if they did), is that not one of them has Gwen Stefani's unerring sense of fashion—and her singular ability to make the most out-there ideas (pink hair? braces?) look totally in.

It hasn't always been this easy. Growing up in Orange County, California, she was forbidden, she says, by her conservative parents to wear "short shirts or any of that stuff." And as a young woman, she risked becoming a "cartoon version" of herself when the look that she popularized was adopted by many of her fans.

This year, Stefani was again seemingly everywhere when she sang hooks on two songs—Moby's "South Side" and Eve's "Let Me Blow Ya Mind"—which became, one after another, the kind of hits that, as she says, "would not go away, just kept going and going." She and her band also spent 2001 recording a new record, *Rock Steady*, which is due out next month and which Stefani promises will be "a party record, not a dance record, but a record you can dance to." The record's fun sound was influenced by dance-hall, new wave, and hip-hop, which seems a pretty accurate description of what's been influencing her style as well. "I always feel uncomfortable talking about my whole fashion thing," she says, "because if you speak about it, it brings too much attention to it." Of course, this is coming from a woman who's been strutting around in pants that have her name beaded in gold across the bum, so it's not too hard to persuade her to say more. "I've been doing a lot of my own clothes again," she says. "I had to make a skirt to go with this Vivienne Westwood corset I have, so I went to a fabric store, and it was like going to Disneyland."

It's been six years since she entered the spotlight, but Stefani retains a sense of wonder about her place there. The day before she sat for David Bailey for the accompanying photograph, he had taken a portrait of John Galliano. "John wrote me a little note, and I was like, Oh, my God! I just felt like, I'm in the cool crowd." Of course, the coolest thing about her is the attitude.

—LAUREN WATERMAN *vh1/vogue* ▶190

Hair, Ray Allington for Bumble and Bumble at Magnet L.A.; makeup, Sarah Reygate using BeneFit Cosmetics. Bustier dress, See by Chloé.