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THE GIFT



QF GWEN

Making holiday wishes come true, Gwen Stefani signed on to a second leg of her residency, which kicks off Dec. 27—and debuted a new collection of holiday songs.

BY ABBY TEGNELIA PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAMIE NELSON

Gwen Stefani's residency kicks off after Christmas with chart-topping hits and over-the-top show production.

As a young girl growing up in sunny Orange County, future pop phenom Gwen Stefani's narrow view of nearby Las Vegas was solely that it produced the silver dollars her grandparents would bring back from gambling trips. But after her band, No Doubt, was signed by Interscope Records, Sin City got a whole lot more exciting.

"The first time I went to Vegas was with No Doubt," Stefani says. "Everybody would use up all of their per diems gambling. We were just kids. It was just close enough to home that we could go there, but it was far enough away that it felt like we had to work hard to get there."

Fast forward a few years, and it's no wonder that the still endearingly wide-eyed superstar said yes when Planet Hollywood's Zappos Theater asked her to kick off a second leg of her hit Vegas residency Dec. 27.

"Never in my wildest dreams did I think I'd have a residency," she says. "Being in the same room every night creates a completely different kind of energy and emotion for me. It's hard to put in words, but it's just so different from moving from town to town on a tour. It took my whole career to build up to a show like this and to have enough songs to build a story like the story I put on in Vegas."

Gwen Stefani—Just a Girl has been a hit since it opened June 27, drawing in fans from all over the world who scream ("bananas!"), sing along and dance through the entire show. And their idol does not disappoint. The L.A.M.B. fashion designer changes from one over-the-top outfit to the next, ranging from extravagant gowns to tiny sequined ensembles that allow the high-energy star to dance. Expect glam Vegas touches such as feathers and long gloves, too—and even classic showgirls. And then there's the music. The three-time Grammy winner belts out all of her greatest hits, including "Hollaback Girl," "Rich Girl," "Sweet Escape," "Harajuku Girls" and, of course, "Just a Girl." Stefani's known for her flair when it comes to her dancers and choreography—with a permanent stage at her disposal for more backdrops and more hoopla all around, this is one spectacular show.

"It's a bit more theatrical than anything I've ever done, and I have more freedom to do things I couldn't do on tour," Stefani says. "Every night, by the end of the night there's this satisfying feeling of 'OK, they knew me when they walked into the venue, and now they know me even better.' You want the audience to walk away with the lasting memory they came for. I really love interacting with the audience and being really casual onstage with them. I actually like when things go wrong. I think it makes the show different and challenging—I like variety."

In addition to prepping for this new leg of her residency, this month is a busy one for the multifaceted star and supermom to her three sons. She's making the rounds promoting her deluxe Christmas album, *You Make It Feel Like Christmas*, which dropped at the end of October with five new songs, in addition to covers of holiday favorites such as "Santa Claus Is Coming to Town" and "Winter Wonderland" that she debuted last year.

This Christmas, Stefani will be making some new traditions, too, with her partner, country singer Blake Shelton, whom she met when both were judges on *The Voice*. (She says that her "favorite song" on her Christmas album is "definitely" "You Make It Feel Like Christmas," the song she wrote with Shelton.)

"My favorite part of the holidays is creating memories with my children that are special and full of family and traditions," she says. "That's the kind of family I had growing up—we went really big. To be able to try and re-create that and create new traditions with my children is something we look forward to. It's such a great time to reflect on the year and dream about what's to come in the new year. I just love this time of year." ■