

L A D Y

G A G A



IT WOULD BE EASY TO DISMISS LADY GAGA AS JUST ANOTHER POP PUPPET—WERE SHE NOT PULLING ALL THE STRINGS HERSELF. THE OUTSPOKEN, RULE-BREAKING SUPERSTAR IS MAKING 2009 HER YEAR BY SAYING WHAT SHE WANTS, SINGING HOW SHE FEELS, AND NEVER COMPROMISING ON THE FASHION

Photography Sebastian Faena
Styling Nicola Formichetti

"IT'S NOT MY JOB TO DO SOMETHING THAT'S SAFE FOR PEOPLE. I JUST DO WHAT I THINK IS BEAUTIFUL." —LADY GAGA

To the boys and girls with a disco ball, some sunglasses, a glue gun, and a dream, this is your moment. Lady Gaga from Yonkers, New York, a graduate of lower Manhattan nightlife, who came into this world as Stefani Germanotta, is a star. "Just Dance" and "Poker Face," the first tracks from her 2008 platinum-selling, electro-pop debut album *The Fame*, both reached number one on the Billboard Hot 100 singles chart, a success not seen since the introduction of Christina Aguilera a decade ago.

Gaga delivers herself to the masses wrapped in postfeminist sexuality, cynicism-free materialism, and a new generation's excitement for "creative direction." She is the number one proponent of the avant-garde statement costumes currently popular with entertainers like Beyoncé and Rihanna. Gaga's distinct visual vocabulary includes a signature "hair bow," a studied disinterest in wearing pants, and an evolving wardrobe of geometric, left-of-center fashions (a Hussein Chalayan-inspired bubble dress, for example).

Considering that Gaga designed this persona on her own, along with the creative team she calls Haus of Gaga, her development is being watched with interest, particularly as her notoriety affords her greater access to the high-end resources and collaborators that can bring more polish to her artistic ambitions. "You always have to be ahead of the curve," she says. "Right now I'm quite obsessed with 1950s monster movies. And it's a leap. But when you focus on something and commit yourself to it, your lie can become true."

The following conversation with Gaga, who speaks with a slight Madonna-esque accent, happened during a photo shoot for an upcoming M.A.C beauty campaign, in which she will star alongside Cyndi Lauper. Questions were directed at Gaga's reflection in a mirror through a space between her hair, which was being worked on by Danilo, and the arms of a makeup artist applying red rhinestones to her face. **Mark Jacobs**

MARK JACOBS Have famous people been everything Gaga hoped they would be?

LADY GAGA I was never excited to be friends with famous people. That's never been the goal of this. I know my album is called *The Fame*, and that's the subject matter, but it's fame in the Warholian Studio 54 kind of way, not the stereotypical fame that people read about in tabloids and is considered very poisonous.

MJ Why is fame important?

LG To me, if something is good when it's shallow, that's enough. If it goes deeper that's fine. I hope people read into the work but if they don't...

MJ You've spoken about the subtext of "Poker Face." What is the subtext of "Boys, Boys, Boys"?

LG I wrote the track as a mating call. I was dating this guy who was really into heavy metal and I wanted to write a pop song that would make him fall in love with me. So I wrote that record and we dated for two years. It reminds me of "Girls, Girls, Girls" by Mötley Crüe. The subtext is that even though I'm a very free and sexually empowered woman, I'm not a man hater. I celebrate very American sentiments about bars and drinking and men buying women drinks. It's a very heavy metal sentiment that I celebrate

in a pop song. But I don't think every record has to have this "Poker Face" subtext.

MJ Has Gaga encountered an item of clothing too outrageous for her?

LG I don't consider my own clothing to be outrageous. It's very strange to me the way people say, "Oh, Lady Gaga and another one of her wacky outfits!" Or, "You always dress so crazy!" The truth is that people just don't have the same references that I do. To me it's very beautiful and it's art, and to them it's outrageous and crazy.

MJ It's certainly more challenging than a pair of torn Levi's and a tank top.

LG I guess challenging and outrageous are two different things. There is a method to my aesthetic. I don't just choose pieces based on their shock value. I really think that what I wear and what we design as a house is very beautiful and when people say it's outrageous or over-the-top, to me we just don't share the same references. Danilo, for example, knows who Thierry Mugler is. He's very familiar with his work, he knows the lines, he knows the shapes, he's seen the progression of his work and his archives since the '70s. So if Danilo sees a piece that I've designed that's Mugler-inspired, he says, "Oh, that's amazing, I love it." Whereas someone who doesn't know Mugler might say, "Oh you look like a tranny robot." They just don't understand the reference. But it's not my job to do something that's safe for people. I just do what I think is beautiful.

MJ The pop stars have been very territorial with the Mugler lately. Have you met Sasha Fierce?

LG Have I met Beyoncé? No.

MJ You once said you wish your live shows could change lives...

LG I'm wondering why you asked if I'd met Beyoncé.

MJ Because she's really into Mugler right now.

LG Right now. But I've been wearing Mugler for years. For me it's not a one-off for a tour or a one-off for this album cycle. This kind of clothing, the period, the lifestyle of fashion and art and pop art as life, this is who I've been for years. But Beyoncé looks amazing. I love what Mugler did for her tour. But do you see my point? It's not going to end after *The Fame* is over.

MJ What about the teacup as accessory?

LG That's ridiculous. I like to drink out of china. People made a big deal of it.

MJ What is the origin of the hair bow?

LG Me and Matt Williams, he's my creative partner and my best friend, we design and creative direct everything together, we were on the set of my "Poker Face" video. We were looking through books, and he was looking through a Gaultier fashion show, and Gaultier did all this amazing hair art with cats and giraffes, like crazy amazing. And I was yapping about bows. "I love bows!" I was imagining myself with hundreds of bows. "Bows are everywhere! Bows are the next big thing! They're not on the street but they're at the parties!" So he's saying, "Yeah, I like bows, but everyone's going to do it." And I said, "Let me see that hair art. Go and put a fucking outfit on my head."

Lady Gaga's *The Fame* is out now from Interscope Records. Lady Gaga is currently on tour