

= The Sweet Escape =

The Sweet Escape is the second studio album by American singer and songwriter Gwen Stefani , released on December 1 , 2006 by Interscope Records . Having originally intended to return to No Doubt after her debut solo album , Love . Angel . Music . Baby . ( 2004 ) , Stefani decided to record a second album as a way to release some of the material left over from the Love . Angel . Music . Baby. writing sessions . The album musically resembles its predecessor while exploring more modern pop sounds . It was released to generally mixed reviews from contemporary music critics , receiving criticism for its strong similarities to Love . Angel . Music . Baby .

It was preceded by the lead single " Wind It Up " , which charted moderately across the world , and produced the follow @-@ up single " The Sweet Escape " , which proved more successful worldwide . The Sweet Escape reached the top five in the United States , Canada , and Australia and peaked inside the top 20 in the United Kingdom . The album 's supporting tour , The Sweet Escape Tour , kicked off in April 2007 , covering North America , Colombia , Australia , Asia , and Europe .

= = Conception = =

= = = Background = = =

Following the release of her debut album Love . Angel . Music . Baby . , Stefani announced that she had intended to return to No Doubt and record a sixth studio album with the band . After the commercial success of L.A.M.B. , she decided to release several leftover tracks from the album as an EP or as extra tracks on a DVD . However , Pharrell Williams , with whom she had collaborated to write " Hollaback Girl " , convinced Stefani to create " a L.A.M.B. part two " , and the two recorded several songs during sessions in Miami in July 2005 .

The two produced " Wind It Up " , " Orange County Girl " , " U Started It " , " Yummy " , " Breaking Up " , and " Candyland " during these sessions , and the songs were used for a fashion show premiering the 2006 collection of Stefani 's fashion line L.A.M.B. She included performances of " Wind It Up " and " Orange County Girl " when she embarked on the Harajuku Lovers Tour in October 2005 . Stefani put the project on hold in December 2005 when she discovered that she was pregnant , before returning to the studio in August 2006 . The album 's working title was Candyland , sharing its name with an unreleased track that has only been looped via her fashion show soundtrack . The title was changed to The Sweet Escape , the title of the second track , to emphasize the album 's themes of wanting to escape to a better life .

= = = Album cover = = =

The album cover was taken by photographer Jill Greenberg . The image was part of a series of promotional images taken by Greenberg , inspired by her previous End Times exhibition . To create End Times , Greenberg gave lollipops to toddlers but took them back after several moments , provoking emotional outbursts . Greenberg used the images as a representation of American politics and society . Greenberg was accused of child abuse for the photo shoots ; Stefani , however , commented , " I didn 't think ' child abuse ' ? I just thought , ' That 's beautiful . ' Every kid cries , " she asserts , and as if on cue , Kingston pipes up in the next room . " Other people reacted like , ' Oh my God . That 's so disturbing , ' or ' That 's so sad . ' I guess that 's what art 's all about . It 's supposed to make you think . "

Stefani 's appearance on the album cover is inspired by that of Elvira Hancock , a cocaine addict portrayed by Michelle Pfeiffer in the 1983 film Scarface . Stefani first gained inspiration for the style while shooting the music video for " Cool " in Lake Como , Italy . During the shoot , Stefani saw her No Doubt bandmate Tony Kanal and his girlfriend , who had on a " long , peach , polyester [ late @-@ 1970s style ] dress " . It was this dress that got Stefani thinking " about Michelle Pfeiffer and

how amazingly styled she was [ in Scarface ] " , which in turn drew inspiration for the cover . The pair of oversized sunglasses on the album cover is intended to represent her " guarded exterior " , and the other images symbolize her various emotions .

#### = = Composition = =

The Sweet Escape has themes of romantic situations and details of her career and personal life , while sonically the album features " sparsely rhythmic tracks where she chants as much as she sings " and " pop songs that aim for choruses . " It starts with " Wind It Up " , which features fanfares and samples from The Sound of Music 's " The Lonely Goatherd " , having " material @-@ minded lyrics touting her fashion line and her shape . " The second and title track , " The Sweet Escape " , is a dance @-@ pop and doo wop song , which features Akon that provides a " wee @-@ oh ! " hook , with lyrics about a " feisty sort of apology . " " Orange County Girl " is an autobiographical rap song , where Stefani shows how she is " grateful for her success while recalling the simpler days of her youth . " The album 's first ballad , " Early Winter " , has influences of 80 's soft rock and lyrics about the need for fidelity and transparency in romantic relationship . " Now That You Got It " features military snare drums , loping hip @-@ hop beat and a staccato piano sample . Its lyrics has Stefani " act [ ing ] as if she 's doing a lover a favor and challenges him to come through . "

The sixth track " 4 in the Morning " is an 80 's @-@ inspired synthpop ballad , that lyrically deals with a relationship on the edge , while " Yummy " is a dance song , with a tribal rhythm , cameo by Pharrell Williams and lyrics that finds Stefani declaring that " making babies leaves her eager to feel sexy again . " " Fluorescent " features Angelo Moore on saxophone , and was compared to the works of Madonna and Prince , while " Breakin ' Up " has influences of hip @-@ hop and electronica and it 's " a breakup song built on a dying cell phone metaphor . " The tenth track , " Don 't Get It Twisted " , talks about an unexpected pregnancy , in a song influenced by reggaeton . " U Started It " was noted for having " lilting melody , silken harmonies , and pizzicato strings " , while the final track , " Wonderful Life " , was named a Depeche Mode @-@ style synth ballad about how much she misses her first love and how the person had a profound impact on her .

#### = = Critical reception = =

The Sweet Escape received mixed reviews from music critics . At Metacritic , which assigns a weighted mean rating out of 100 to reviews from mainstream critics , the album received an average score of 58 , based on 24 reviews , which indicates " mixed or average reviews " . Stephen Thomas Erlewine of AllMusic wrote , " From the stilted production to the fashion fetish , all the way down to her decision to rap on far too much of the album , all the dance @-@ pop here seems like a pose . " Alex Miller 's review for the NME was more emphatic , dubbing it " this year 's bargain @-@ bin fodder " , and stated that " the majority of this record serves only to bury what made Gwen Stefani unique in the first place . " At Entertainment Weekly , Sia Michel noted that the album " has a surprisingly moody , lightly autobiographical feel " but that " Stefani isn 't convincing as a dissatisfied diva " . Pitchfork Media 's Mark Pytlík described the album 's oddities as a career risk for Stefani , where most of the " gonzo pop songs yield some degree of payout " but that Stefani 's tight scheduling during production of the album leaves the result " somewhere between the vanguard and the insipid . " Paul Flynn of The Observer , however , characterized the album as less interesting than Fergie 's The Dutchess and Nelly Furtado 's Loose . Robert Christgau cited the song " Yummy " as a " choice cut " ( ) .

The album received criticism for its similarities to Love . Angel . Music . Baby . Sal Cinquemani of Slant Magazine opined that " [ h ] istory will likely view The Sweet Escape as a retread of Stefani 's well @-@ received solo debut , but it shares that album 's general inconsistency and , thus , its peaks and valleys " . Rob Sheffield of Rolling Stone agreed , viewing it as " her hasty return " to music lacking the energy of L.A.M.B. and in which " she sounds exhausted . " The New York Times ' Jon Pareles commented that Stefani " rebooks some of the same producers and repeats some of the old tricks with less flair " , adding that " superficiality is more fun when it doesn 't get so whiny . "

Caroline Sullivan disagreed in her review for The Guardian , in which she stated that although some of the songs date back to the 2003 writing sessions for L.A.M.B. , " generally The Sweet Escape feels minty @-@ fresh . " PopMatters ' review by Quentin B. Huff , however , referred to The Sweet Escape as L.A.M.B. : Reloaded and described The Sweet Escape and L.A.M.B. as " the same album , just add more rap , a glossy Next @-@ Top @-@ Model @-@ ish photo for the cover , and a few more recent @-@ sounding influences . "

= = Commercial performance = =

The Sweet Escape debuted at number three on the Billboard 200 , selling 243 @,@ 000 copies in its first week . It sold another 149 @,@ 000 copies during its second week , falling to number 14 . The album was certified platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America ( RIAA ) on June 25 , 2007 , and had sold 1 @,@ 733 @,@ 000 copies in the United States by February 2016 . The Canadian Recording Industry Association ( CRIA ) certified The Sweet Escape platinum eight days prior to the album 's release , and double platinum on March 5 , 2007 .

In the United Kingdom , The Sweet Escape debuted at number 26 on the UK Albums Chart with first @-@ week sales of 33 @,@ 632 copies . Three months later , on March 4 , 2007 , the album reached a new peak position of number 14 . It was certified Platinum by the British Phonographic Industry ( BPI ) on July 22 , 2013 and , as of March 2016 , has sold 365 @,@ 143 copies in the UK . The album was moderately successful across Europe , peaking in the top 10 in Norway and Switzerland ; the top 20 in Austria , Finland , Germany , Hungary , Ireland , and Sweden ; and the top 40 in Belgium , Denmark , France and the Netherlands . The Sweet Escape reached number two for two consecutive weeks on the ARIA Albums Chart in Australia , and was certified double platinum by the Australian Recording Industry Association ( ARIA ) .

= = The Sweet Escape Tour = =

The Sweet Escape Tour was Stefani 's follow @-@ up to the Harajuku Lovers Tour . It went worldwide as compared to her previous tour which was constricted only to North America and had more than double the number of shows . It was Stefani 's last solo effort as she rejoined her band No Doubt after the tour ended . The main feature were usage of various props such as a prison for Stefani 's opening act , a six @-@ piece band and a large multimedia screen in the backdrop showing videos and animations .

The tour had its own set of controversies . A group of students making up for The National Union of Malaysian Muslim Students , banned Stefani 's concert that was slated to take place August 21 , 2007 at Putra Indoor Stadium in Kuala Lumpur . The union 's vice president , Abdul Muntaqim , said , " Her performance and her attire are not suitable for our culture . It promotes a certain degree of obscenity and will encourage youth to emulate the western lifestyle . The concert should be stopped . " The organizer of the event , Maxis Communications , later responded , " Stefani has confirmed that her concert will not feature any revealing costumes . She will abide by the Malaysian authorities ' guidelines to ensure that her show will not be offensive to local sensitivities . " In April 2007 , Akon drew criticism for engaging in on @-@ stage dirty dancing with a 14 @-@ year @-@ old girl at a club in Port of Spain , Trinidad and Tobago , as part of a fake contest . As a result , Verizon Wireless terminated its sponsorship of the tour .

Stefani donated \$ 166 @,@ 000 from her October 30 , 2007 concert in San Diego to the San Diego Foundation , in benefit of the victims of the October 2007 California wildfires . On her June 22 and June 23 concerts in Irvine , California , Stefani was joined onstage by her No Doubt bandmates . They performed the band 's songs " Just a Girl " , " Spiderwebs " , " Sunday Morning " , " Hella Good " , and their cover of Talk Talk 's " It 's My Life " .

= = Track listing = =

Notes

^ a signifies an additional producer

^ b signifies a co @-@ producer

^ c signifies an additional vocal producer

" Wind It Up " contains interpolations from the composition " The Lonely Goatherd " , written by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein .

= = Personnel = =

Credits adapted from the liner notes of The Sweet Escape .

= = Charts = =

= = Certifications = =

= = Release history = =