

= What You Waiting For ? =

" What You Waiting For ? " is a song by American singer and songwriter Gwen Stefani from her debut solo studio album , Love . Angel . Music . Baby . (2004) . Written by Stefani and Linda Perry , the song is the album 's opening track and was released as Stefani 's debut solo single . " What You Waiting For ? " details Stefani 's lack of inspiration , fear of producing the album , as well as her reaction to pressures exerted by her record label . It is primarily an electropop song and introduces Stefani 's four back @-@ up dancers , the Harajuku Girls , who had a major input into the album 's production .

" What You Waiting For ? " was released as the album 's lead single ; according to Stefani , as an " explanation for doing the record " . The song was well received by critics , and was frequently cited as a highlight of the album . The single was commercially successful , topping the chart in Australia and reaching the top 10 in several countries . It was certified gold in the United States , and was nominated for Best Female Pop Vocal Performance at the 47th Grammy Awards . The song has been remixed a number of times , and was covered by the indie rock band Franz Ferdinand and singer Marina and the Diamonds .

= = Background and writing = =

During the night of the 2003 Grammy Awards , Perry forced Stefani into a chokehold , and demanded that they were " gonna write songs together ! " , to which Stefani reluctantly agreed . Soon after , Stefani finished the Rock Steady Tour with her band No Doubt , and took a call from her label , who informed her that Perry was in a studio ready to collaborate , and that Perry " only [had] five days out of the whole year to work with [her] . " Stefani has since admitted that she was frustrated by not being able to see her husband Gavin Rossdale , and was intimidated at the thought of collaboration , in particular with Perry , who she did not feel was qualified to write dance music . Stefani was exhausted by the recently completed tour , and shortly afterwards suffered an emotional breakdown , which she spent in bed crying .

During their first day of work , the two wrote a song titled " Fine by You " , which Stefani later described as " a stupid love song , but really good " . Perry remarked that the song " wasn 't right " , and the track was excluded from the album . The session was unproductive , due in part to Stefani 's self @-@ consciousness and writer 's block , and she at one stage broke down in tears in the studio . Stefani has since admitted that writing songs without her band members felt " humiliating and intimidating even if they 're sweet and excited , because you 're drowning in their creativity " .

That night , Perry began work on another track , which she played for Stefani the next day to motivate her . Stefani was impressed with the track , and Perry asked her , " What are you waiting for ? " According to Perry , Stefani took the question as a dare , replying , " You 're totally challenging me , right ? " The two began writing lyrics for the new wave @-@ styled song based on Stefani 's writer 's block and fears about making a solo record , and it grew into " What You Waiting For ? " .

Stefani came up with the idea of the Harajuku Girls while writing the song . Stefani first saw the women of Harajuku , known for their unique style drawing from Gothic Lolita and cyberpunk fashion , in 1996 and had admired them since . She decided to mention them in the line " You Harajuku Girls , damn you got some wicked style " , and the concept grew into a running theme on Love . Angel . Music . Baby . , which went as far as to feature one song named after and dedicated to them .

= = Composition = =

" What You Waiting For ? " combines the genres of electropop , new wave , dance @-@ rock , and funk , and was composed in common time and in the key of G minor . It is written in verse @-@ chorus form , and its instrumentation derives from the guitar and electronic keyboard . The song opens with an emotional piano solo as a tribute to Stefani 's time with No Doubt . The verse begins at only 60 beats per minute and gradually slows , mixed with sounds of applause from the audience

. A beat set at 138 BPM begins , and Stefani repeats the phrase " tick @-@ tock " , commonly interpreted as a reference to her maternal clock and the pressures she felt about producing the album .

Stefani creates an argument between lyrical personas by alternating her vocal range and point of view . Stefani 's vocal range spans two octaves in the song , from G3 to G5 . In a melody similar to that of Weezer 's " Hash Pipe " , one side of Stefani 's personality sings in a higher range in the first person , and the other , more confident personality sings lower in the second person . During the verses , the more nervous personality discusses her concerns about leaving No Doubt for a solo career as well as the ephemeral success of female singers in the music industry . The chorus is a boost of confidence for her and continues the song 's time motif with the lines " Look at your watch now / You 're still a super hot female " . Backed by perfect octave dyads , Stefani sings a verse about her excitement for her future , and the two personalities merge into one during the coda .

= = Critical reception = =

" What You Waiting For ? " received positive reviews from critics . Nick Sylvester of Pitchfork Media gave the song a strong review , rating it four and a half stars , and labeled it " fucking great " . The website went on to rank the song 16th on its list of the Top 50 Singles of 2004 . RJ Smith of Blender noted the song 's new wave influence by stating that it could start a revival of Missing Persons , and Amy Linden of The Village Voice compared the " giddy , yodeling vocals " to those of Lene Lovich 's 1981 song " New Toy " . Jason Damas from PopMatters was mixed on the song , calling the opening " awkward " and the refrain " ridiculously dumb " , but arguing that the song " is so frivolous and stupid that it winds up being brilliant ; it pretends to be nothing more than party bubblegum and achieves its artistic criteria beautifully . " Slant Magazine 's Sal Cinquemani agreed , stating that " it 's this impishness that helps make ' What You Waiting For ' one of the hottest ' arrival ' songs of all time " . Richard Smirke of Playlougher found the track 's production " crisp " and " edgy " , and Jennifer Nine of Yahoo ! Music called the song " itchily irresistible " . Jemma Volp @-@ Fletcher , writing for Contactmusic.com , rated the song nine out of 10 , commenting that it has " irresistible commercial pull and a melody to die for " and that the track " makes the most of her unmistakable vocal and reflects that off @-@ the @-@ wall Stefani personality perfectly . " Natasha Tripney from musicOMH gave the song a negative review , stating that " it 'll become one of those tracks that 's irritatingly catchy ? but on this initial listening , Ms Stefani 's debut solo effort is just plain irritating . "

Many reviewers considered the track one of the album 's highlights . Entertainment Weekly critic David Browne gave Love . Angel . Music . Baby. a C + rating but called the track " one of the album 's undeniable highs " . In its review of the album , Nick Sylvester of Pitchfork Media believed that " we can 't expect 12 more cuts as personal or urgent as debut single ' What You Waiting For ' " , while naming it " one of the best electro songs this year " . Lisa Haines of BBC Music stated that it " stands out as the best track on the album for the way it pits storming beats against enthusiastic lyrics " and compared the song to Goldfrapp 's 2003 single " Strict Machine " . Eric Greenwood of Drawer B , who felt that the album " fails on every level " , also commented that " if this album had even two more songs this immediate and catchy , then I 'd stick my neck out for it , but , sadly , it 's the only song worth listening to . " In 2009 , The Daily Telegraph listed the song at number 82 on their list " 100 songs that defined the Noughties . "

= = Commercial performance = =

In the United States , " What You Waiting For ? " debuted at number 93 on the Billboard Hot 100 on the issue dated October 16 , 2004 . It reached a peak of number 47 on November 27 , 2004 and remained on the chart for a total of 20 weeks . The song topped the Hot Dance Club Play chart , but only had moderate success on the pop charts , reaching number 17 on the Mainstream Top 40 and number 24 on the Adult Top 40 . The song was certified gold by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) on February 25 , 2005 . Additionally , it was nominated for Best Female Pop Vocal Performance at the 2005 Grammy Awards , but lost to Norah Jones ' " Sunrise " .

Elsewhere , the song 's reception was stronger . In Canada , it debuted in the top 40 on the Canadian Singles Chart before reaching number 24 in late January 2005 . In the United Kingdom , " What You Waiting For ? " debuted and peaked at number four on the UK Singles Chart and remained on the chart for 15 weeks . The single performed well across most of the rest of Europe , reaching the top five in Belgium , Denmark , Finland , France , Ireland , Italy , and Norway , and the top 10 in Austria , Hungary , the Netherlands , and Sweden .

In Australia , " What You Waiting For ? " debuted atop the ARIA Singles Chart on November 14 , 2004 and stayed there for two weeks . It remained within the top three through January 17 , 2005 and dropped off the chart after 15 weeks . In 2014 , the single was certified double platinum by the Australian Recording Industry Association (ARIA) . The song reached number three on New Zealand 's RIANZ Singles Chart and spent four months on the chart .

= = Music video = =

The song 's music video was directed by Francis Lawrence and produced by Caleb Dewart of DNA Inc . The video deals directly with the lyrics ' theme of Stefani 's search for inspiration in songwriting . It opens with a lengthy non @-@ musical section in which Stefani arrives in Los Angeles off of No Doubt 's Rock Steady Tour . She receives several calls from Interscope label head Jimmy Iovine , who attempts to push her forward with her solo debut project , but she replies that she is tired and uninspired . After a failed studio attempt , Stefani sees a flyer advertising help for writer 's block . Upon arrival she is asked to fill out a suspicious questionnaire , where the camera pans to the questions which will be important . She is then told that she will be billed when she is finished . She asks for clarification only to discover that she is already back in the studio by herself . When Stefani picks up an oversized pocket watch from the piano , a rabbit knock @-@ knock that she had previously seen jumps across the room . She throws the watch at the knock @-@ knock , causing her to fall back on her chair and find herself transported to a fantasy world based on Alice 's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking @-@ Glass .

Stefani portrays several characters from the books , including Alice , the White Queen , and the Red Queen , in dresses by British @-@ Gibraltarian fashion designer John Galiano . The video frequently cuts to Stefani back in the studio to show her singing and performing in semi @-@ synchronization with her actions within her fantasy world . As this transpires the song is recording itself . Stefani ultimately rediscovers her confidence , and her full awareness is transported back to the ordinary reality of the studio just as she dances in front of her four giggling Harajuku Girls . She then is presented with her bill by the consultant as a wooden chair topples to the floor .

There are four versions of the video . The full , long version is one minute longer than the Making the Video version , while the cut version omits the scenes in which she leaves the airport and is sleepy and in which she fills out the questionnaire . The short version begins with Stefani practicing on the piano and her finding the watch just seconds after that . Her being billed is not shown in this version , so the video ends with the Harajuku Girls laughing at her performance .

The music video was well received by many reviewers . Sam Bloch from Stylus Magazine referred to it as a short film , comparing it to Michael Jackson 's Thriller , and commented , " I sigh with admiration and wish every video was this alive . " The video debuted on MTV 's Total Request Live on October 19 , 2004 at number 11 . The following month it reached the top of the chart and was there for three non @-@ consecutive days , remaining over five weeks on the program . At the 2005 MTV Video Music Awards , the video won the award for Best Art Direction and was nominated for Best Editing . In Canada , it only reached number 11 on the MuchMusic 's Countdown , though it remained on the chart for eight weeks . At the 2005 MuchMusic Video Awards , the video was nominated for Best International Video but lost to Usher 's " Caught Up " . It won the award for Best Dressed Video at the first MTV Australia Video Music Awards , and was also nominated for Video of the Year and Best Pop Video .

= = Alternative versions = =

Stuart Price (also known as Jacques Lu Cont) made the most well @-@ known remix of the song , titled the Thin White Duke Mix , which was included on the CD single . The track , over eight minutes long , is carried by a guitar riff and occasional chimes . The remix received positive reviews from music critics . Aaron Mandel of Pitchfork Media labeled it " outstanding " , and John M. Cunningham of Stylus Magazine stated that it " endowed [the song] with a sense of grandeur " . DJ InVincible from About.com viewed the remix as " moody and a bit hypnotic " , commenting that it is " best suited for early @-@ evening sets . " Armand Van Helden created two remixes , the Armand Van Helden Remix and the Armand Van Helden Dub , which use only some of the original vocals and a new bassline constructed with synthesizers and some electric guitar . Felix da Housecat created the Rude Ho Mix , which uses more bass guitar and leaves out the original background vocals by Mimi Parker until the final verse .

Alex Kapranos , guitarist and lead singer of Scottish indie rock band Franz Ferdinand , wore a Gwen Stefani pin on a Members Only jacket as a tribute to " What You Waiting For ? " . In December 2005 , the band performed a cover version of the song on Live Lounge , a segment of The Jo Whiley Show on BBC Radio 1 . The cover includes the chorus from Billy Idol 's 1983 song " White Wedding " . In October 2006 , the song was released as a part of the Radio 1 's Live Lounge compilation , and the cover received mixed reviews . Jack Foley from IndieLondon called the track " completely insane " , stating that it " really has to be heard to be believed . " The Guardian 's Dorian Lynskey found the cover smug , adding that " one of Alex Kapranos 's eyebrows [is] raised so high that it practically vacates his head . "

Welsh indie pop singer Marina and the Diamonds covered " What You Waiting For ? " during some of her early live performances in 2009 . Mary Bellamy of Drowned in Sound referred to her debut album The Family Jewels (2010) as " an extended album length re @-@ write " of " What You Waiting For ? " .

= = Track listings = =

= = Credits and personnel = =

Credits adapted from the liner notes of Love . Angel . Music . Baby .

= = Charts = =

= = Certifications = =